INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE: FIRST NATIONS WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE

by

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DEDICATION

To First Nations women, whose wisdom,

courage, and perseverance

will one day lead to true justice and equality.

ABSTRACT

This study examined how First Nations women's experiences of intimate partner abuse are embedded in and shaped by the historical and current socio-political context organising their everyday lives. The PsychoSocial Ethnography of the Commonplace (PSEC; Gouliquer & Poulin, 2005) was the methodology used to explore the multiple ways in which the Federal government and Native society influence women's cognitions about their abuse experiences. Thirty-five women from Ontario and New Brunswick were interviewed. By applying the analytical sequence of the PSEC, five Organisational Moments (OMs), or instances when there is a lack of fit between the needs of the institution and the needs of the women who are affected by them, were identified and explicated: (1) The Institutional Response to Violence against First Nations Women; (2) Elder Support; (3) Addictions; (4) Transparency in the Distribution of Band Services and Resources; and (5) Education for Native People. The results examined the schemata women evoked to make sense of the contradictions that emerge from this mismatch of needs. The analysis revealed that Aboriginal women either reframed their interpretation of their experience in order to fit into existing schemata (e.g., blaming partner violence on substance abuse illustrated the use of a socially available schema, *It's the Drinking! It's the Drugs!*), or they rejected the socially-available schemata so that their experience could be cognitively interpreted (e.g., rejecting the schema that *Education Equals Success* for an understanding that education often leads to alienation for Native People). The strategies women employed to resolve the complications that result from trying to live within the organisational confines of Native society and Federal government policy and procedure were often dependent upon the schemata informing their understanding of their situations. The discussion highlights specific ways in which the OMs contribute to a more informed

understanding of how risk factors for intimate partner violence operate for Native women. In addition, the political and clinical implications of these findings are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Woman abuse is defined as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life" (Statistics Canada: Violence Against Women Survey [VAWS], 1993, p. 8). According to Statistics Canada's General Social Survey of Victimization (2005), 7% of women reported some form of abuse by a current spouse in the previous five years. Of those, 40% reported being pushed or grabbed; 23% reported being threatened; and 16% reported sexual assault. These figures do not include women who are abused psychologically, spiritually, and/or financially. Given the high rate of woman abuse in Canada, it is recognized as a widespread social problem. Its implications are serious, both for the women who are victims, and also for society in terms of the costs for health care, policing, legal, and other victim-related services.

While research on woman abuse within the family has informed our understanding of the victims and the perpetrators involved in these crimes, most of these studies have focussed on the experiences of women in the dominant population. Less attention has been paid to violence against particular minority groups of women, thereby limiting our knowledge of factors that uniquely affect their experience of abuse. Consequently, we do not know to what extent our current understanding of intimate violence is transferable to these other groups, nor can we assume that the factors that interact with and shape women's experiences of abuse operate in the same way for all groups of abused women. What is missing is an analysis of how women's differing social

positions interact with and perhaps complicate the barriers that keep women in abusive situations. Further research is needed to uncover the ways in which the experience of violence against women is shaped by differences in women's social location (e.g., ethnicity, economic and immigration status, sexual orientation).

Aboriginal scholars have called for increased attention to violence against Aboriginal women, and also to the influence of history and culture on abuse experiences (Cheshire, 2001; Chester, Robin, Koss, Lopez & Goldman, 1994; Frank, 1992; Hamby, 2000; Longclaws, Barkwell & Rosebush, 1994; Norton & Manson, 1995; Stout & Kipling, 1998). Much of the research investigating woman abuse within Native communities is statistical in nature (e.g., information documenting the extent of abuse in First Nations communities, rates of physical versus sexual abuse). While numerical data contribute to an overall picture of woman abuse in First Nations communities, our understanding of the factors influencing intimate partner violence for this population, and its psychological consequences for Aboriginal women, is still missing.

Currently, two basic theoretical frameworks have been proposed to understand domestic violence: (a) abuse as the result of pathology (e.g., victim-blaming), which focuses on individual personality deficits or familial dysfunction that perpetuate perverse relationships (see Kirkwood, 1993 for a discussion of victim-blaming theories; Straus, 1983); and (b) abuse as the result of systemic oppression (e.g., feminist theories), which focuses on the interface between the structural inequalities of gender, power (Dobash & Dobash, 1990; MacKinnon, 1982; Smith, 1990; Yllö, 1983), race, class (Dickason, 1992; McIvor & Nahanee, 1998; Razack, 1994), and violence within the home. Within each framework, the kinds of questions posed are indicative of the lens through which abuse is

viewed. The present study is conceptualized from a feminist perspective of woman abuse, guided by Lerman's (1986) criteria for building or evaluating a good theory about women's personality. It is also influenced by Harding's (1987) writings on epistemological categorization, Smith's (1987) methodology of doing Institutional Ethnography, and cognitive psychology's concept of schemata as important individual cognitive structures for interpreting the world (e.g., Bem, 1983; Rumelhart, 1980).

The present research is a study of intimate partner violence within the context of racial oppression, through a focus on Aboriginal women's experiences of abuse. It is important to recognise that the oppression of Aboriginal people is sui generis: The history of the colonisation of First Nations people (see below for details), and its modern embodiment make the oppression of Aboriginal people distinct from other racial groups. However, literature on racism informs an understanding of the oppression of Native people through contrast and similarity. Thus, the term racism is used throughout this thesis, with the awareness that for Aboriginal people, colonisation is and leads to a distinct form of oppression. Keeping this distinction in mind, this research examines how Aboriginal women's cognitions about abuse are shaped by the context in which they live. In other words, Native women live within a specific type of political structure (e.g., the Indian Act) and an imposed system of governance on reserves that has the power to micromanage individual and family life. When an Aboriginal woman experiences violence, the question becomes how this political reality influences her thinking and coping strategies with respect to the violence committed against her. The goal is to uncover competing schemata that arise when the social ideologies do not fit with Native women's everyday lives. This research, therefore, is a test of the applicability of a

feminist analysis of violence, with specific attention to the intersection of gender and race as it applies to the lives of Aboriginal women. Further, it leads to recommendations with respect to how First Nations communities respond to family violence.

The organisation of the present chapter reflects the need to situate Native women in their historical, social, and political position before any discussion of violence against them can begin. Consequently, the chapter begins with a review of the historical and political background. This provides the context for the section on the intersection of abuse and racism. Next, the consequences of colonisation are described, and two of the most significant elements of the project of assimilation of Aboriginals into mainstream culture are examined in light of the lasting impact these have had on Native society. Then, changes in governing structures and cultural identity are presented and juxtaposed with the current social conditions of First Nations people. Once the context has been established, a review of violence against women, and specifically, violence against Aboriginal women follows. Within this review, the research on violence against women in the general population is examined. This research is contrasted with what is known about violence against Aboriginal women. An overview of the main theories of domestic violence precedes a review of barriers to leaving abusive relationships. Attention is given to some of the factors that make it especially difficult for Aboriginal women to leave abusive relationships, compared with those for non-Aboriginal women. The chapter ends with a summary and description of the purpose of the present study.

Historical and Political Context

The historical record documents the unique features of Aboriginal people's experience. Political assimilation policies, which began in earnest in the late 1700s, were

part of an ongoing attempt by the Europeans in North America to eliminate Native culture (McIvor & Nahanee, 1998). Many First Nations scholars identify residential schooling, which was implemented prior to the turn of the 20th century and continued until the 1980s, as a key to understanding violence against Aboriginal women perpetrated by Aboriginal men (Bear Nicholas, 1994; Frank, 1992; LaRocque, 1994; McIvor & Nahanee). Some also suggest that the imposition of the Band system by the Canadian Federal government, which resulted in a power structure significantly different from traditional forms of Aboriginal governance, has had a direct connection to Aboriginal violence (McIvor & Nahanee). This change in governance led to power being concentrated in the hands of the Chief and Council. These positions were predominantly filled by Aboriginal men. According to LaRocque, prior to the Band system, Aboriginal women were respected and considered integral to the well-being of their communities. "The status of women was high [in First Nations cultures...they] played central economic and decision-making roles" (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999, p. 132). This is not the case in many Native communities today (Native Women's Association of Canada, 1992). Under the Band system of governance, First Nations women lost power and their status within their communities diminished, mimicking the European hierarchical pattern of male privilege, both within and outside of the family (Dickason, 1992; Emberley, 2001; Hill, 1992; Paul, 2000). According to some writers, this change in status was related to an increase in rates of violence against Aboriginal women (LaRocque; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989a).

The existence and location of Indian reserves also differentiates Aboriginal experiences from those of the non-Native majority. The tracts of land allotted to

Aboriginal people through treaty negotiations were among the poorest and most isolated in the country (Frank, 1992; Royal Commission on Aboriginal People [RCAP], 1996). Consequently, many Aboriginal communities were, and remain, geographically isolated from services available to the average Canadian (e.g., services for victims of abuse, policing, and Child and Family services). For urban Aboriginal people, services may be readily available, but distance from kinship networks increases feelings of isolation and may impede support-seeking from outside sources (Status of Women Canada, Roundtable Report, 2000). Moreover, for Native women, whether they live on or off reserve, cultural differences represent another form of distancing that hinders their access to available services, programs, and institutions (Status of Women Canada, Roundtable Report; United Nations, 2001). Therefore, for Native women in abusive relationships, access to information, resources, and support is limited. In turn, their ability to carry out the actions needed to respond to intimate violence is limited, and may even complicate the identification of their experience as abuse (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999).

Intersection of Abuse and Racism

The colonisation process had and continues to have far-reaching effects on Aboriginal society. The assimilation policies, restructuring of Native forms of governance, changing gender roles and relations, and residential school system combine to add context and complexity to woman abuse in Aboriginal communities (Frank, 1992).

According to many theorists and researchers, the abuse of women, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, is a consequence of gender discrimination made possible by a patriarchal culture that legitimizes violent behaviour toward women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Ellison, 2002; Lerner, 1986; VAWS, 1993). Although male-power and control are central

tenets of the feminist analysis of violence against women, feminists writing from the cultural margins call for an extended analysis of intimate partner abuse that specifically examines the impact of minority cultures (Hamby, 2000; hooks, 1984). Based on this perspective, systemic racism adds a level of complexity to the understanding of the gendered dynamics of violence, by creating and maintaining the conditions that lead to woman assault. For a feminist analysis to be more complete, it must examine the links among violence, racism, and class inequalities on which our society operates. As mentioned earlier, the unique socio-cultural and historical events that have shaped the lives of First Nations people must inform any study of violence in these communities (Feinman, 1992; Hamby; LaFromboise, Berman, & Sohi, 1994; Paul, 2000; Zellerer, 1999). The next section, therefore, specifically examines the consequences of colonisation for North American Aboriginal people.

Consequences of Colonisation

Due to the links between history and current social conditions for First Nations people, certain historical events are highlighted (Dickason, 1992; Duran & Duran, 1995; Frank, 1992; Hill, 1992; LaFromboise, Heyle, & Ozer, 1990; Paul, 2000). While it is beyond the scope of this paper to present a detailed account of the relationship between Native people and non-Native settlers, a synopsis of key events will provide the context for a more informed understanding. It is important to note that the term colonisation, which is used throughout this thesis, refers to the economic (Leacock, 1981), legal (Thira, 2005), political, administrative (Emberley, 2001), and ideological transformations of Aboriginal society into Nations mirroring the patriarchial and capitalist foundations of Western society (Emberley; Leacock; RCAP, 1996). There is debate on the meaning and

influence of these various aspects of colonisation for Aboriginal peoples (Bedford, personal communication, February 2006). This debate, however, and the extent to which each of these specific aspects of colonisation have contributed to the current state of Native society, go beyond the purpose of the current thesis. It is mentioned here to remind the reader of the multidimensions of colonialism. In what follows, therefore, an attempt is made to highlight the influence of distinct aspects. It is clear, however, that the divisions are often arbitrary and oversimplified. Given the complexity of the influence, overlaps are more often the rule rather than the exception.

Aboriginal writers and historians have documented the demise of traditional Native cultures that occurred over centuries of European influence (Dickason, 1992, 2000; LaRocque, 1994; McEachern, Van Winkle, & Steiner, 1998; Paul, 2000). Differences existed between the early settlers and First Nations people in language, spiritual and religious practices, beliefs, and social values that organized their respective societies (Dickason; LaRocque; Paul). Initially, those differences did not interfere with trade relationships. Although the cultural differences were striking, they did not collide or hinder developing economic relationships and both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners were more or less satisfied with the arrangements (RCAP, 1996). This balance shifted when British immigration to North America increased (RCAP).

Aboriginal peoples' economic system was reportedly founded on principles of mutually beneficial trade according to need (Dickason, 1992). The concepts of personal property and individual advancement at the expense of others were foreign to a world-view that saw humans as part of an ecosystem based on "a balance of reciprocating forces to keep the universe functioning in harmony" (Dickason, p. 13). In contrast, Europeans

imported a world-view that included control by an omnipotent Lord, and the mandate of the people to tame and subdue the world in His name (Beaton, 1991; Monague, 1992). According to Dickason, the role of the church in this conquest cannot be overstated. The Europeans were operating with an imperialistic theology in tandem with the monarchs of Europe. As a result, Native spirituality was dismissed and "the economic, political, legal and military systems under-girded the evangelization efforts of the European missionaries" (Oussoren, 1991, p. 3). While Native knowledge in various domains was exploited (e.g., its hunting, fishing, and trapping techniques), Aboriginal cultures and their social organisation were considered primitive and uncivilized (Dickason; Paul, 2000). Thus, the socially constructed image of the "savage Indian" was popularized and used to justify the "civilizing practices" implemented by missionaries (Paul; RCAP, 1996).

Any mutuality of benefit from interdependence between Europeans and First Nations in economic trading, skills acquisition, and technology that may have characterized the early contact period was eroded as the colony, which eventually became Canada, grew into nationhood (Dickason, 1992; RCAP, 1996). The political, legal, and economic aspects of colonisation were evidenced in the advancement of legislation designed to identify and control the Aboriginal population through appropriation of traditional lands (Thira, 2005). Specifically, policies were developed that led to the displacement of Native peoples from their land, strained the natural resource base on which their livelihood depended, and enforced practices in an attempt to eliminate their cultures (Paul, 2000; RCAP). As Hamby (2000) suggested, the repercussions of these policies and practices for First Nations people are still present today, and the assimilation

strategies used remain powerful as tools of oppression. For example, the influx of immigrants into the Maritimes and the West during the late 18th and early 19th centuries meant that increasing numbers of British citizens, interested in developing permanent settlements, required land. Small-scale industries in agriculture, timber, and fishing were established. The Native people, who had previously been guaranteed protected land rights and political autonomy from the Royal Proclamation of 1763, were displaced in favour of expansion and economic development (RCAP). Reserve lands were taken without consent in many cases, and given to European settlers in the name of progress (RCAP).

In concert with European ideas of progress was an ideology of superiority. Ideological colonisation had its basis in the view that European society was at the forefront of evolutionary development (Dickason, 1992; Hill, 1992). The taming of the "savage Indian," then, was viewed as a means to accelerate their human development (Paul, 2000; RCAP, 1996). Operating with such an ideological bias, the Indian Act of 1876, and the many revisions that followed, enacted policies of cultural assimilation from an ideological position (Frank, 1992). As a consequence, Aboriginal society was transformed. Indian Agents, who were White civil servants appointed by the superintendent general of Indian Affairs, were given wide jurisdiction in their mandate to oversee and manage the Aboriginal people. These agents had considerable authority: They had power over land use and ownership; they were ex-officio justices of the peace with magistrate powers to enforce the by-laws and regulations of the Department of Indian Affairs (RCAP); they enforced the ban on traditional Native dancing and ceremonies; and they could, "[i]ntervene in almost all areas of daily reserve life" (RCAP,

Vol. 1, Chap. 9, p. 53). Aboriginal society came to be ruled by a government intent on "civilizing" them.

Political and ideological colonisation continued with two significant measures taken by the Canadian government during the 1800 and 1900s: 1) the forced restructuring of administrative practices in Aboriginal society and 2) the establishment of the residential school system. These approaches to assimilation had a lasting impact on Aboriginal culture in different but connected ways.

The Band System

To enable communication between First Nations communities and various levels of Canadian government, administration structures needed to conform to the European model (RCAP, 1996). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People reported that the forced colonial-style of governance spread unevenly throughout regions in Canada, but gradually First Nations across the country were "Remade...in the image of the newcomers" (Vol. 1, Chap. 6, p. 4). The initial restructuring attempts met with resistance in the form of underground continuation of traditional forms of governance (RCAP). Eventually, however, elections usurped other methods of determining leadership. A system was established whereby the Chief and the new addition of a Band Council were voted into office for specified terms. Chiefs were not always voted into office. Indian Agents often appointed Indian men to the position. The appointment was made on the basis of an established or potential alliance between the Indian Agent and the prospective chief. Their mandate was to represent the voices of the people they served (i.e., other Band members). This system, foreign to traditional leadership practices (Bedford & Workman, 1997; Hill, 1992; Native Women's Association of Canada, 1992), gradually

became the model followed by Bands across the country (RCAP). The extent to which the change in administrative structure altered Aboriginal society goes beyond the political sphere. In remaking the First Nations society into a mirror image of the colonisers, the gender disparity between men and women inherent in the European system also influenced Aboriginal society (Emberley, 2001).

Although diversity existed among Aboriginal people, their governing structures were founded on common principles derived from a world-view that valued and practised respect for all things (Braveheart-Jordan & DeBruyn, 1995; Hill, 1992). Community well-being was of paramount concern, and, as a result, decision-making usually involved a process of consultation and consensus among the people (Emberley, 2001; Leacock & Lee, 1980). The Chief, a traditional position, consulted widely, particularly valuing the wisdom of the Clan mothers and Elders in guiding the leadership of the community. According to many Aboriginal theorists and researchers, men and women contributed equally to social, political, and economic decisions made by the Chiefs (Akwesasne: White Roots of Peace, 1973; Bear Nicholas, 1994; Hill, 1992; LaRocque 1994; Leacock & Lee).

It has been argued that gender inequity is inherent in societies where gender roles are rigidly scripted and the gendered division of labour is normative (Bem, 1993; Lerner, 1986). In contrast to this position, however, Native oral and written history suggest that the gendered divisions in labour, roles, and expectations within Aboriginal society were, "Enacted in ways that help[ed] people feel powerful and honored" (Braveheart-Jordon & DeBruyn, 1995, p. 353). In part, and perhaps ironically, the respect believed to have been characteristic of Aboriginal relationships existed because the gender assignments created

conditions whereby specific knowledge was held by and passed on through gender lines (Dickason, 1992; Hill, 1992). Specifically, the women of the Band often held knowledge about medicinal herbs, whereas men tended to design and orchestrate large game hunts. Knowledge held by both sexes was essential to survival; thus, the health and continuation of communities depended on the insight, knowledge, and active participation by all Band members (Bear Nicholas, 1994). Ostensibly, the relatively independent social roles that were part of traditional practises have been considered synonymous with gender equality in terms of status, power, and prestige. Hamby (2000) suggested that, while this view is characteristic of much of the recent literature on traditional gender relations among Aboriginal people, it is likely an idealistic portrayal. Guemple (1995), for example, described social relations between Inuit men and women. She reported that men have "Ultimate control over decision making" (p. 22), even to the point of arranging sexual favours for other men without their wives' consent. Despite examples of gender inequality, however, Guemple concluded that men and women shared relatively equal power and status. The tendency toward idealistic depictions of life before colonisation might reflect an attempt to balance the largely negative portrayal of gender relations by early missionary writings (Hamby). According to Hamby, both are extreme views and do not accurately represent gender relations in traditional Native culture. It is likely that the current attitudes toward women in Aboriginal society have been shaped by elements of non-egalitarian features of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures.

The restructuring of Band administrations, nonetheless, had an impact on not only a political system, but also an ideological system (Monture, 2002). The notion of respect for and value of women and their knowledge, participation, and ability to give life began

to diminish as power within communities was gradually transferred to men (Bear Nicholas, 1994; Braveheart-Jordan & DeBruyn, 1995; Dickason, 1992; Feinman, 1992; LaRocque, 1994). The inequality between Aboriginal men and women was solidified and exacerbated in the Grand Civilization Act of 1857 and its successor, the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869. In those decrees, women were denied voting rights in Band Council elections (RCAP, 1996), which effectively removed them from the political process (Mason, 1996). Monture reported that "the [Indian] Act at one time prevented women from running for office in Band Council elections or voting on such matters as land surrenders" (p. 20). They did not gain voting rights in Band elections until 1951 when an amendment was made to the Indian Act. They were only enfranchised as Canadian citizens in 1960, which was considerably later than other Canadian women. Moreover, Aboriginal women were involuntarily enfranchised upon the enfranchisement of their spouses, or upon their marriage to a non-Aboriginal man. The involuntary relinquishing of Indian Status meant that Indian women had no recourse for retaining their Indian status or Band membership. Further, the enfranchisement legislation allowed for enfranchised men to will their property to a child or children, but not to a wife (RCAP). Those who were enfranchised were no longer eligible to occupy reserve land or vote in Band elections. Moreover, their children were also automatically enfranchised. This remains a contested issue for Aboriginal people in spite of Bill C-31, which reinstated status to women who lost their Indian status by marriage to a non-Native man.

These acts of gender discrimination, in concert with other discriminatory measures, buttressed a complete transformation of Aboriginal society (Hill, 1992). "The change to a hierarchical view of the world meant a drastic over-turning of [traditional

philosophy]" (Hill, p. 16). Positions within the hierarchy were determined according to male privilege. Women and children, devoid of political and social power, were made more vulnerable to male oppression in this new regime (Bear Nicholas, 1994; Braveheart-Jordan & DeBruyn, 1995; Hill). According to the Native Women's Association (1992), women's power was co-opted and their current status continues to be one of subordination. In addition, the status of Elders in Native society diminished through years of assimilation. Hence, advanced age is no longer a guarantee of care and protection for aging Aboriginal women (C. Brown, personal communication, April 2002). Consequently, Aboriginal women are under-represented in decision-making structures, and their struggle for equality and political participation is not only with the Federal government, but also with a male-dominated Aboriginal establishment created by provisions and legislations contained in the Indian Act (Mason, 1996; Native Women's Association of Canada).

The Residential School System

The attempt to assimilate Aboriginal people through the policies of the Indian Act was further intensified with the imposition of the residential school system. By the end of the 1800s, the Canadian government was dissatisfied with the state of assimilation of Aboriginal people, as Native people continued to resist appropriation of their cultures (Dickason, 1992, 2000; Paul, 2000). Indian agents and church leaders saw that their attempts to "civilize" and Christianize their charges were not as effective as expected (RCAP, 1996). Pressure from churches and the Indian agents on the Federal government to do something about the "Indian problem," (RCAP, Vol. 1, Chap. 9 p. 1) resulted in the development of the residential school system.

By the late 19th century, the residential school system had become the instrument of radical resocialization of Indian children in an effort to indoctrinate them with the values, customs, language, and skills of the Europeans (RCAP, 1996). Thousands of Aboriginal children were removed from their homes and placed in boarding schools, away from all that was familiar to them (Knockwood, 2001; Timpson, 1995). Churches, in partnership with the Federal government, believed that the principals, teachers, and staff would provide a surrogate home in which morality, in addition to "quality" education, could be instilled in the children. According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, "Of all the steps taken to achieve that goal [assimilation], none was more obviously a creature of Canada's paternalism toward Aboriginal people" (Vol. 1, Chap. 10, p. 1).

In reviewing the documentation left from this era, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996) concluded that those plans failed miserably. Disease ran rampant in the schools: Overcrowding, buildings in poor repair, lack of care and cleanliness, poor sanitation facilities, and malnourishment contributed to the scourge of tuberculosis and other ills. In some schools, as many as 47% of the children died (RCAP). These poor living conditions were met with equally tragic care conditions: Neglect, severe punishment, physical, spiritual, sexual, and emotional abuse added to the tragic circumstances endured by many Aboriginal children (Knockwood, 2001; Macmillan, Young, Quigley, Chrisjohn, & Belleau, 1992; Maracle, 1993; Mason, 1996; Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993).

The legacy of the residential school system continues to influence the lives of Aboriginal peoples (Knockwood, 2001; Mason, 1996). Effectively, generations of Native

people grew up in an environment that denied them their identity as a people. Cultural estrangement from both their own and non-Native culture left them in a cultural void (Dickason, 1992; Duran & Duran, 1995; LaFromboise et al. 1990; Maracle, 1993; Reynolds, 2002). Moreover, thousands of Aboriginal people learned to relate to others, and to "parent" from a harsh, abusive, and punishment-based residential school model (Duran & Duran; Haig-Brown, 1998; Macmillan et al., 1992; Maracle). Consequently, they have entered intimate relationships with this as their primary model.

There are two factors that emerge directly from this history that likely increase the risk of domestic violence: low self-esteem and transgenerational violence. The links between various battering experiences and self-esteem have already been reported (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994). Further, the likelihood that a woman will leave an abusive relationship is affected by her self-esteem. Poulin and Flowers (1999) reported that the lower the self-esteem of a woman, the less likely she is to leave. Additionally, research has linked low self-esteem to tolerant attitudes toward wife abuse (Ali & Toner, 2001). With respect to the transgenerational transmission of violence, many researchers in the field of family violence have reported empirical evidence that suggests a strong link between abuse of a spouse and experiencing abuse as a child (e.g., Dutton, 1995; Straus, 1983). According to the RCAP (1996), the residential school experience may have contributed to poor self-esteem found among Aboriginal people and also to a pattern of family violence across generations.

In summary, the assimilation tactics legislated in the Indian Act had a devastating impact on Native cultures in Canada. Yet, in spite of the effects of a White system of patriarchal hierarchy that influenced their development as a people, Aboriginal society

has retained some of the fundamental aspects of its culture (Dickason, 1992, 2000; Duran & Duran, 1995; Paul, 2000). While these strong Native traditions protected against complete assimilation, the policies and practices of colonialism reshaped the political, social, and psychological landscape of Native society. All Aboriginal people have suffered, but Aboriginal women have suffered disproportionately from the double axis of gender and racial oppression. Women lost status in both the legal (i.e., through enfranchisement legislation) and social sense (Bear Nicholas, 1994; Bell, 1991; Monture, 2002; Native Women's Association of Canada, 1992; RCAP, 1996; Status of Women Canada: Round Table, 1993). The history of sexual discrimination in the Indian Act has led to a male-dominated Aboriginal establishment. This creates a situation in which women must struggle to have their concerns and voices heard, not only within the various levels of government, but also among their own people (Bear Nicholas; Bell; Native Women's Association of Canada). Consequently, this is the juncture where racial and gender oppressions meet, and where gendered violence is perpetrated in the context of systemic racism. The implications this has for how Aboriginal women respond to intimate violence will be examined subsequently; however, it is necessary first to outline the social conditions and the extent of violence in Aboriginal society.

Current Social Conditions of First Nations People

The demonstrated link between social factors and abuse (Dobash & Dobash 1990; Hoff, 1990; LaPrairie, 1994) justifies attention to the social, demographic, and economic conditions that influence how family violence manifests and is treated within Native Canadian society. In comparison to the average Canadian citizen, Aboriginal people face a much different socioeconomic reality (LaPrairie; Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000).

Social factors, such as poverty, unemployment, and low levels of education, are not only indicators of social status, but they are also indicators of the extent to which structural inequalities disproportionately affect First Nations and other marginalised groups (West, 2001).

Aboriginal people are among the most disadvantaged groups in Canada (Frank, 1992; Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 2000; Trainor & Mihorean, 2001). Compared with the non-Aboriginal population, Aboriginal peoples experience higher rates of unemployment, incarceration, poverty, and poor health, as well as lower levels of education and average incomes (Trainor & Mihorean). In addition, substandard housing and overcrowding is problematic for Native people, whether they live on- or off-reserve (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993; Frank; Mason, 1996; Monture, 2002). Specifically, the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women reported that 35% of Native people living off-reserve are in need of housing, and over 50% of people on reserves live in sub-standard housing conditions.

Poverty

The poverty rate for Native people is more than twice the national average (Statistics Canada, 2001a). Statistics reveal that more than 70% of Native families live below the poverty line (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2004). Forty-four percent of the Aboriginal population living off-reserve live in poverty; however, the situation is worse on reserve with almost half of these individuals earning less than $10,000 annually (National Anti-Poverty Organization, 1999). In addition, one Canadian study found that gender and age influenced the likelihood of experiencing poverty (Lee, 2000). Specifically, Lee reported that women, regardless of age, were more likely to live in

poverty than men. Furthermore, women over the age of 75 and under the age of 24 accounted for 36% and 33% of the urban poor, respectively. When ethnicity is factored in, Aboriginal women are among the poorest in Canada (Lee).

Employment

Poverty is inextricably linked to employment and education. Employment in some Aboriginal communities is as low as 10% (Braveheart-Jordan & DeBruyn, 1995; Family Violence Prevention Division, 1996). The highest rate of employment in Native communities is 40%, which is significantly lower than the national employment figure (51.6%) (Statistics Canada: 2003a). The employment-population ratio[1] for Aboriginal people living on reserves was 36.7%, compared to 39.5% for the total Aboriginal population, and 58.9% for the general Canadian population (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000). This is further reflected in the finding that nearly half of the Native population aged 15 years or older was not in the labour force in 1999 (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada). According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, discriminatory hiring practices and low paying unskilled jobs are partly responsible for the low levels of employment. Further, Aboriginal people are more likely to be underemployed than other Canadians, either because they are hired for work that is part-time, or because they obtain seasonal jobs, such as those found in the fishing and logging industries (RCAP). Consequently, Aboriginal people earn about one-third less in wages than non-Native people (RCAP). The number of Native families living at or below the *Low Income Cut-offs* (LICO) in 1995 was more than double that of the total Canadian population (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada). The relevance of the employment situation for Aboriginal peoples and intimate partner abuse is based on the findings that

[1] The employment-population ratio refers to the degree to which a labour pool is effectively utilized.

abuse, unemployment, and low family income are related for the general population (MacMillan & Gartner, 1999; O'Leary, Malone, & Tyree, 1994; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001; VAWS, 1993). These studies suggest that women are at greater risk of spousal violence when their partners are unemployed and when the family income is below $15,000 annually. Given the high unemployment figures for Aboriginal people, and the number of low-income families, more Aboriginal women are at risk for family violence than the non-Native women in Canada (Brownridge, 2003).

According to Duran and Duran (1995), Aboriginal women are more likely to be employed than their male counterparts. This gender discrepancy in employment may contribute to Aboriginal male violence. Duran and Duran postulated that Aboriginal men, having been deprived of their traditional warrior/hunter roles, may use violence in their intimate relationships as a means to increase their sense of personal power and self-worth. Brownridge (2003) found limited support for the hypothesis that Aboriginal women are at a greater risk for violence when their male partners are unemployed. He found that risk increased when the Aboriginal women were employed. Similar increases were found for employed non-Aboriginal women with unemployed partners (Brownridge, 2003; MacMillan & Gartner, 1999). In other words, employed women, regardless of ethnicity, with partners who are unemployed are at greater risk for violence. Although this finding is relevant for Aboriginal women, Duran and Duran may have overestimated the extent to which Aboriginal women are employed in relation to their male counterparts. An examination of the 2001 census data suggests that the unemployment rate for Native women is lower than it is for Native men (23.3% and 30.7%, respectively) and almost three times higher than for the non-Native Canadian

population (Statistics Canada, 2003a). In sum, Aboriginal men and women are unemployed and underemployed at higher rates than the average Canadian, with Aboriginal women less likely than Aboriginal men to participate in the labour force. Lack of employment for Native people may contribute to high rates of spousal abuse for this population.

Education

Educational attainment is associated with the economic standing of individuals and access (or potential access) to economic resources. According to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (1995), a grade 9 education is used as an indicator of functional literacy and numeracy. There is a gap between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations with respect to functional literacy rates. Illiteracy among Native adults (16 years and older) living in Manitoba and Saskatchewan was 60% compared to 45% and 39% among non-Aboriginal people in those provinces respectively (Statistics Canada, 2003d). The gap in literacy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people seems to be stable, according to the 2001 Canadian census. The discrepancy may be due to literacy differences between on- and off-reserve populations, and smaller growth or stabilized literacy rates for other Canadians. In terms of educational achievement, according to the 2001 Census of Canada, on-reserve Registered Indians are lower than the general Canadian population on all educational attainment indicators, including secondary school completion rates, postsecondary education admissions, and completion of university degrees (Health Canada, 2000).

Comparisons between the 1996 and 2001 census data, however, indicate improvement in the education profile among Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64. Between

1996 and 2001, the proportion of Native people with a high school diploma increased from 21% to 23%, and those with post-secondary qualifications increased from 33% to 38%. This remains significantly lower, however, than the overall educational achievement for Canadians (61% with qualifications beyond high school) (Statistics Canada, 2003b). This educational achievement gap between Native and non-Native people may narrow as increasing numbers of Aboriginal people are attending post-secondary institutions. At this time, however, the relatively poor standing of Aboriginal people in terms of level of education is a significant concern because of its status as one of the indicators of socioeconomic standing and the demonstrated relationship between socioeconomic factors and risk of family violence (Duffy & Momirov, 1997).

Age Distribution

The median age of the Canadian Aboriginal population was 24.7 years in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2003c). In the 2001 census, nearly 33% of all Native people were under the age of 14, which is a significantly higher proportion than the 19% found in the total Canadian population. When that is extended to the under 30 age category, the difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rates is similar (61.1% & 38.8% respectively) (Statistics Canada, 2003c). The birth rate is 79% greater among Aboriginal people than all other ethnic groups (LaFromboise et al., 1994), while the infant mortality rate is double that of the total Canadian population (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000). Life expectancy at birth for the Registered Indian population was estimated at 70.4 years for males and 75.5 years for females (Treasury Board of Canada, 2005). This reflects differences of 7.4 years and 5.2 years, respectively, from the Canadian population's life expectancies. Thus, non-Aboriginal people, on average, live 5 - 7 years

longer than their Aboriginal counterparts (Health Canada, 2000). Life expectancy has improved only marginally for Aboriginal people since the 1996 census.

One of the important aspects of the changing demographic profile of Native people concerns the risk for abuse. While the number of Native people is growing, the largest proportion of this population is under 30 years old. Research has identified youth as a risk factor for domestic violence (Johnson, 1996; see also Gelles, 1993; Kennedy & Dutton, 1989; and MacLeod, 1987). Moreover, there is a demonstrated relationship between low socioeconomic status and youth (Brownridge, 2003; LaPrairie, 1994; VAWS, 1993). Being young and financially unstable tends to co-occur, and both factors correlate with risk of abuse (LaPrairie; VAWS). With the fastest growing segment of Aboriginal people under the age of 24 years and their lower than average socioeconomic status, the likelihood of a decline in the rate of domestic violence among Aboriginal people is improbable, at least in the foreseeable future. One demographic factor that may serve to reduce the rate of spousal abuse is education: If the trend toward increased enrolment in post-secondary education of Native people continues, it may produce positive results, in terms of off-setting the overall rate of Aboriginal spousal abuse.

Single-Parent Households

A full one-third of First Nations people under the age of 15 live in single-parent households, which is approximately twice as high as the national figure (Statistics Canada, 2001b). The number of lone parent families headed by Aboriginal women in urban areas was 38% compared to 18% for other Canadian women (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000). In 2000, the First Nations birth rate was 23.4 births per 1,000 population - more than twice the Canadian rate (Health Canada, 2000). One in five First

Nations births involved teenaged mothers; by contrast, far fewer births occurred among Canadian teen women (5.6%) (Health Canada). The issue of teenage motherhood is of particular concern given the risk of violence for young women living in poverty (LaPrairie, 1994; VAWS, 1993).

Emigration from Reserves

Poverty, unemployment, and substandard housing are social realities for Aboriginal people living on- or off-reserves. However, migration to urban centres continues to increase. Thirty-six percent of the Indian population live in urban areas and 5% live in rural non-reserve areas (Statistics Canada, 2001a). If the past is predictive of the future, this trend is likely to continue. According to a report by the National Crime Prevention Centre (2000), emigration to urban centres is most often the result of social problems on the reserve. People leave to search for work, but also to escape poverty, lack of housing, over-crowding, violence, and other related social ills. However, this emigration strategy is not an effective solution for most people who leave reserves; violent assault remains disproportionately high in urban Aboriginal populations (National Crime Prevention Centre). Thus, moving to the city may not improve the economic well-being of Aboriginal families; Aboriginal families, whether on or off reserves, tend to encounter the same socioeconomic conditions (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1995). As emigration from the reserves continues, it becomes increasingly difficult for Aboriginal people to maintain a strong cultural identity, sense of unity, and community ties (Dickason, 2000; Monture, 2002; Paul, 2000). For abused Aboriginal women, leaving known sources of support may increase their vulnerability to violence or further compromise their options for escape (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999).

Substance Abuse

Prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse is high among Aboriginal people. They are more likely to be in drug and alcohol abuse programs than non-Aboriginal people (Ozer, 1986). Frank (1992) found that alcohol and drug abuse were significant problems in 93% and 81% of Aboriginal communities, respectively. Among a sample of urban Aboriginal women in the United States, 38% reported drinking alcohol or other substances in the previous six months (Walters & Simoni, 1999). Norton and Manson (1995) found that alcohol abuse was reported as a significant problem in Aboriginal families. In their domestic violence study, 88% of women reported getting drunk in the previous year, while 100% of their partners got drunk during the same period. In addition, the most severe instances of violence occurred when either the husband or both partners were drinking (i.e., husband only, 31%, wife only, 6%; husband and wife, 56%, neither partner, 6%). The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996) found that many First Nations communities listed the use and abuse of alcohol as a critical mental and physical health problem among their people. Several authors have suggested that the extensive abuse of alcohol and other substances among Aboriginal people may be a response to generations of racism, oppression, loss of cultural identity, and extreme poverty (Heath, 1983; LaFromboise et al., 1994; Walters & Simoni). Nonetheless, alcohol has been identified as a risk factor for spousal assault for both Native and non-Native populations (Brownridge, 2003; Johnson, 1996; LaPrairie, 1994). Consequently, the severity of the substance abuse problem for First Nations people further increases the risk of abuse for Aboriginal women.

The Extent of Violence among Aboriginal People

A comparison of incidence and prevalence of violence, including violence committed and experienced by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, reveals disproportionately high rates among First Nations people. Violence in Aboriginal communities is so pervasive that the RCAP (1996) report stated that there is a danger that violence will come to be seen as normal.

All forms of violence, including violent assault, sexual assault, homicide, and suicide, occur with greater frequency among Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal people (Correctional Service Canada, 1999; National Crime Prevention Centre 2000). The following statistics illustrate this discrepancy: 3% of the Canadian population is Indigenous, while 19% of the inmates in provincial penitentiaries and 17% of inmates in federal penitentiaries are Aboriginal (Inmate Health, 2003). Of those, 20% were convicted of sexual assault in comparison to 12% of non-Native offenders convicted of the same crime (National Crime Prevention Centre). Death as a result of violence is three times more common in Aboriginal communities (Griffiths & Verdun-Jones, 1994; Zimmerman, 1992). Rates of spousal homicide among Aboriginal people are 8 times higher for Native women and 18 times higher for Native men than their non-Native counterparts (Trainor & Mihorean, 2001).

Aboriginal people also are victims of violence at higher rates than non-Aboriginal people (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2000). In a study of violent crime in two Saskatchewan cities, 42% of the people victimized by violent crime were Aboriginal; yet, they constitute only 10% of the people in those cities (Quann & Trevethan, 2000). Thus, Native people are over represented as offenders and as victims. Victims of violence are

found in all segments of the Aboriginal population. The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (1996) reported that 40% of children in Northern First Nations communities experience violence at the hands of a family member. Some communities have also identified the abuse of Aboriginal seniors as a serious problem (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence).

The current social conditions outlined above represent an overview of some of the extensive problems that Aboriginal society faces. While much of the focus from government and Band Councils is directed toward these issues, intimate partner abuse among Native people remains largely closeted (Durst, 1991; Native Women's Association of Canada, 1992; Razack, 1994). The reluctance to disclose community problems, especially domestic violence, is slowly beginning to wane. This comes as a result of increasing pressure from Native and non-Native women's organizations to investigate and address the problem of gender-based violence in their communities (see Native Women's Association of Canada; LaRocque, 1994; Status of Women Canada: Round Table, 2000).

Violence against Aboriginal Women

There is some debate about the existence of violence against women in Aboriginal society prior to European influences (Hamby, 2000; LaRocque, 1994). According to some Aboriginal writers and historians, male violence against women prior to European contact was rare and severely sanctioned (Chester et al., 1994; Feinman, 1992). Others believe that domestic violence was problematic within some Nations before European influence (LaRocque; see also Lerner, 1986, for a discussion of gender relations throughout history). Due to the lack of written records, it is difficult to determine to what

extent domestic violence existed in Native society before and during the early period of contact with Europeans (Hamby; Paul, 2000). There is agreement, however, that rates of violence against women increased substantially after sustained contact with Europeans, especially within the last 150 years (Chester et al.; Dickason, 1992; Feinman, 1992; Hamby; LaRocque; National Clearinghouse on Family Violence 1996; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989a). Further, it is widely believed that cultural, social, and economic marginalization has contributed to the high levels of woman abuse in many First Nations communities today (Feinman; Hamby; Longclaws, Barkwell & Rosebush, 1994).

While the debate regarding the onset of woman abuse among Native people will continue, there is no dispute regarding the existence of abuse now. In the Aboriginal community, as in the rest of the Canadian population, victims of sexual assault are primarily female (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2000; Trainor & Mihorean, 2001). The rate of sexual assault of Aboriginal women is higher than in other segments of the Canadian population, and higher still among Inuit women (National Crime Prevention Centre). The results from an Ontario study of violence against Native women found that 8 out of 10 Aboriginal women had been subjected to family violence (Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989b). Sexual and physical abuse were the most prevalent forms of violence, with 57% reporting sexual abuse and 87% having sustained physical injury from abuse. Similar rates were reported by LaPrairie (1994); 72% of the 621 respondents in her survey (n = 372 males; n = 249 females) reported violence in childhood or adulthood and 49% reported more than one incident of spousal, child and/or sexual abuse.

According to the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (1996), 75-90% of women in some Canadian Northern Aboriginal communities are abused by their intimate partners. Two additional studies and a national survey of intimate partner violence reported similar rates of violence against Aboriginal women in the United States (Bohn, 1993; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). In 2004, Aboriginal women reported assault by a spouse or an ex-spouse at three times the rate of non-Aboriginal women (Statistics Canada, 2005). It is important to note that these studies and surveys examined only two forms of abuse: physical and sexual violence. LaPrairie stated that psychological or emotional violence was not defined as *abusive behaviour* by Aboriginal respondents in her study. This may account for the dearth of empirical data on other forms of abuse for Aboriginal women. Consequently, rates for other types of abuse experienced by Native women, such psychological and financial abuse, are unknown.

Not only does intimate partner violence occur more frequently among Aboriginal women, but the violence experienced is reported to be more severe than it is among their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Forty-eight percent of Native victims of partner violence experienced potentially life-threatening violence compared to 31% of non-Native victims (Statistics Canada, 2001a). Specifically, Native women were more likely to report "being beaten, choked, threatened with a gun or knife, or sexually assaulted" (Statistics Canada, p. 29). The General Social Survey (Statistics Canada, 2005) revealed that physical injury occurred in 43% of Aboriginal family violence victims as opposed to 31% of non-Aboriginals; 18% received medical treatment for the injuries incurred compared with 9%; and 54% feared for their lives because of the violence compared with 37% of non-Native victims. According to McGillivray and Comaskey (1999), Native women are beaten 30 to

40 times before they contact police. Dumont-Smith and Labelle (1991) stated that physical injury due to domestic violence is the leading cause of death among First Nations women.

In sum, it appears that the violence Aboriginal women experience at the hands of their partners or ex-partners is disproportionately higher than for other Canadian women. While these statistics provide important information about the prevalence and seriousness of this problem, there is little known about Aboriginal women's subjective experience of violence and how they cope with it in their everyday lives. Before turning to this question and examining obstacles that make it difficult for women to leave abusive partners, an overview of domestic violence theories is first presented.

Theories of Domestic Violence

As noted in the overview (p. 2), there are two broad frameworks that can be used to categorise the many theories that have been proposed to account for relationship violence: 1) abuse as the result of individual or familial, pathology, and 2) abuse as the result of systemic, gendered oppression. The first category of theories place the focus centrally on the dysfunctional unit, either the perpetrator, victim, or couple. Amongst these theories, for example, we find biological frameworks that focus on the psychopathology of the perpetrator (e.g., Lalumière, Harris, Quincy, & Rice 2005) and the victim (e.g., Dalton, 1999) to explain the cause of woman rape or battering. Lalumière et al. drew on the mechanism of natural selection to explain how this pathology keeps reappearing over generations in offenders. Dalton focused on hormonal imbalance in women premenstrually, which changes the behaviour of the victim and provokes the violence in the perpetrator. Other models in this first division integrate

sociological and psychological factors. For example, the work of Gelles and Straus (e.g., Gelles, 1976, 1993; Gelles & Straus, 1990) suggests that both women and men use aggression and violence to resolve conflicts equally. They do so because society supports this tactic to resolve conflicts. How individuals learn to use violent and aggressive tactics can then be explained using Social Learning theory (Bandura, 1973) or transgenerational theories of violence (Pagelow, 1984; Widom, 1989). Social Learning and transgenerational theories of violence also provide an explanation of how men and women are socialised into gender roles that enable male aggression and female passivity. The learned helplessness theory of woman battering (Walker, 1980) is also an example of an approach that integrates psychological and sociological factors. In this model, Walker taps into learning theory and gender-role socialisation to account for women's helplessness, and the development of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in response to violence. While these approaches to understanding relationship abuse are significant at the descriptive level, they only include a limited analysis of the social context, and no analysis of the role of political and historical factors.

The second category of theories focus on the systemic gender oppression and include more global feminist theories of woman abuse. These approaches to violence locate the causes of intimate partner violence in the gendered division of power under patriarchy and the structural inequalities of race and class that are upheld by capitalism. These approaches attempt to provide analyses of the social, political, and historical factors that support violence against women. With this lens, it is assumed that the gendered division of power in society is the root-cause of violence and that women battering is a means to reproduce the status quo (e.g., White and Kowalski, 1998). Just as

for the fist category of theories, this group also utilises social learning and transgenerational transmission theories to explain parts of the mechanism at work that lead to gendered violence. The main distinction is that feminist models in the second group are more global, multi level, and comprehensive.

While social learning theory has been proposed as a distinct theory of woman abuse, it is more accurately a theory about learning *applied* to the area of women abuse. Consequently, social learning theory has been utilised in models of abuse that fit into each of the frameworks suggested above. Even the transgenerational model of abuse (see p. 17) draws on learning theory as the mechanism by which individuals and families recreate abusive relationships. If we were to classify the transgenerational model on its own, because its focus is limited to individual, family, and social dynamics, it would fit into the first type of models (i.e., abuse as the result of family pathology). In contrast, White and Kowalski (1998) utilise social learning theory in their integrated model to account for the research linking the witnessing of violence in childhood to the likelihood of reproducing abusive relationships in adulthood. However, the authors contextualise these findings in an analysis of patriarchy's dependency on the recreation of gender discrimination. They explore multiple of levels and sites where conditions coalesce to create an environment that supports this violence. Thus, this approach would be subsumed under the systemic gender oppression framework.

A feminist conceptualisation of violence is adopted in this study. Looking at violence and its mechanisms in isolation of a multi-layered context are considered too narrow to gain an understanding on the experience of abused Aboriginal women. The framework adopted in the present research must allow for consideration of gender, race,

politics, and history to begin making sense of the experience of Aboriginal women abuse. Therefore, feminist analyses are privileged starting with an examination in the next section of the documentation of barriers to leaving violent relationships.

Barriers to Leaving Abusive Relationships

Women face several social and psychological obstacles when extricating themselves from abusive relationships. Cultural similarities in the experience of violence and the barriers to leaving abusive relationships have been acknowledged in the violence literature (e.g., Bell, 1991; Chester et al., 1994; Moon, 2000; Tang, 1997). Yet, empirical studies investigating the influence of marginalization on leaving violent relationships for Aboriginal women are lacking (Chester et al.). Native scholars have reasoned, however, that racism adds complexity to the barriers that already exist for women, thereby worsening the situation for Aboriginal victims of intimate partner abuse (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1998; Norton & Manson, 1997; Razack, 1994). Three categories of factors have been identified as contributing to Aboriginal women's entrapment in abusive relationships: social conditions, psychological consequences of abuse, and marginalization. In what follows, a discussion of the obstacles that make it difficult to leave abusive partners is organized using these three categories. Given the similarities among cultures, the factors experienced by abused women will be described first, followed by a specific focus on the extent to which these factors are extended and complicated for abused Aboriginal women.

Social Factors

Abused women encounter a number of social and socially imposed barriers that constrain their ability to seek help or to leave abusive partners. These barriers include

social attitudes and expectations that exert pressure on women to keep families together; victim blaming and negative stereotypes; lack of resources, such as occupational training, education, and finances; the normalization of violence through the intergenerational transmission of a model of abuse; geographic isolation, which influences the availability of services and information; and the extent to which confidentiality is available within communities. The origin and dynamics of many of these social factors can be explained by feminist theories. In this section, specific aspects of a feminist analysis of woman abuse will be used to provide a context for the findings presented.

Feminist theories suggest that patriarchy supports a system of gender interdependence whereby men have control of the economic, political, and social domain, and women have the responsibility of maintaining the family unit (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Lerner, 1986). In such a society, men's activity in the public sphere is tied directly to women's entrapment in the home as support staff in the roles of wives, mothers, and housekeepers (Frye, 1983; Lerner). The socialization of women into stereotypical female roles exerts pressure on them to keep the family together (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). The Canadian Violence Against Women Survey reported that 70% of women who left their abusive partners returned to them at least once with over half of them citing family unity related reasons (e.g., for the sake of the children and wanting to give their partners another chance) (Johnson, 1996). As in European Christian tradition, to stay in the relationship and make the best of it regardless of circumstances is considered virtuous in Native society (Bohn, 1998). Durst (1991) found that most participants from two Northern Native communities considered 'occasional beatings' an expected part of family life. Bohn reported that it is

characteristic of Aboriginal families to counsel abused women to endure the hardship. Thus, the pressure to keep the family together is significant for Aboriginal women (Bohn; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989a).

Stereotypical gender role socialization dovetails with research suggesting that the feminization of women rewards them for being caring, nurturing, and putting others' needs ahead of their own (Dobash & Dobash 1979; Gilligan, 1982; Hoff, 1990; Yllö; 1983). In the case of woman abuse, leaving might feel selfish because it contradicts socially expected and accepted behaviour for women. In addition, women are often blamed for the abuse they experience, and their history and behaviour become subject to public scrutiny (Kirkwood, 1993; Poulin, Gouliquer, Brazier, Hughes, Brazier, Arseneault et al., 2004). For Aboriginal women, gender role socialization and negative stereotypes about Indian women collude with the established tendency toward victim blaming in society generally. According to Portman and Herring (2001), historical and contemporary media, movies, and writings have cast Aboriginal women into two opposing stereotypes: Indian "prostitute-princess" or "dirty squaw." Both stereotypes foster woman-blaming either directly, as in the case of the prostitute-princess who is eroticised and sexualized for the pleasure or use of men or indirectly, as in the case of the dirty squaw, wherein the Indian woman is depicted as "a dismal drudge" (Medicine, 1988, p. 86), and thus unworthy of protection or justice. Given these stereotypes, it is unlikely that an abused Aboriginal woman will avoid being blamed for her situation; her own people may scrutinize her behaviour while negative stereotypes about Native women may augment the tendency toward victim blaming in general. These social attitudes and beliefs about women stemming from a patriarchal social structure interact with negative

stereotypes about Native women. Together, these factors may lead to their continued entrapment in abusive relationships by encouraging self-doubt and fear of reprisal.

Feminist theories assert that male control of resources not only ensures women's dependence on men, but legitimises violence against women to maintain women's subordination (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Kurz, 1989; Yllö, 1993). As a consequence of the power disparity between men and women, many women have few alternatives to abusive situations (Bowker, 1993; Duffy & Momirov, 1997). Research has consistently found that abused women tend to lack financial resources, adequate job training, education, housing possibilities, support services, and social support systems (Dobash & Dobash; Emery & Laumann-Billings, 1998; Hoff, 1990; Kurz; Pagelow, 1981, 1984; Strube & Barbour, 1983). Native women are among the poorest and most uneducated in Canada (RCAP, 1996). For Aboriginal women, the difficulties associated with limited resources may be exacerbated by language barriers, which may further compromise their ability to free themselves from abusive partners. In addition, male privilege may influence the community's response to violence, such that violent behaviour by abusers with familial or political power will be ignored, and the victims will have little or no community support.

Patriarchy depends on the recreation of gender discrimination in social institutions, such as the family unit (White & Kowalski, 1998). Research suggests a link between witnessing violence as children and the likelihood of reproducing an abusive dynamic in adult relationships. Several studies have found that women who witnessed their fathers abuse their mothers were twice as likely to be in abusive relationships than women who had not witnessed violence in their family of origin (Gelles, 1976; Pagelow,

1981; Rodgers, 1994). Rodgers suggested that girls who witnessed or experienced violence as children and now find themselves in abusive situations in adulthood perhaps see few options for changing their circumstances. It has been suggested that women who witness and/or experience violence in childhood may come to see abuse as a normal and expected component of adult love relationships (Bohn, 1998; Durst, 1991; Orava, 2000; Rodgers). In one study of Aboriginal women who participated in an urban domestic violence program in the United States, 56% reported knowledge of violent behaviour between their parents. In addition, 50% reported having experienced abuse from one or both parents in childhood (Norton & Manson, 1995). According to the report "Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile" (Trainor & Mihorean, 2001), Aboriginal children in Canada witness and/or experience violence more frequently than non-Aboriginal children. The normalization of violence in the context of Aboriginal families has been cited by numerous researchers as a contributing factor to the maintenance of high levels of spousal abuse, and to the difficulty identifying experiences of abuse as unacceptable.

The situation for abused Aboriginal women living on reserves in many ways parallels that of rural or farm-women. In both cases, women endure geographic isolation, inadequate social services, and issues arising from limited confidentiality in rural living. When these factors coalesce, leaving an abusive relationship can be especially difficult. Living in remote locations, as mentioned previously, limits access to social services for victims of abuse, including health and mental health care, policing and legal services, and shelters (Hornosty & Doherty, 2001; Moon, 2000; Norton & Manson, 1997). Consequently, rural women are isolated from important sources of help. Moreover,

limited local services influence the availability of information concerning abuse, options for dealing with abuse in relationships, and women's rights (Hornosty & Doherty). For example, information pamphlets displayed in medical clinics, law offices, mental health centres, and so on, are of little use to women who cannot access services that do not exist where they live.

The problem of access to services for rural and farm-women must be further contextualized for Native women living in geographic isolation. Their situation is also complicated by language, lack of transportation, and limited access to telephones. Many Native women in remote northern reserves either do not speak English or their proficiency in English or French prohibits them from obtaining information and accessing services for which there are no translators (Bohn, 1998). While victim services, such as shelters and crisis hotlines, provide free telephone service (i.e., 1-800 numbers), and some have qualified staff who speak Native languages, not all Aboriginal homes have personal telephone lines. In some cases, there may be only one phone for the whole community (Bohn; L. DuCharme, personal communication, August, 2000).

In addition, access to transportation is non-existent for many Aboriginal women (Native Women's Association of Canada, 1992). Vehicles are of little value in small communities with no infrastructure to support them (i.e., roads). Unlike rural or farm locations, many Aboriginal reserves are located in remote areas that can be accessed only by aeroplanes. In some of these northern reserves, Band Councils oversee air travel in and out of the communities (L. DuCharme, personal communication, August, 2000). The extent to which this type of administrative control compromises women's ability to leave the reserve is not known. It is reasonable to conclude, however, that for geographically

isolated Aboriginal women, escaping from a violent partner requires an organized, well-coordinated effort as well as assistance. However, coordinating these factors may be, pragmatically, impossible.

Issues of confidentiality are particularly relevant as obstacles for women in rural and farm communities (Hornosty & Doherty, 2001; Poulin et al., 2004), and for Aboriginal women (Moon, 2000; Norton & Manson, 1997). According to Hornosty and Doherty, and Moon, women who seek outside assistance from police, courts, shelters, social services, and medical clinics within or near their own communities fear that they will not receive confidential services. Like rural women, Aboriginal women are likely to know the constables who take their statements or the counsellors they see; often, they will be related by blood or marriage (Bohn, 1998; Moon). The issue of confidentiality within the context of abuse is salient in and of itself (see Poulin et al. for discussion on confidentiality within the transition house system), and the fear women experience surrounding the lack of privacy is understandable given the prevalence of victim blaming. Researchers have suggested that lack of privacy and fear of negative appraisal from others may inhibit women from obtaining the intervention and services needed to help them leave unhealthy relationships (Hornosty & Doherty). For Aboriginal women, confidentiality is further complicated by the administrative politics on reserves: chiefs and Band Councils have been criticized for perpetuating gender discrimination by excluding women from positions of power, and practising nepotism and favouritism (Huntley & Blaney, 1999). Given that part of the mandate of Band Councils is to determine how funding is spent, it is within their power to withhold payment for services

for a particular woman or to deny her access to services (C. Brown, personal communication, April, 2002). Data on the extent to which this occurs are not available.

Many of the social deterrents to leaving abusive situations occur concomitantly. For example, pressure to keep the family together, gender socialization, and negative stereotypes are part of a package of external conditions that operates in society in general; thus, they bear on all women, regardless of age, race, or sexual orientation. As these social barriers impinge on those that already exist for women (e.g., poverty, geographic isolation), the challenge to break away from abusive relationships is made even more difficult. For Aboriginal women, the social obstacles are infused with a racial component adding complexity to the process of leaving.

Psychological Factors

The aspect of control that characterizes abusive behaviour is not limited to social and external components. There is a psychological element to all violent relationships that can have far reaching effects on its victims and impose internal constraints on women's ability to leave (MacLeod, 1987; Orava, 2000; Walker, 1995). McCue (1995) suggested that when the male role in the family is viewed as including *control over* the household (i.e., head of the house), the perpetrator of intimate violence will use emotional means to maintain this control. If he perceives a threat to that control, which she suggests may be perceived as a threat to his very manhood, it can act as a trigger for other acts of abuse or violence. The consequences of emotional abuse on women have been reported by some as being even more severe than those resulting from physical violence (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990). In some of the quotes MacLeod (1987) cited, women would explain how one can heal from a physical injury

but psychological wounds are much more difficult to overcome. Walker's (1984) work with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of trauma experienced in the context of domestic violence is a good example of the long-term psychological effect of domestic abuse.

There is no question that abuse has detrimental effects on women's mental health (Hyde, 1996; Kirkwood, 1993; Orava, 2000). The "battered women's syndrome" (Walker, 1983) is a term that refers to a cluster of clinical symptoms that women develop as a consequence of abuse. This syndrome may impede a woman's ability to leave an abusive partner. The symptomatology involves depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and feelings of personal powerlessness (Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992; Frisch & MacKenzie, 1991; Pagelow, 1984; Rodgers, 1994). In addition, chronic fear, from threats of bodily harm or death, or harm to their loved ones, or even pets if they leave is an important factor that can trap women in harmful relationships (Hornosty & Doherty, 2001; Pagelow; Sinclair, 1985). A national survey in Canada found that 85% of women who reported being beaten by their intimate partners had experienced symptoms typical of the battered women's syndrome. Anger, fear, low self-esteem, and distrust of others were the most commonly reported consequences. Depression, anxiety; feelings of guilt and shame, and difficulty relating to men were also noted (Rodgers).

These findings are similar to the results from Norton and Manson's (1995) study of responses by Aboriginal women to violence against them. Norton and Manson's data, however, revealed that 100% of the Aboriginal women reported increased stress and depression since the beating began. Moreover, 31% reported suicidal thoughts in the previous year, 31% reported a generalized deterioration of physical and mental health,

and 38% increased their use of alcohol. The use of alcohol by men and women to numb the effects of poor living conditions has been well documented (Durst, 1991; West, 2001); however, it is likely that alcohol abuse by women, while serving as a coping strategy, may unintentionally contribute to their entrapment in abusive relationships by reducing their capacity to function. Battered women's syndrome or deterioration in overall mental health and functioning may compromise women's ability to leave abusive partners.

In sum, leaving an abusive partner is difficult for any woman, regardless of race, class, age, or ability. Social and psychological factors are knitted into a complex set of conditions that result in women's entrapment in abusive relationships. When institutional racism is part of women's reality, such as it is for Aboriginal women, it may be even more difficult to break free of violent partners. The impact of racism, however, is not limited to complicating the barriers that already exist for all women. Aboriginal women are further subject to a unique set of conditions that results from cultural marginalization (LaFromboise et al., 1994; LaRocque, 1994).

Marginalization Factors

The interplay of social and psychological factors that inhibit women from leaving abusive partners is further complicated for Aboriginal women by the intersection of sexism and institutionalized racism (Ellison, 2002; Kirkwood, 1993; LaFromboise et al., 1994; LaRocque, 1994). Internalized oppression refers to the development of personal and ethnic identity within an environment that is hostile to the culture to which one belongs (Cheshire, 2001). When the views of the dominant society function as the lens through which one's culture is seen, the negative messages and stereotypes can become

internalized by group members (Cheshire; United Nations, 2001). There is a parallel between the effects of internalized racial oppression and the impact of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse has been defined as "an ongoing process in which one individual systematically diminishes and destroys the inner self of another" (Loring, 1994, p. 1). In the context of racism, systematic degradation of another would be extended beyond an individual to include the entire group, yet the underlying mechanisms are the same; power and control are wielded by one over another for the purpose of destroying the inner self of the other. The negative effect of emotional abuse on the self-concept of abused women has been well documented (see Kirkwood, 1993). For women who face double oppression from living in a racist and sexist society, the impact on psychological health is even more devastating (LaRocque, 1994).

According to a report by the Native Women's Association of Canada (1992), violence is often considered a normal part of Aboriginal women's lives, and they come to believe that they cannot hope for or expect anything different. It could be argued that these perceptions are formed, in part, by self-understanding derived from society's depiction of Native people as worthless, lazy, and alcoholic. Some authors have suggested that internalized oppression is a primary causative agent of Aboriginal men's violence against their partners and the high rates of suicide and alcoholism among Native people (Duran & Duran, 1995; Hamby, 2000).

The reality of living as a minority means having limited access to and usability of institutions designed for and controlled by the dominant culture (Greene, 1994). With respect to abused Aboriginal women, this reality presents a set of obstacles that could be called institutional barriers. Several authors have listed barriers to leaving abusive

partners. Among them are named a pervasive mistrust of authority, and fear that they will not be believed (Hancock, 1996; McGillivray & Comaskey, 1998, 1999; Paul, 2000; Province of Nova Scotia, 2000). For example, the Ontario Native Women's Association (1989b) found that 54% of the women surveyed knew of situations in which Aboriginal women sustained physical injuries requiring medical treatment, but they did not seek treatment out of fear and shame.

Moreover, Aboriginal women report reluctance to discuss personal and sensitive information with people in authority, dissatisfaction with the lack of culturally appropriate services, and fear that they will lose their children if outside services are contacted (Feinman, 1992; Frank, 1992; Hancock; Hart, 1996; Native Women's Association of Canada, 1992; RCAP, 1996). The General Social Survey (Statistics Canada, 1999) reported that 54% of Aboriginal women (compared with 37% of non-Aboriginal women) had contact with the police as a result of partner violence. While this figure appears to contradict the view that Native women are reluctant to initiate contact with outside services, this higher rate may reflect the greater severity of the violence experienced, suggesting that Aboriginal women may use police intervention as a means to protect themselves in potentially life-threatening situations. Further, the majority of the respondents reported being dissatisfied with their treatment by police (Statistics Canada, 1999). Research also suggests that Aboriginal women may not be well served by the judicial system in cases of domestic violence (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1998; Seuffert, 1994).

Institutional barriers for Aboriginal women coalesce with community denial regarding the seriousness of domestic violence, both on and off reserves. Aboriginal

women are overcoming their reluctance to speak about the degree of violence present in their communities. However, there remains pressure from within communities to keep silent to protect the men and to prevent their own children from being taken by Children's Aid (Razack, 1994; RCAP, 1996). According to Razack, a sex-race dichotomy exists for many women of minority cultures. This dichotomy intentionally divides women's solidarities so that speaking out about within-group violence gets framed as a question of loyalty. In this way, a woman feels she must choose; will she be loyal to her ethnic group or to the White women's groups who are part of the system that has oppressed her? Bell (1991) referred to this dichotomy specifically as it pertains to Aboriginal women. She stated that exposing intra-racial violence can feel like betrayal, and that women are afraid that negative stereotypes will be reinforced by raising awareness of the extent of rape within their communities. This may result in abused women putting up with violence to support the struggle against racism (see Greene, 1994 for a discussion of the dynamics of the sex-race dichotomy for black women). The contradictions inherent in the Aboriginal Women's Roundtable report (Status of Women Canada, 2000) indicate the extent to which the sex-race dichotomy constrains the discussion of violence against Aboriginal women. On the one hand, women at the roundtable condemned the Aboriginal male leadership for supporting gender discrimination in the form of economic, political, and spiritual exclusion. On the other hand, they argued that family violence is not about gender inequality but racial inequality.

For abused Aboriginal women, the reluctance to garner assistance from outside services is further entangled with an underlying fear of retaliation from within their

communities. Band politics and Band Councils have the authority to banish individuals from reserves (McGillivray & Comaskey, 1998). As a result, they hold significant silencing power. Many of the briefs submitted from Canadian Native women's groups to the RCAP (1996) attest to pressure on women by the male leadership to keep their suffering silent. By employing the accusation of betrayal that stems from the sex-race dichotomy, male leaders continue to undermine women's concerns and the discourse of domestic violence is thus minimized. Moreover, the failure of the Aboriginal leadership to speak out against violence and to take action to dismantle structures permitting abusive behaviour is regarded by many Native women's groups as unconscionable (RCAP).

The mythology surrounding Aboriginal violence that exists outside of Native communities also plays into the sex-race dichotomy. Specifically, among the stereotypes of Native people is that they are inherently more violent than whites, and that savagery is cultural (Hamby, 2000; RCAP, 1996). The danger in believing that woman battering is a culture-specific phenomenon is twofold: first, that Aboriginal people, particularly women, will view their experience as normative and that any involvement in movements to end violence will be seen as a betrayal of their people and traditions; and second, that outsiders to Aboriginal culture will be paralysed into non-action for fear of further stripping Native people of traditional practices. For example, woman battering, as a cultural right, has been used in court cases in Australia to appeal for leniency for perpetrators (Bell, 1991; Lucashenko, 1996). Both of these dangers lead to the issue of violence against Aboriginal women being dismissed, ignored, hidden, or silenced. Marilyn Fontaine, in a brief written to the RCAP, stated:

Tradition is invoked by most politicians in defence of certain choices. Women

> must always ask, Whose tradition? Is 'tradition' beyond critique? How often is tradition cited to advance or deny our women's positions?...Some Aboriginal men put forward the proposition that a return to traditional government would remedy the abusive and inequitable conditions of women's lives. We have no reason to put our trust in a return to 'tradition', especially tradition defined, structured, and implemented by the same men who now routinely marginalize and victimize us for political activism...The Coalition is prepared to support the leadership, however, not at the expense of silencing the reality that women, children and men are being abused and killed. (Marilyn Fontaine, in RCAP, 1996, Vol. 3, Chap. 2, p. 69).

The silencing of women's reality is an omnipresent force for all women and it interacts with the social and psychological factors that keep women in abusive conditions (Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, 1993). For Aboriginal women, factors related to marginalization also pose obstacles to leaving abusive relationships. These factors, such as internalized oppression, institutional barriers, and the discourse around cultural loyalty, are further complicated by the structure of Native society. The accompanying branches of Aboriginal government (Band Councils at the local level and the Assembly of First Nations at the national level) represent additional sources of power that shape the lives of Aboriginal women. There is a paucity of research tying together these various factors that contribute to violence against Aboriginal women and that make it difficult for them to leave abusive partners, while keeping First Nations women's experience central and contextualized within a social, political, and historical framework.

Consequently, there is a lack of direction for policy and other more informal changes that could facilitate Aboriginal women's transition from abusive relationships.

Purpose of the Present Study

In the present study, First Nations women's experience of intimate partner abuse will be examined. This research will focus on how this abuse is embedded in and shaped by rules and practices of specific institutions that organise women's everyday lives. 1) Thus, the first goal is to document Aboriginal women's lived experiences of abuse. Their experiences with family violence, therefore, will function as the starting point for this investigation (Harrison & Laliberte, 1994). 2) The second goal is to uncover the multiple and invisible ways that Native society and the Federal government shape and constrain women's understanding of abuse. In other words, it seeks to elucidate ways in which women's daily activities are micro-managed by the rules and practices of these institutions. 3) Finally, the third goal is to identify instances of cognitive dissonance for women that result from a mismatch between institutional needs that lead to these rules and practices, and women's needs. More specifically, which schemata women evoke to make sense of these complications. In sum, the present study explores some of the connections among Aboriginal women's experiences of intimate partner abuse, the rules and practices in First Nations communities, and women's psychologies. To accomplish this goal, the Psycho-Social Ethnography of the Common Place methodology (PSEC) will be utilised (Gouliquer & Poulin, 2005). The next chapter describes this methodological approach and its epistemological and theoretical underpinnings.

CHAPTER 2: METHOD

Epistemology and Methodology

Feminists have criticized psychological theories about women and women's development, particularly those theories that are based on biological gender differences (e.g., psychoanalytic and sociobiological theories). Such theories tend to explain female development and behaviour on the basis of biological determinism, which serves to rationalize and perpetuate women's subordinate position in society (see Hyde, 1996, for a more complete review of feminist critiques). Explanations of woman abuse stemming from these theories tend to either pathologize women (e.g., women as masochistic, passive, or narcissistic), or give biological justification for male aggression toward women (for a recent example, see Lalumière, Harris, Quinsey, & Rice, 2005). There is scant evidence supporting these positions. Moreover, many of the hypotheses derived from them are difficult, if not impossible, to test empirically (Hyde); yet, they continue to influence social perceptions about the psychology of women and gender-based violence.

Consequently, it is important to have some standard on which to evaluate explanations of woman abuse. Given the limitations of empirical inquiry, Lerman proposed that the meta-assumptions of feminism be used as criteria on which to build good theories about women, or to evaluate existing theories of women. These meta-assumptions include (1) holding a woman-positive perspective, wherein women are viewed positively and directly rather than being residual artefacts of male-based theories; (2) acknowledging the diversity and complexity in women's lives by remaining close to the experience of women and, by extension, close to the data based on that experience; and (3) recognizing the importance of the social world, as it interacts with the internal

psychology and external conditions of women's lives. Given that Lerman's criteria are based on the meta-assumptions of feminism, they are concomitant with the assumptions of feminist standpoint epistemology (Harding, 1987).

Feminist standpoint epistemology is the framework used for this study. Using this epistemological perspective, this paper examined the social and political climate in which intimate partner violence occurs in the lives of Aboriginal women. The main assumptions of feminist standpoint epistemology are that (1) violence against women is a consequence of systemic social, economic, and political oppression; (2) human activity, which is the basis of all knowledge production, is differentially shaped, constrained, and situated by race, gender, and class (Harding, 1991, 2001; Smith, 1987; Sprague, 2001); (3) knowledge held by those on the margins of society will be less partial and less distorted because they have less investment in maintaining the status quo of the dominant society (Harding, 1991; Sprague); and (4) doing research from a feminist standpoint necessitates that the starting place of research activity be the everyday lives of women.

According to Smith (1987), however, social scientists must go beyond the narrative accounts of what participants tell researchers. They must examine the invisible lines of power that create and recreate the conditions that perpetuate existing power structures. These "relations of ruling" are the external forces that shape and constrain women's lives; yet, women have been largely relegated to invisible positions within the social order. Importantly, it is women's participation in social relations that enables institutions to function seemingly effortlessly (Harrison & Laliberte, 1994).

From this epistemological position and using Lerman's (1986) evaluative criteria as guiding principles, it is possible to make connections between the psychology of the

individual and the social and political context in which she is situated. The linking mechanisms are the schemata people draw on to give meaning to their experiences. The term "cognitive schemata" refers to the underlying network of associations that individuals develop as a means to make sense of the world (Bem, 1993). Individuals are predisposed to impose cognitive structure to their thoughts and to look for patterns (Bem; Holland, 1985; Markus, 1977). Both of those processes occur spontaneously and unconsciously, and both facilitate the absorption of cultural messages (Bem).

According to Khayatt (1990), individuals derive meaning about their personal experiences from the way in which their lives are externally organized. Schema theory proposes that the mechanism responsible for that meaning-making ability is schemata. Schemata work in this way: daily, individuals receive large amounts of information. To help them make sense of it, they construct webs of associations that permit the interpretation of subsequent sensory information (Bem, 1983; Rumelhart, 1980). In other words, information originating in the external world is processed, categorized, and interpreted according to the schemata people develop. Consequently, there is a reciprocal relationship between external and internal factors that shapes knowledge.

Given that the dominant society is concerned with representing the experiences of those with power (Smith, 1987), people in the margins are likely to encounter moments of conflict between the social organisation of their day-to-day lives and their personal experience. The moments of conflict arise because the ruling apparatus structures daily life to serve the needs of patriarchy (Smith). It follows that the way in which life is organized may not correspond with the everyday needs of individuals who have no power to influence the organizational structure (e.g., women, cultural minorities, sexual

minorities). The reason for the discordance, however, is difficult to identify because it is system-driven. Individuals are so well integrated into society that the system itself is invisible. Individuals respond to the conflict between the organizational edicts and their lived realities by drawing on socially or individually constructed schemata to make sense of the discrepancies (Gouliquer & Poulin, 2002; 2005).

Making the connection between the social organisation of daily life and individuals' psychology is facilitated by the use of the Psycho-Social Ethnography of the Commonplace (PSEC, Gouliquer & Poulin, 2002; 2005) as a methodology. PSEC requires that to make this connection, one must first identify the regular behaviours, actions, and routines of women as they go about their day-to-day lives. Second, making this connection requires the recognition and naming of the ways in which the institution (i.e., Native society, Federal government) structures that experience. Only then will it be possible to isolate *Organisational Moments* (*OM*), or instances when there is a lack of fit between the needs of the institution and the needs of the women who are affected by them. This procedure enables the identification and exploration of schemata used to make sense of the contradictions or complications that emerge from this mismatch of needs. It also facilitates the identification of strategies women employ to reconcile or resolve the complications that result from trying to live within the organisational confines of the institution, in this case, Native society and Federal government policy and procedure.

By examining the everyday lives of Native women and following the investigative sequence outlined above, this study seeks to elucidate the connections among intimate partner abuse, the structure of Native society, the impact of the Federal government's role in First Nations business, and the implications for individual women's

psychologies. In other words, how Native women manage their everyday realities will be elucidated through the ways they reconcile, resolve, or cope with the competing cognitive schemata that give meaning to their experiences of violence within their intimate relationships.

Participants

Interviews were conducted with 35 Aboriginal women with Indian status from New Brunswick (Mi'kmaq and Maleseet) and North Western Ontario (Ojibway and Cree), representing 14 Bands. Thirty-nine women were contacted for an interview, and 35 agreed to participate. The participants' mean age was 38 years and ranged from 18-66. The median for personal income was $22,000; and only slightly higher for family income ($22,880). More than 50% of the participants had annual incomes of less than $10,000. Thirty-five percent of the sample lived on a reserve at the time of the interview, and 90% of the remaining participants had resided on a reserve in the last 5 years. The majority (60%) had less than a grade 12 education, and 45% were employed full time. At the time of the interviews, 40% of the participants were married or living in a common-law heterosexual relationship.

Materials

Interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed. The interview guide (see Appendix A) served as an organising structure for the interviews. As required by the PSEC method, it contained three sections. Table 1 provides an overview of the sections of these sections. 1) The first section gathered demographic information. The purpose of this section was strictly to obtain information to describe the sample once the study was completed. 2) The second section followed an abridged-life interview format with

Table 1

Overview of Sections of Interview Guide

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3
Demographic Data	Abridged life interview format Chronicle intimate relationship experiences	Organisation of victim-related services in the women's communities

specific anchor-points (Gouliquer & Poulin, 2005). To begin, a brief outline of women's involvement in intimate relationships was obtained, noting which had been abusive. In so doing, more time could be reserved to discuss these particular relationships, given the focus of the study. Once these overviews were gathered, women were asked to talk about their experience starting with their first and followed by each subsequent intimate relationship through the answering of questions. In this study, therefore, the anchor-points were the beginning of each relationship the women chronicled. According to Poulin and Gouliquer (2004), anchor-points are chronological or regularly occurring events. At each anchor-point, the same, repeated series of question are asked. Repeating the same questions for each relationship permitted the identification of recurring patterns in the everyday experience of the women in intimate relationships. The chronology of the interview, the anchor-points, and the repeated series of questions organised the interview and facilitated recall and verification of the events participants recounted. The areas that were examined in the series of questions were chosen on the basis of themes typically discussed in the literature on women abuse. These have been documented to play an important role in abusive relationships and on the likelihood of leaving an abusive partner (e.g., jealousy of partner, financial means, family support; Poulin & Flower, 1999; Strube & Barbour, 1983). Particular attention was placed on factors considered to be relatively more important in Aboriginal, rural, or farming communities than among urban populations (e.g., the perception of the surrounding community, issues of transportation and confidentiality; Doherty & Hornosty, 2004; Haddon, Merritt-Gray, & Wuest, 2004; Poulin et al., 2004). 3). The third section focused on more specific questions of interest pertaining to the experience of abuse and the organisation of resources around intimate

abuse in the context of the community. Additional areas of inquiry were added to the third section as they emerged as recurring themes in the initial set of interviews (e.g., the role of Elders and education). These last questions were explored only if they had not already surfaced during the abridged-life interview section. PSEC interview strategy was designed to facilitate recall of the day to day experience of marginalised groups in a chronological manner (Poulin & Gouliquer, 2004). It prescribed the inclusion of questions to enhance the likelihood of informing the researcher about organisational practices while never drifting away from the participants'daily experience or her perception of these organisations.

In practice, the second section of the interview guide could not always be followed chronologically. The participants tended to organise their narrative around particular themes. For example, when women were asked about finances in one relationship, they provided spontaneous comparisons to their other relationships. Consequently, the order of coverage suggested by the guide was not always followed. When this occurred, the guide still provided a tool to ensure comprehensive coverage of the themes in the various relationships.

The interviews ranged in duration from 1-4 hours with the average duration being 3 hours. The entire interview was conducted in one session, with short breaks inserted as needed. Because of some participants' interest in the research outcome, contact with some participants have continued past the interview.

Procedure

The recruitment of Aboriginals to take part in a research project represents a challenge, especially for a White researcher. Due to previous experience with outside

researchers, many First Nations have felt exploited, betrayed, and misrepresented. Given this history, the development and demonstration of trustworthiness and credibility by a researcher is a necessary requirement to obtain the participation of Aboriginal people. In the present study, participant recruitment relied on the "snowball technique" (Poulin, 2001). Using this recruitment strategy was possible because the researcher resided in North Western Ontario for over 20 years. Her reputation was that of a supporter of First Nations people. She had worked in a Native women's shelter, and was part of a municipal anti-racism committee. Most recently, she had lived in New Brunswick, had established a network with Native people, and was an active member of the Atlantic Aboriginal Rights Coalition for three years.

It can be argued that recruitment using the snowball technique limits the diversity of a participant sample. This is so because each participant is somehow linked to the next by characteristics such as jobs, interests, hobbies, or relatives. However, using this technique also helps to build the researcher's credibility because participants tell others about their experience. In addition, the snowball technique is often utilised when the research topic is emotionally sensitive or recruitment is anticipated to be difficult.

As a result of my connections with Aboriginal people, it was possible to gather a core group of Native women to act as advocates for the study during the recruitment phase. Recruitment posters were also used (see Appendix B); however, these failed to produce any participants. After hearing about the study, participants would either contact me or let the contact person pass the message on to me. I contacted them by phone or in person. A brief explanation of the study was given at that first contact. If the woman

indicated interest in participating a mutually convenient time and place for the interview was determined.

The setting for the interviews was the investigator's home, the participant's home, the place where the interviewer was staying, or a room in a church. The researcher was sensitive to the possibility that participants may react negatively to meeting in a church, thus, this option was given last and with a statement indicating awareness that this may be unacceptable. Approximately 25% of the sample preferred the church location. The participants read and signed the consent form (see Appendix C) at the beginning of the interview, and received a debriefing letter (see Appendix D) upon its completion.

Consultants

Eleven First Nations women agreed to be consultants at various points throughout the study (see Appendix E for the consent form for consultants). Six were contacted through an Aboriginal Student's Association at a Canadian University, two were connected to the researcher's supervisor, and three were acquaintances of the researcher. Three of the 11 provided feedback on the content of the interview guide, advocated for the study, and suggested a process for contacting women and conducting the interviews. The remaining eight women provided feedback on the analysis and interpretation of the results. Reaction from the consultants to the results and interpretation was recorded and evaluated as a means of establishing reliability and validity of the findings.

Institutional Representatives

Twenty-one political leaders were solicited for their response to a summary of the findings (see Appendix F). The initial contact was through e-mail, followed by a letter of reminder, and a hard copy of the summary sent approximately one week later. Four non-

Native political leaders and 4 Native political leaders provided responses: Five of those were written, two were telephone interviews, and one was a face-to-face interview. Their commentary on the results provided additional information from an institutional perspective.

Analytical Design

To protect the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms are used in the presentation of the results. In addition, the content of the quotes has been modified to disguise specific details that could identify the speaker without altering the meaning or intent of the participant. Finally, quotes have been edited for readability.

Analytical Approach

Three levels of analysis were applied to the participants' data. NVivo (QSR, 1999-2000), a qualitative software program, was utilized to aid in this task. An overview of the levels of analysis is provided in Table 2. The first level, thematic coding, served as a method to organize and manage the text. The initial set of themes applied to the interviews was developed on the basis of the themes from the violence against women literature. This process was similar to the process used to develop the interview guide (p. 53). Additional themes also emerged from the data and became part of the code set. When themes recurred within and across interviews, special attention was given to those themes in the next stage of analysis.

As the Psycho-Social Ethnography of the Commonplace (PSEC) prescribes, the second level of analysis involved uncovering the social organizations that give meaning to women's everyday experiences. Specifically, this process consists of identifying *Organisational Moments* (OMs) in the interview transcripts. As defined previously, these

Table 2

Overview of Levels of Analysis

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Thematic Coding Purpose: Facilitates familiarity with the data and organises the text into manageable blocks	Identify Organisational Moments Instances or events in the everyday life of a woman that have meaning for her because of the meaning these moments have for the organisation.	Part 1: Schematic Analysis Part 2: Coping Strategies

represent instances or events in the everyday life of a woman that have meaning for her because of the significance these moments have for the larger organisation (Gouliquer & Poulin, 2002; 2005). In this case, the larger organisations are Native governmental structure and the Federal government.

The OMs identified in the second level of analysis also represent a point of intersection between social ideologies and individual psychologies (Khayatt, 1992; Poulin, 2001). Specifically, OMs make women's lives difficult because they have not evolved in response to women's needs. Therefore, the third level of analysis involved the examination of schemata, or the underlying network of cognitive associations, which are evoked when there is a lack of fit between organisational ideology and personal experiences. OMs often give rise to competing schemata, one based on social ideology and another based on experience. By examining the specific characteristics of each schema, the nature of the discordance between them was documented to provide understanding of the strategies women employ to achieve reconciliation or resolution.

This sequence of analyses yielded multilayered results meeting Lerman's (1986) criteria for a "good" theory to understand women (i.e., women as a positive construct, women as central to the theory, sensitivity to the diversity of women, awareness of social forces, theory as an explanation that remains close to the data, theory as testable, and theory as an account of the interplay between the internal and external world). Throughout the research process, two methods were utilized to test the integrity of the emerging analysis: (1) theoretical sampling (Glaser & Straus, 1967), which is the intentional selection of cases that may extend, enrich, or challenge the developing interpretation; and (2) cohort consultation (Brazier, 2000), which involves dialogue with

and critique from contemporaries of the participants. In this way, the credibility of the interpretation was strengthened.

As discussed previously, the reaction from the Institutional Representatives who responded to the request for comment were used to provide contextual information and enhance the analysis and the interpretation of the results.

Trustworthiness of the Results

Several steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the observations (i.e., reliability) and the trustworthiness of the interpretation (i.e., validity) of the data and analysis. This section addresses each of these aspects of trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness of Observations

The trustworthiness of the observations or *procedural trustworthiness* concerns the reliability of the data (Stiles, 1993). The emerging canon of good practice suggests that the investigator's personal orientation be made explicit, that there be intensive engagement with the data, that the analytic process be one of iterative cycling between observations and interpretation to ensure that the interpretations are solidly grounded in the observations (Stiles). This study addressed all of these considerations.

First, the investigator's personal orientations (biases) are evidenced throughout the introduction, and particularly in the section on methodology. It is clear from this reading that the researcher was influenced by feminist ideology, and adhered to a perspective that values the knowledge inherent in the experience of marginalised individuals. Thus, the investigator's orientation to the topic of study and to the participants was made explicit. In addition, the investigator engaged in the practice of reflexivity defined by Mead (1934) as "the turning back of the experience of the

individual upon [him- or herself]" (p. 134). The practice of being reflexive in this study involved taking time following each interview to either write or audio record the researcher's immediate reactions to the interviews. It served as a means to process the emotions evoked in the interviews, and to record ideas or insights that emerged. This information was typically used to inform subsequent interviews with respect to areas or ideas to probe.

Second, intensive engagement with the material was achieved through the process of transcribing the data and the reading and re-reading of the resultant transcriptions. This immersion in the data was further supplemented during the phase of analysis, when themes, *OMs*, schemata, and coping strategies were the specific foci of subsequent readings. This back and forth process (iterative cycling) between the material and the interpretation that is involved in qualitative data analysis constitutes the third consideration. Consequently, grounding the interpretation in the observations is achieved through immersion in the material and the cycling between theory and data.

Trustworthiness of Interpretations

The trustworthiness of the interpretations of the current study was evaluated using Stiles (1993) criteria. Stiles recommends that the assessment of interpretations occur on the basis of two factors: locus of impact and type of impact. Locus of impact involves determining whether the impact is on the reader, the participant, and/or the investigator/theory. The type of impact refers to determining whether the impact is at the level of fit or agreement with preconceptions, or has stimulated a change or growth in understanding.

Locus of impact. The impact of the interpretations on the readers will be assessed directly by the consumers of this study. The reader will determine for her/himself if the content is coherent, well presented, and tight. However, given that the researcher is not First Nations, cohort consultation (Brazier, 2000) was employed as a means to test the validity of the findings. A participant cohort of seven Aboriginal women from the Ojibwa, Cree, Metis, Mi'Kmaq, and Maleseet Nations agreed to read and react to the findings and analysis. Because the consultants share similar cultures with the 35 participants, they served as an appropriate group to evaluate the credibility of the findings. Thus, the consultants were selected on the basis of their tribal affiliation and provided valuable feedback. All consultants indicated that the presentation and interpretation of the data resonated with their experience of being a Native woman. For example, one consultant stated "It was like reading my life story." [Consultant #1]. Another stated, "You've hit the nail on the head." [Consultant #2]. Statements such as these increase the interpretations' credibility, indicating that the criterion of agreement has been met with both readers and participants.

Type of impact. Another means of establishing the trustworthiness of interpretations is by evaluating readers' or participants' reactions. Specifically, Stiles (1993) refers to testimonial validity as a measure of agreement, and catalytic validity as an indicator of change or growth. To assess testimonial and catalytic validity, the consultants' reactions were recorded and evaluated according to their content.

Testimonial validity, as a straightforward check on the accuracy of interpretation, was achieved to a degree on the basis of the consultants' reactions. After reading the analysis, all of the consultants shared their own experiences to some extent. These

spontaneous narratives, unsolicited by the investigator, mirrored the themes, schemata, and coping strategies that the interpretation presented. It is unlikely that their sharing of personal information was inspired by a desire to please the researcher. As one of the consultants stated:

I have to be honest and say that I was all set to be highly critical of your work – to rip it apart! But as I read, I knew that you knew. [Consultant #1]

The Institutional Representatives who were Native also included personal information regarding their experiences within their official responses. Again, it was spontaneous and unsolicited sharing in reaction to the results. For these individuals (three women, one man), it is unlikely that this was motivated by social propriety. Rather, it was a response intended to verify the accuracy of the interpretations, not to appease the investigator. The endorsement of the findings by the consultants and the Native Institutional Representatives, measured by the spontaneous disclosure of personal experience, is a reaction that speaks to the validity of the interpretations.

Catalytic validity is defined as "The degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants" (Stiles, 1993, p. 611). This empowerment criterion was evident to some extent by the reactions of the women to participating in this research, both immediately and in the weeks following the interviews. One woman stated:

Going through my life like that [i.e., in a sequenced manner] *really made me see the patterns. I just keep repeating the same things over and over again.* [Leah]

It appears that Leah gained greater self-insight as a result of the interview process. Another participant stated:

This [the interview] *was like therapy for me. I've never talked about some of this stuff with anyone. It is a relief to have said it out loud, maybe now I can move ahead.* [Natalie]

In addition to their immediate reactions, some women shared their experience of participating in the interview with other women, and encouraged women friends to also participate. Whether or not the research process has led to behavioural change is unknown. What is clear from the excerpts above is that there was some movement in cognition and self-awareness, and a sense of catharsis. We know from Cognitive Behaviour Therapy that intervening at the cognitive level often leads to behavioural change (Beck, 1987).

One of the Institutional Representatives requested a copy of the final version of this thesis. She indicated that it was for the purpose of informing her work on finding solutions to the issue of violence against Native women. Thus, catalytic validity will continue to be evaluated as this research is disseminated.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Five OMs were identified in the data:

1. The Institutional Response to Violence against First Nations Women
2. Elder Support
3. Addictions
4. Transparency in the Distribution of Band Services and Resources
5. Education for Native People.

The format for reporting is as follows: First, the OM is described. This description is then followed by an examination of how Bands and the Federal government benefit from the OM and how it complicates the lives of women. Next, the schemata women used to reconcile or make sense of the OM are explicated, followed by an examination of the strategies women employed to cope with the complications that result for them. This is followed by a section summarising the responses from Institutional Representatives. An overview of the results can be found in Figure 1.

Organisational Moment #1: The Institutional Response to Violence against First Nations Women

Definition

The *Institutional Response to Violence against First Nations Women* is an OM because it illustrates how the absence of initiatives to redress this issue on the part of Band Councils has significant implications for women's everyday lives. Specifically, when First Nations women experience intimate partner abuse they are faced with decisions about how to respond. From a practical perspective, Aboriginal women's

ORGANISATIONAL MOMENT	SCHEMATA	SUB-SCHEMATA	COPING STRATEGY
1. Institutional Response To Violence Against First Nations Women	*Individual Responsibility *Self-Serving Leadership *Lost Traditions		*Schematic cognitive coping *Seeking protection from friends & family
2. Elder Support	*Indian *Elder	*Elders Are Victims *Good Elders/Bad Elders	*schematic cognitive coping *caution in their selection of the Elder *rejecting Elder advice *Ignoring the potential for Elder advice
3. Addictions (and its intersection with abuse)	*I Can't Expect Anything Different *Socialising *No Choice *It's the Drinking, It's the Drugs *Indians are Drunks		*attempting to change their partners' behaviour *leaving the relationship *cognitive schematic revising to support action *substance use *avoid intimate relationships
4. Transparency in the Distribution of Band Resources and Services	*Entitlement to an Equal Share *Servanthood Mentality Political Corruption Nepotism Rules		*schematic cognitive coping *forgo band support and seek resources on their own
5. Education for Native People	*Traditional Gender Roles It's different now *Education Equals Success Education Threatens the Status Quo		*schematic cognitive coping *support group

Figure 1. Overview of the results.

choices for seeking assistance are constrained because few reserves have services for victims of abuse available to women. Several women interviewed in the present study were not aware of any community-based services specific to woman abuse that they could access in a time of crisis.

There's nothing here like that [victim services]. *When he comes home in the middle of the night and it* [the abuse] *starts up again, I just get the kids and get the hell out...I go to my mother's* [Kara]

Our reserve didn't have anything – not even counselling – you had to go to [name of a town approximately 100 km away]. [Katie]

The Aboriginal leadership at the national and local levels has been criticized for being complacent about issues facing First Nations women, especially regarding violence against women in their communities (Status of Women Canada, Roundtable Report, 2000). There is a wide-spread perception that woman abuse among Native women is being ignored, hidden, and dismissed (LaRocque, 1994). This is in spite of statistics documenting high rates of abuse of First Nations women both on and off reserves (Statistics Canada, 2005). The following quotes from Marlene and Kristin's interviews illustrate the status of violence against women within some Native hierarchies:

One of the things we did is we asked for funding to address different issues. Family violence was one of those. We held a regional conference and only one chief showed up!

He was the only one [even though] *all the chiefs from the region were invited. They could have gotten their way paid because we had the money. But they didn't come...they didn't even acknowledge that we had that gathering,* [which] *to me says something about their commitment to the issue of abuse.* [Marlene]

We have one of the leaders today who has sexually abused his wife and his own daughter. He was incarcerated for six to eight months, and now he is back into his old job, doing the same thing - nobody talks about it. You just close the blinds. [Kristin]

Marlene's and Kristin's quotes raise some of the difficulties that prevent the leadership from acknowledging violence against Aboriginal women as a serious issue. Marlene's experience indicates that even when funding is available to begin addressing woman abuse in First Nations communities, local leaders appear unwilling to commit their time. Kristin shares her experience of the silencing of abuse that sometimes occurs within Native communities.

The Institutional Response to Violence against First Nations Women: Benefits to First Nations Leadership

There are specific advantages to Band Councils that ignore the plight of abused women in their communities. As in any organisation, financial considerations are an integral part of program planning. On reserves, Band Councils are responsible for making these difficult budget decisions. Financing a safe-house and maintaining its operation would mean redirecting significant funds that are already spread too thinly. Ursala's quote speaks to this issue.

There are so many issues that require money and services and programs. Look at all the stuff happening on reserves, suicide, poverty, the job situation...abuse is just one. [Ursala]

It could be argued that such a 'solution' (e.g., a safe house) may be neither the best use of funds, nor a practical option for some northern reserves with small populations that also face housing and land shortages. Further, First Nations communities may reject implementing a system, such as the shelter system, which was developed by White women and then co-opted by the state (Walker, 1990). This type of system may not adequately meet the needs of First Nations women whose experiences, values, and traditional forms of sanctioning differ from the majority culture (for a discussion of the importance of program development based on Aboriginal worldviews and values, see Duran & Duran, 1995). However, the discussion of financial cost diverts attention from the more foundational and threatening issues that underlie the leadership's avoidance of violence against Native women. Marcie raises the issue of cost as a diversion in the following quote.

It's all about money, right? No it's not. That's just what they want us to believe. [Marcie]

For Band Councils to take seriously the issue of woman abuse in their communities, violence against women would first need to be recognised as a problem. More specifically, as feminist theories suggest, woman abuse is a gendered problem, with power and control at its root (Saunders, 1986). Most commonly, however, it is conceptualized as a consequence of substance abuse, poverty, and suicide that will

resolve on its own once the socioeconomic status of Aboriginal people is improved. Adhering to and promoting this view allows Band Councils to eclipse the issue and continue to protect themselves from having their abusive behaviours exposed. The Aboriginal leadership in Canada is predominantly male (Status of Women Canada: Roundtable report, 2000). For example, among the 14 Bands represented in this study, there were no women in leadership positions at the time of the interviews. Arguably, more Native women in leadership roles might bring women's issues to the forefront of Aboriginal Band politics.

The nearly all-male leadership, as a collective and as a group of individual males in positions of power, profits by ignoring the issue of violence against Native women. This is true in spite of the fact that not all males are violent. Some individual men in power positions may be well intentioned, and some may be unaware of the systemic benefits of the silence. However, maintaining the status quo benefits the leadership and all men because it supports the power differential between men and women. Moreover, First Nations men, whether or not they hold leadership positions, do not have to take responsibility for their abusive behaviours toward women. The following quotation from Umma illustrates one of the processes used to guard against challenges to the status quo.

As soon as there was a [Band] *councillor in there that actually spoke against this stuff* [the problem of woman abuse and substance abuse], *who actually had some vision, he got booted out. Because he was doing his job, he's doing what he's supposed to do. Basically, you only get elected to council if you keep your mouth shut.* [Umma]

Acknowledging the active censorship of persons seeking change in the way woman abuse is handled in communities runs counter to the discourse about the high esteem afforded to women in many traditional Aboriginal societies (Duran & Duran, 1995; Hamby, 2000). It also clashes with the publicly stated desire of Native leaders to reclaim women's status and other aspects of Native traditions that have been eroded by colonisation. The following quotation speaks to Delma's understanding of the traditional role of women and children:

The women and children used to be the centre of our communities – women were the life-blood and we were respected. Not anymore. That's one thing I can't understand why they [the Aboriginal leadership] *don't care about their women and children anymore; that should be their first priority.* [Delma]

Drawing on the rhetoric of alcoholism as the leading cause of violence against women in Native communities, which will be further explored on p. 89, allows the leadership to escape facing the reality that they have used the same tools as their colonizers (i.e., patriarchal ideology and practices) in the subordination of Native women, further stripping them of power and dignity for self-gain.

The Institutional Response to Violence against First Nations Women: Benefits to Federal Government and Tax Payers

The lack of action by Band Councils to provide support services or victim-related initiatives for Native women also serves the Federal government and Canadian tax payers. If First Nations leaders made the problem of violence against women a priority,

the Federal government would be pressured to expend additional funds to address the issue. Given the extent of violence among Aboriginal people, the funding required would run into the millions and the costs would be passed on to the Canadian tax payers. The Federal government and majority culture is thus protected from having to take responsibility as long as the Native leadership remains unconcerned or inactive, and silent with respect to gendered violence.

In addition to monetary savings, the majority culture benefits from the complacency of the Aboriginal leadership. Political non-action on this issue reinforces negative stereotypes and myths about Aboriginal peoples and cultures. White male power and privilege is not challenged and First Nations women continue to experience the oppression of sexism and racism. Ursala comments on this:

As long as what women live with is hidden, then no one has to do anything about it. Just think of what it would cost to really make a difference...who wants to go there? No wonder Aboriginal women get left hidden in the closet! [Ursala]

Complications for Women

The introductory chapter identified practical complications for women looking to access victim services when none were available in their home communities (e.g., transportation to another community, access to telephones, availability of Native speaking counsellors). These complications, however, did not surface in the interviews. Rather the analysis revealed that women's lives were complicated by the meta-messages inherent in keeping the issue of woman abuse veiled in an unofficial code of silence.

Women try to make sense of their abuse experiences within a context that works to maintain its invisibility. Thus, not only are victims dealing with the very real consequences of physical, emotional, sexual, and financial violence against them, but they are forced to do so within a context that renders their plight invisible. The framework and language used to understand violence against women support the hegemony of the patriarchal colonisers.

First Nations women bear a triple burden. First, they have to find words for the violence they experience in a culture that has normalised its occurrence. If they come to understand that violence is unacceptable and that something should be done to stop it, they encounter the societal inertia that is common and very useful to the abusers. Second, by maintaining silence and simply doing nothing, the abusers, and the systems that support them, need little energy to maintain the status quo (Joseph, 1997). In comparison, First Nation women need inordinate amounts of energy to make the violence visible. Finally, they also encounter active resistance by Band Councils to any initiative to remedy the situation. All of these factors combine and are activated when woman face the *Institutional Response to Violence against First Nations Women.* The primary complication for women, therefore, is the social and hegemonic norms that preserve the status quo. However, this complication is experienced also at the psychological level because the social ideologies are internalised and experienced as personal.

Schematic Analysis

First Nations women must determine a course of action to take when dealing with their victimisation. This decision-making takes place within a context where abuse is common (e.g., 8 out of 10 Native women experienced abuse), but where it receives little

or no attention from the community leaders. The data revealed that women relied on three schemata to make sense of the absence of Band initiatives related to victim services. These schemata are *Individual Responsibility, Self-serving Leadership,* and *Lost Traditions.*

The schema *Individual Responsibility* refers to the cognitive interpretation of this OM based on the belief that women are responsible for dealing with abuse in their lives. Given that, in general, Western society holds an individualistic value system that casts responsibility for social problems on the individual or family unit, and that holds women responsible for its well-being (Dobash & Dobash, 1990), it is not surprising that this schema was evoked. As will be illustrated below, this schema employs no analysis of power, gender, or political responsibility for violence against Native women.

The *Individual Responsibility* schema was utilised by several women; however, there were distinctions among the ways in which it seemed to operate. For some, drawing on the schema that women are responsible to find their own support or assistance encompassed victim-blaming. Ellen's words exemplify this perspective:

I think a woman has her own responsibility to do that [find support] *because if she really wanted out of it, she'd get out of it.* [Ellen]

This socially available schema functions to direct attention and responsibility away from the social and political ideologies that foster violence against women. It blames women for the abuse that they suffer. As identified above, women who used this schema did not consider the lack of services in their analysis of the problem. Rather, the

schema substantiates the position of non-action on the part of the Chief and Band Council.

While adopting this schema supports both the Band Councils' and the Federal government's complacency regarding violence against women, it also appears to serve a protective function. Specifically, placing responsibility on the abused woman to help herself diverts women's attention away from the socio-cultural factors that silence abuse. It may also serve as a psychological protection against feeling outraged and helpless in the face of a system, a leadership, and a community that ignores the reality of so many women's lives.

Ironically, there is a positive aspect to using this schema, but only for women who successfully extricate themselves from abusive relationships. It allows them to feel a sense of pride for having accomplished this feat on their own. Ellen expresses this as she finishes the above quote by saying:

I didn't have anyone but myself to rely on and I did it! [left her abuser]. [Ellen]

Using this schema can promote a positive self-view and result in empowerment, which builds greater psychological resources upon which women can draw when needed. Delma's quote illustrates how this sequence operated for her:

I'd gotten out of one [abusive relationship] *before and it takes a strong person to do that because it's not easy. And when <u>this</u> guy started that shit – forget it. I knew I didn't have to put up with that. So I left him too.* [Delma]

This quotation demonstrates how important it is to be able to draw on an internalised view of self as independent, strong, and possessing the courage it takes to leave abusive men. However, the use of this schema also supports the hegemony of individualism. Thus, it continues to make the individual responsible to put an end to abusive situations.

The schema of *Individual Responsibility* also had an element of self-care. The analysis of this aspect appeared to function as a means to secure a sense of self-preservation, as illustrated in Naomi's thinking:

What I've learned in my life is that I have to take care of me. If I don't take care of me, there's nobody going to take care of me [Naomi]

For Naomi, and the other women for whom this schema was evoked, accepting ultimate responsibility for their own safety was paramount to survival. This was linked to women's distrust of the system and any available services. Wanda speaks to this:

I didn't really know what kind of services were there or if there were any. Besides, I wouldn't have used them... not trusting the system, and for a good reason, I didn't even ask. I feel that they'd just judge me, and what would they say to me anyway? 'Well we're going to put you in a mental hospital'. I was afraid that's what they'd do to me, because they would think that I was nuts. [Wanda]

It is clear that the fear of being judged remains a deterrent to abused women who need support and resources.

The use of the *Individual Responsibility* schema provides evidence of the extent to which neo-conservative ideology has permeated and usurped traditional Aboriginal world views and values. As reported in the introductory chapter, pre-colonial Native societies featured a strong relationship ideology, where community and unity were valued over individualism and autonomy. This commitment to community was common and likely essential for survival among Native peoples (see page 9 of chapter one for a more detailed description of traditional Aboriginal worldviews). Not only are First Nations women challenged by pervasive violence in their lives, they have also internalised the ideologies transmitted through the process of colonisation to explain their current plight.

Women also tapped into the schema of S*elf-Serving Leadership*. This schema involves a political analysis of this OM to understand the leadership's complacency concerning violence against women. Many women adopted this schema to make sense of the silence that surrounds the issue and the resultant lack of community services for victims.

The leaders shouldn't be shoving it into a corner and denying that it happens. ...it may protect them in the short term, but it's short-sighted [Kateri]

They're [Band Council members] *doing it* [abusing female partners] *too. It's all kept behind the doors, but they're no different, so they need to hide it – it means that they get away with it and get to keep their jobs. As if those guys would ever be kicked off council!* [Marcy]

Employing this schema allows women to cognitively reconcile opposing realities: their victimisation and the leadership's lack of initiative to redress the problem of woman abuse in their communities. Their understanding that the leadership benefits in self-serving ways provides a resolution for the contradiction.

Interestingly, women who employed this schema supplemented their understanding by evoking parallel schemata to account for the problem of violence against First Nations women. Specifically, women drew on the *Lost Traditions* schema. This schema includes ideas about gender equality in leadership and traditional teachings about the sacred roles of women and men.

The problem is that we've lost our traditions. We need to return to Native spirituality - to our traditions. Woman abuse is not part of our peoples' history [Jean].

I am the doorway to this life and that's why woman's role is so sacred. So we need to believe that. We need to live that. That is our sacred responsibility because that's our gift. That to me is so powerful. Once we start to...reclaim and accept responsibility for the work that we've been given as women and men and hold those roles sacred then our communities will begin healing. ...Each community needs to return to the old ways when women had power alongside the men. [Marlene]

It is the woman that should have all the power; if women were in those positions there would be a forum that allows women to speak – a place and process where she can feel protected. That is the old way. [Kateri]

As these quotes illustrate, the *Institutional Response to Violence against First Nations Women* is further resolved by drawing on the *Lost Traditions* schema to provide women with a tenable rationale for explaining why the male leadership is not effective in dealing with this issue. The *Lost Traditions* schema holds that Native people have strayed from traditional teachings and First Nations women lost power in that process. Combining these schemata is a highly effective means of dealing with the sex-race dichotomy that was explained in the introductory chapter. Specifically, utilising the *Self-Serving Leadership* schema allows women to name the reasons for the leadership's complacency, which may be experienced or viewed as a betrayal of their people. However, by subsequently drawing on the *Lost Traditions* schema, women are relieved of the distress that may be caused by seeing themselves as disloyal to their people. The *Lost Traditions* schema names the 'real' problem as the erosion of their culture and traditions. These women have found a way to reconcile the complexity involved in making sense of the lack of reserve-based services for victims of abuse when violence against First Nations women is pandemic.

Coping Strategies

The schemata women relied on to make sense of the psychological complications arising from having few or no victim services provided by their bands also serve as cognitive coping strategies. As discussed above, the schemata are very effective at a cognitive level; yet, they do not provide the physical safety and protection needed by Native women in abusive relationships. Consequently, women also need to cope by taking concrete measures to deal with the leadership's lack of action to ensure safety for themselves and for their children.

All women interviewed relied on friends and family for protection when they needed to escape from their abusers.

I would go to his dad - his dad really helped me, his parents, I would just go over there, and they would protect me. It was like that. [Leah]

I used to go to my mom's quite a bit because I didn't have anywhere else to go. But then again, he'd go banging on my mom's door, you know, like freaking out, and...whatever. So my mom's boyfriend would just tell him – like kinda push him out and tell him to get lost. [Hannah]

His sister would come to our house, like, as a refuge, right? Because – when she got beat up, she would come to our house and I did the same thing. I'd take the kids and go over there or to another friend's place that was close, when [name of husband] *would start abusing me.* [Katie]

I have all kinds of friends and I just tell them what's going on. But I don't even have to say anything anymore – I just show up anytime- bruises, bleeding...they just know and don't even have to ask. [Dora]

The Institutional Response to Violence against Women is an OM because it complicates the lives of Aboriginal women living in violent relationships. Complacency on the part of First Nations leaders provides specific benefits to the leadership, the

Federal government, and also the Canadian tax payers. The examination of the OM demonstrates how barriers to leaving abusive partners for First Nations women are inherent in the system itself.

Commentary from Institutional Representatives

All Institutional Representatives acknowledged that services for First Nations abuse victims are lacking. Native leaders who responded raised many of the same issues that were raised by the participants, such as the fear and shame abused First Nations women experience and their reluctance to report abuse.

The socially available schema of *Individual Responsibility* was not part of the Institutional Representatives' responses. Instead, the Native leaders utilized a broader analysis of abuse that focused on systemic factors. However, they did access the *Self-Serving Leadership* and *Lost Traditions* schemata in their response to this OM. For example, the Native Institutional Representatives acknowledged that there has not been an understanding or will on the part of governments (Federal and Native) to acknowledge the importance of addressing violence. One of the male Native leaders stated that:

There has been the idea that economic development is the panacea: if we just close the soci-economic gap all these problems will vanish. But we know that only hurt people hurt people, and many community leaders have not addressed their own issues. [Institutional Representative #1]

The three other Native leaders who responded indicated that there are many unhealthy people in community leadership positions, so taking seriously the issue of woman abuse in their communities would require them to deal with their own abuse issues.

The non-Native political leaders who responded to the request for reaction to the results focused their comments on the financial commitment by government to violence prevention programming for Aboriginal people. For example, a National political leader stated:

The Family Prevention Program provides funding for 35 emergency shelters, which annually serve approximately 4,500 individuals ordinarily residents on-reserve. [Institutional Representative #5]

This leader also indicated that there is a need to continue to assess operational funding, and to develop second-stage housing as well as outreach networks in First Nations communities.

Organizational Moment #2: Elder Support

Elders have always been important to Indians. ...you'd go to an Elder for teachings because they lived the old ways and they knew what you should do. [Kensia]

Definition

Elder Support, as an institutional practice, can be considered an OM because it demonstrates how the Eldership system benefits the Federal government and negatively

influences how some Native women respond to abuse. The Eldership system in Native cultures is a unique structural component of First Nations societies. Historically, it functioned as means of support, teaching, and guidance accessible to all people of the community. The Federal government has incorporated this system into its attempt to support Indian development. However, this strategy primarily benefits the government (to be discussed below). Women's decisions regarding whether or not to avail themselves of this traditional support appear to be influenced by a number of factors, which have been negatively influenced by the co-optation of the Eldership system. These factors include the erosion of cultural traditions, previous experience, and beliefs about the utility of Elder support. In her quote, Leah's negative experience with an Elder led her to question the advice she received, and subsequently, to dismiss Elder support as a personal option:

At the time when I was going through that [abusive relationship], *the advice I got from an Elder was 'go home and forgive your husband and try to make it work'. That was it...that was all he said. I've never gone to an Elder again.* [Leah]

In contrast, Marlene's experience with Elders was positive:

When we got involved in the [traditional] *teachings, two Elders, a man and a woman, talked to us and the things they said and shared...were so profound. I think that's what made me change. It made me realise that how I was handling it* [the abuse] *was not working.* [Marlene]

Finally, Katie's opinion of Elders is linked to the behaviour of Elders that she witnessed as a child:

When I was growing up, I saw them do that stuff, like abusing their women, the drinking, the violence. Now they are Elders. I have no respect for them. I have no respect for what they have to tell me – they did all that themselves and they didn't try to change anything! [Katie]

The contrasting experiences reported above exemplify the diversity in women's experiences present in the data. They also highlight the reality that the Eldership system is not working for all women as intended. Traditionally, Native Elders were leaders in their own right, with power and knowledge that was respected and sought, particularly in times of crisis or challenge. According to Native tradition, it is a wise and appropriate course of action for people to seek the advice and assistance of Elders (Bongar-White, 2004). Based on the present analysis, for many women, Elders' credibility has been lost. Seeking support from Elders is not even part of some Native women's consciousness, as Marcy's quote illustrates:

I never even thought about going to an Elder – it didn't even enter my mind [Marcy]

For women like Marcy, *Elder Support* constitutes an OM through its "absence," which is similar to the effect of OM #1 discussed above.

Elder Support: Benefits to Federal Government

Federal government initiatives, such as building sweat lodges and contracting Elders to provide services in the workplace, appear to be legitimate attempts to acknowledge the value of partnering with First Nations people. These government projects are intended as a means of working together to solve problems related to cultural differences and tensions. The financial cost to government of such initiatives pales in comparison to the benefits they receive from them. As a result of these projects, the Federal government gains a public image as cooperative, benevolent, sensitive to and respectful of the needs and values of First Nations people (Emberley, 2001).

In this way, then, the government appears to actively support and facilitate the promotion of Indian culture and identity. It has nothing to lose in adopting this approach. In addition to a positive public image, a partnering approach provides the government with a no-fault position, should these initiatives fail to accomplish the goal of improving the conditions of Native peoples. Specifically, the government can point to the ways it has supported Native people and their culture, including hiring Elders. When negative events occur in the Aboriginal community thereafter, the government is blame-free. This implicitly places exclusive responsibility on First Nations people for their inability to appropriately utilise the support provided to them. Some might perceive this as a sophisticated and covert tactic of maintaining the status quo while others might maintain that the government is completely sincere in its intent. History does not support the latter interpretation (Duran & Duran, 1995, Emberley, 2001) but the truth may lie somewhere in between. For example, that the government has transformed the Eldership concept into a marketable position (i.e., for individual gain, as Elders are now paid for their services)

is evidence of, at best, ignorance of the traditional understanding of Eldership. At worst, it shows disregard for Native culture and a continuation of colonising practices. In other words, colonisation is now accomplished by co-opting important aspects of Native traditions and promoting them as support for Indian culture and development. Yet, this practice continues to have the same detrimental effects as more overt assimilation strategies such as the residential school system or the banning of ceremonial practices.

In addition, using colonised people in these roles may serve to divide Native peoples' solidarity. Specifically, some First Nations people benefit financially and socially by participating in the co-optation of aspects of Native culture. For example, as discussed in the introduction, the local governing structure of First Nations peoples (i.e., Band Councils) is a system imposed by the government. As a result, it has created a power differential in Aboriginal communities based on the dominant value system. Band Councillors have power and financial status as a result of the government insisting that this system be established. Thus, some groups of Aboriginal people are rewarded for their participation in the colonising process and are far less likely to mobilize to speak against the government. Co-opting specific groups of Native people, like Elders, may better serve the interests of the government whether or not there is conscious intent on the part of government to do so.

Elder Support: Benefits to Elders

The past few decades have witnessed an increased resolve among Native people to reclaim their heritage, and to assert their right to be self-governing Nations within a Nation (see www.ualberta.ca/~walld/NUNSEPT2.html). One of the significant effects of this movement for Native and non-Native peoples has been to raise the profile of

particular aspects of First Nations culture, including the value placed on the role of Elders. However, this reclaiming process occurs within the context of colonisation. The values of this European mind set contrast starkly with traditional Native worldview. While it is true that each of these world views has been simplified for the purposes of this discussion, it remains that European and Native cultures differed vastly in their understandings of human nature, values, and approach to the world. Native people have lived through centuries of colonising practices that dismantled and destroyed cohesive aspects of their traditions (Hamby, 2000). Consequently, Native people today, including Elders, have been socialised within an imposed and foreign culture, in which individualism and ideas of dominance and superiority are valued and rewarded (Proulx & Perrault, 2000).

Native people have been socialised within a White, Christianised, patriarchal, capitalist ideology. Interestingly, however, there is growing global interest in Native traditions. It is at this intersection that Elders are ideally situated to profit from their Elders' status. Elders now hold paid positions in many government organisations that serve Aboriginal people (e.g., Federal and provincial prisons, and departments within the Federal government, such as Indian and Northern Development). In addition, Elders are employed by government funded programs developed to address specific issues facing Native people (e.g., Aboriginal Ganootamaag Justice Service of Winnipeg). For some women, the co-optation of the Elders' system by the Federal government is where the concept of *Elder Support* loses its credibility and meaning. As Umma explains, there is an inherent conflict between the traditional and current position of Elder.

What happened to tobacco? What happened to respect? What happened to trying to help people without trying to get something in return? And that's what I see...they [Elders] *are part of the problem, they are out to make a buck.* [Umma]

The question Umma raises in the above quote is addressed by Aboriginal writer Elizabeth Levesque (2003). Levesque makes a distinction between "True Elders," and "High maintenance Elders." According to Levesque, true Elders are recognised by their "Humble walk and their teachings through acts of kindness...and who quietly serve the people" (p. 1). In contrast, high maintenance Elders are characterised by their selfish behaviour, demands on others, and their desire to be served. It is the latter group of Elders Umma identifies as "Part of the problem." Like Levesque, she opposes the use of Elder status for personal gain. Whether that gain is financial or in terms of social status, as defined by the dominant society, it is an exploitation of the traditional honour of being named an Elder and a mark of successful colonisation: the tenets of capitalism have been integrated, adapted, valued, and maximised for individual benefit.

Consequently, for those so inclined, there is growing opportunity for personal, social, and financial advancement as Eldership becomes marketable in the current socio-political climate. The individual gain, however, is achieved at the expense of traditional Native culture while communities suffer from the co-optation of the Eldership system. The pervasive mistrust of Elders, as illustrated in Umma's quote above, is present throughout the data. It is further evidence of the legacy and success of centuries of assimilation practices.

Complications for Women

The current state of the Eldership system does not seem to be a direct or practical complication that First Nations women identify as much as another absence of resource. However, that void in itself is evidence of the extent to which cultural erosion has created distance from and distortion of traditional means of receiving personal help. For many abused First Nations women, the co-optation of the Eldership system has fostered a pervasive mistrust of this traditional means of support. The data suggest that the majority of women interviewed did not consider seeking out the counsel of Elders, either because of negative experiences or because the option is simply not part of their conscious processing of possible support resources. Consequently, the majority of Native women in the present sample has no culturally-based recourse from which to garner assistance in dealing with the abuse in their lives. In other words, it is in its absence that *Elder Support* complicates Aboriginal women's lives.

This is problematic for two reasons. First, when Native women decide to access outside assistance (i.e., beyond the help of family and friends), most of their options are limited to organisations that have been developed or are being funded by the White majority (e.g., transition houses). The problems this creates have already been discussed (see p. 60). Second, Native women must make sense of their experience in light of their knowledge of the cultural importance given to Elders in the healing of First Nations communities.

Schematic Analysis

A significant intrapsychic conflict is inherent in this situation because women who reject Elders also are rejecting an aspect of their own culture. The psychological

complication this can engender may interfere with their identity as Native women; and therefore, with their ability to make decisions about their lives with confidence and personal integrity. Specifically, deciding to reject Elders' support challenges who they are as Native women. This is illustrated in Kristin's quote:

Oh, I wish I could say that I respect my Elders, I know I should – that's a big thing for us. But I don't respect them. How can I? Maybe I shouldn't even call myself Indian! [Kristin]

Kristin's quote also highlights a critical issue: There is a culturally available schema of *Elders* embedded within another culturally available schema of *Indian*. The *Indian* schema is rich and extensive, and it involves believing in and being committed to the concept of Elders. In turn, the culturally available schema of *Elder* is likewise rich and involves an idyllic picture of what it means to be an Elder. Clearly, respect for Elders is a core component shared by both of these socially-available schemata. Native women's identity may be called into question as a result of the contradiction between these readily available schemata and their personal experiences of the Eldership (e.g., non-helpful, self-serving, distrustful).

This OM, *Elder Support*, adds a further complication for some Aboriginal women. Specifically, their decision regarding whether to access the Elder system is influenced by the socially accessible schemata of *Indian* and *Elder*. These schemata, however, often conflict with their own lived experience. First Nations women must deal with the cognitive dissonance resulting from the clash between their experience with Elders and their knowledge of the *Elder* schema. Women cognitively modified the social

schema *Elders* to make sense of the *Elder Support* as an institutional practice. Two sub-schemata were derived: *Elders Are Victims* and *Good Elders/Bad Elders.*

The sub-schema, *Elders Are Victims*, removes individual responsibility from the Elders who engage in selfish or questionable behaviours by holding White Christian assimilation practices accountable for the erosion of Native traditions. Several participants spoke of the influence of Christianity:

It's the Christian Elders who use the Bible and say 'the Bible says you have to stay, this is your marriage and you stay here and put up with it [the abuse]. And don't get him mad'. That's not right. [Marlene]

Elders up there [names Northern community] *think women should stay* [in abusive relationships] *because divorce is seen as being really bad...and that's because of the Bible – they think you're serving the devil or something.* [Karla]

Religion is a factor too because of what religious institutions have done to us. ...Elders who have been turned into Christians hide behind the church...and time and time again it's proven true. You see a Christian Elder up there and he's telling everybody to follow God's ways...and you find out that he's an abuser. [Cindy]

The sub-schema *Elders are Victims* was further broadened to include not just the influence of Christianity, but the cumulative impact of colonisation.

When you look at the bigger picture of all the...what I call 'ethnostress' that has impacted on the Native people, like the residential schools, Indian Affairs, and all these other ways we've been controlled and changed, they have a tremendous impact on the Native people. [Kensia]

For generations they [Elders] *were not even allowed to practice the ceremonies, so they've lost all of that.* [Kathy]

What is implicit in Kensia's quote is that no Aboriginal person, not even an Elder, is protected from the effects of cultural oppression. Kathy's quote makes a direct link between colonising practices and their effects on Elders. She identifies a specific mechanism (i.e., the historical prohibition of ceremonies) which implicitly suggests that Elders are uniquely disadvantaged because they no longer have the tools to carry out their role. This then serves as a cognitive rationale to explain why *Elder Support* is a contradiction in terms: Elders cannot be true Elders because colonisation has taken away their tools (i.e., Native traditions).

Women who drew on the *Elders Are Victims* sub-schema cognitively understand the contradiction as a consequence of assimilation. This sub-schema, therefore, allows its users to align with Elders, not against them. It also serves to preserve their identity as Native people, who would seek guidance from Elders if the traditional role had remained unchanged. Specifically, the modification gives women a way to understand their experience of specific Elders' selfish behaviours without threatening their adherence to the cultural meaning and importance of Elders. In other words, women using this adapted

schema can cognitively support the Eldership system as an important aspect of their culture and also acknowledge, and perhaps even expect that corruption routinely occurs. A consequence of the *Elders Are Victims* sub-schema, however, is that it exonerates the abusive Elders by blaming the powerful oppressors for the misuse of their position. It is a posture of helplessness that does not open an avenue to social responsibility, action, or change.

The sub-schema *Good Elders/Bad Elders* draws on an individualised analysis to explain the contradiction of the *Elder Support*. Specifically, this sub-schema creates two mutually exclusive categories, one of which each Elder must fit. Determination of which category is appropriate for any given Elder is made on the basis of the merits of the individual.

Some of them are really good. Some of them are very selfish, they want just for themselves. So, you have the good ones and the bad ones. [Ursala]
He was a real good one [Elder], *actually he's a remarkable person.* [Ida]

He's very traditional. You should feel him, what I mean is that you need to be in his presence, there is something different about him that you can actually feel. ...he is a remarkable person. [Marlene]

He was found guilty of abusing I don't know how many kids, but he only got convicted for about two or three. They [people of the community] *wanted him to be able to serve his*

sentence in the community rather than in jail just because he is an Elder. He's not a real Elder, not to me. [Marla]

This sub-schema reflects the same distinction Levesque (2003) makes between types of Elders (described above). Utilising this schema is another effective means of understanding the contradiction without necessarily abandoning the cultural practice of seeking out the counsel of Elders (this is discussed further in the next section on Coping).

Coping Strategies

The way in which Native women cope with the incongruity between their cultural teachings about Elders and their lived experience is accomplished by psychologically resolving the contradiction. Interestingly, the coping strategies they adopted were not attached to a particular schema. This provides an explanation for the diversity of experiences reported in the data.

For women who reported positive experiences, the schema(ta) they used did not lead them to renounce the original Elder schema altogether. Rather, they exercised caution in their selection of the Elder to whom they went for assistance. It is an active coping strategy, one where they must evaluate each Elder on a case by case basis, and then arrive at a decision about whether or not to seek counsel.

I am cautious about the people who I consider Elders. ...I watched him for a year before I went to him. I watched to see how he lived his life, I went to his sweats and I found them very spiritually fulfilling [Marlene]

Other women, who reported negative experiences with Elders or did not consider seeking the counsel of an Elder, also drew on the same schemata to reconcile the contradiction. These women, however, adopted a different behavioural strategy. Specifically, women who reported negative experiences with Elders did not seek Elders' counsel. They refused to accept the need for discernment as their responsibility. Consequently, they coped by rejecting Elder advice as an option. In addition, these women tended to be more sceptical and critical of the state of the Eldership today. They placed the responsibility back onto the shoulders of the Elders themselves, as Umma's quote below illustrates.

I just wouldn't go to an Elder...there is no one I would take tobacco to. They're preaching that we've got to be good to each other, we have to be honest and truthful, we have to treat each other with respect, but I don't see that coming from them. If they want us to respect them – they [Elders] *are going to have to change things around and earn it back* [Umma]

For some women, there was no consideration given to Elders' guidance as an option for helping them to deal with the abuse in their lives. In this case, the coping mechanism they employed could be conceptualised as defensive. Specifically, by keeping the contradiction outside of their consciousness, these women did not have to deal with the cognitive dissonance created by the Organisational Moment. It was through discussing the role of Eldership in the interview that the contradiction was brought into awareness for these women. Consequently, awareness of the contradiction in some ways

forced an immediate need for cognitive resolution. Sally and Bertha's quotes are examples of the immediate processing that occurred:

I didn't go to an Elder then [when in abusive relationship] *or before, for that matter. I don't know why. I just never thought about it. ...I guess I would need to know I could trust that person – there are some Elders with a lot of their own problems.* [Sally]

I just don't think about it...I don't know why, I just don't. ...Maybe that's why they are trying to change, trying to get more spiritual...go back to the traditions. Some of them [Elders] are *really against it* [movement toward reclaiming traditional spirituality] *though, they've been Christianised and they think it's evil* [Bertha]

Whether these quotes reflect suppression, as defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV, American Psychiatric Association, 2000) (i.e., the conscious decision to not think about emotionally difficult issues or conflicts) or repression (i.e., the expulsion of psychic conflict into unconscious awareness, DSM-IV), they act as a defence for these women. In essence, this group of women chose to not think about the OM, and did not have to consciously confront the contradiction until it was raised in the interview. When pressed, Sally drew from the *Good Elders/Bad Elders* sub-schema, while Bertha utilised the *Elders are Victims* sub-schema. The absence in their consciousness of the Elder as a resource in times of crisis may signify the ultimate success of colonisation.

Viewing the *Elder Support* as an OM permits an examination of the co-optation of the Elder system and the complications that arose for women, whether or not they chose to seek the advice of Elders. It has highlighted the ways in which the Federal government and some individuals can benefit from making this aspect of Native culture a marketable commodity. In so doing, this practice has created contradictions and complications for First Nations women.

Commentary from Institutional Representatives

Only the First Nations leaders addressed this issue. The socially available schemata utilised by the participants, *Elders are Victims and Good Elders/Bad Elders,* also shaped the responses of the Institutional Representatives. For example, both schemata are evident in the quote from one female Native leader who stated:

What do you expect? The government's plan was to colonise our people through residential schools. Our Elders of today experienced the abuse of residential schools. Others were placed in foster care. [As a result] *they have no knowledge passed onto them from their parents and grandparents. If I was seeking advice from an Elder, I would ask them what they have done to heal themselves.* [Institutional Representative #3]

Underlying the responses from these leaders was verification that the Eldership system has been co-opted. One leader stated:

It used to be about honouring the wisdom and gifts of the Elder. Now it is about money and marketing a product. [Institutional Representative #2]

The advice to be cautious in selecting an Elder that came from the Native leaders was consistent with the action-based coping strategy taken by some of the women in this study.

Organisational Moment #3: Addictions

I've been around people who drink all my life. My family drinks, my mom's family drinks, my dad's family drinks, all their families drink - I think, actually, every Indian family I know drinks. [Ida]

Definition

Addictions is an OM because it demonstrates how the Federal government and the Aboriginal leadership on reserves benefit from the problem of substance abuse in Native communities. Addictions has an organising and complicating influence in the lives of First Nations women, and plays a significant role in how they respond to intimate partner violence.

The sheer pervasiveness of addiction to drugs and alcohol among First Nations people warrants a conceptualisation of substance abuse as an issue that goes beyond personal choice. Morgan (1983) asserts that alcohol has been used as a tool of domination. It functions as one method of social control whereby the dominant group establishes and maintains power while reinforcing the subordination of the oppressed group. To understand the complicated relationship between First Nations and substance use today requires first a brief sociohistorical examination of the role of alcohol and its

use as a mechanism of control. This is followed by an examination of the question of who benefits from the widespread substance abuse in Native communities.

Addictions: Historic Benefits to Federal Government

Alcohol was first introduced to Native people during early contact with European traders (Brady, 2000; Frank, Moore, & Ames, 2000; Waldram, Herring, & Young, 1995). Initially, it served as a trading commodity that European traders used in exchange for furs and other goods. The European traders, frontiersmen, and merchants modelled aggressive and excessive drinking practices, and this was most Native communities' first and only experience with alcohol use (Brady). With no prior exposure to alcohol and no cultural guidelines or policies to regulate its use or deal with the pathological effects on individuals and communities, the drinking practices of the early European traders were adopted as acceptable and appropriate by many Native Nations (Brady; Duran & Duran, 1995).

The historical record indicates that the state took advantage of the addictive and disinhibiting effects of alcohol and used them as a tool to manipulate Native people during treaty negotiations (Brady, 2000; Dickason, 2002; Frank et al., 2000). According to Frank et al., the economic and political role of alcohol served the state as a profitable commodity that later led to the development of a de facto policy of "using alcohol as a bargaining chip in the appropriation of traditional land holdings" (p. 7).

Historically, the governments profited economically and politically from First Nations peoples' addictions. Not only did the state obtain land and negotiate treaties for political and economic gain, but they also used alcohol addiction among Native people as the grounds on which to promulgate a belief in Indian inferiority. The labelling of Native

drinking as abnormal created a discourse about First Nations people being prone to violence when under the influence of alcohol. This provided the rationale for introducing the prohibition of alcohol use by Native people and other paternalistic practices (Duran & Duran, 1995; Valverde, 2004).

Addictions: Current Benefits to Federal Government

The myth of the drunken Indian created during colonisation continues to be embraced by the majority culture. It has also been internalised by Native people, which is evidenced in the following quotes.

Why [don't I date Native men]*? Because they're all drunks. If they're not when you first meet them, they will be.* [Cindy]

It [alcoholism] *runs in Native families.* [Dora]

The rhetoric of the drunken Indian was tied not only to the cultural inferiority of Aboriginals but also to a biological defect in the group. The view that Native people are predisposed to alcoholism because of a chemically-based intolerance was popularized as an explanation for the prevalence of alcoholism in First Nations communities (Frank et al., 2000). This did two important things: it served to mask the political and historical roots of the substance abuse problem among Native people and turned it into an individual problem, thereby absolving governments of responsibility and accountability for their exploitative practices; and, it reinforced the belief that Aboriginal people are

inherently flawed and made government paternalism toward Native people appear benevolent.

Addictions: Benefits to First Nations Leaders

Unfortunately, Aboriginal leaders mimicked the domination strategies learned from the European practices to compete for power within their own communities. According to Duran and Duran (1995) "rather than acknowledging the subordinate relationship of tribal councils to Federal bureaucracies, tribal leaders may use alcoholism as a viable excuse for victimization" (p. 104). Obtaining personal gain, both economic and social, at the expense of their people is part of the systemic and structural problem that benefits the Native leadership but maintains alcoholism and other drug-related problems in First Nations communities today.

The Federal government and Band Council leaders continue to benefit from the addictions issues that plague First Nations communities. The status quo is maintained, power is concentrated in the hands of a few, and the majority of Indian people bear the costs of community dependency on substances by trying to survive on a day-to-day basis. Ursala's statement makes this reality explicit.

The leaders? They have their own shit to deal with. Even the elders - most of them have their own addiction issues, and lots of them beat their wives. That's why these things get swept under the carpet. Are they going to take this stuff seriously and really DO anything about it? That would mean exposing their own ghosts. For us, it's about survival...finding shelter, enough to eat, enough money to make the rent - it takes every ounce of strength you've got just to make it through the day. [Ursala]

Ursala raises two important points. First, she provides insight into the association between substance abuse and violence against women, and second, how the Aboriginal leadership is served by continuing to ignore the problems faced by First Nations communities. The leadership, in ignoring woman abuse, benefits by protecting itself from dealing with problems associated with addictions and violence in their own lives. The state also benefits from the conceptualisation of substance abuse, disinhibition, and woman abuse as a tightly linked trio that has its roots in biological and cultural defects. The negative stereotypes about Native people are preserved and government paternalism continues to receive majority culture support. Natives normalise their experiences of abuse by drawing on the internalised belief that drunkenness and violence are inextricably linked and inherent to their people. This association benefits the state, the Band Council, and the men who abuse their partners because it provides a convenient excuse for violence. Consequently, no one takes responsibility for woman abuse. Instead, substance abuse is targeted as the primary evil.

That the leadership benefits from this situation, does not suggest that their action or non-action is instrumental or specifically designed to acquire these benefits. Rather, it is likely that the leadership fulfills its mandate to govern without recognising the impact of their actions on Native women. Indeed, critical realist theory asserts that social structures, like governments, are reproduced largely as an unintentional consequence of intentional actions (Joseph, 1997). It follows, then, that any benefits to the leadership may also be unintentional, but resulting from intentional action. Having said that, there

was a perception on the part of the participants that the ignoring woman abuse is an intentional action. Marlene's quote speaks to this.

I think our leaders are afraid of what may happen if women had equal power...that's why they continue to ignore this issue. [Marlene]

Complications for Women

Many of the costs of addictions are shared costs for men and women. For example both men and women suffer from health-related difficulties, loss through accidental deaths and suicide, and financial problems that result from heavy consumption of drugs and alcohol. The effects of these consequences, however, are often different for men and women. The following quotes speak to how women are affected by alcohol/substance abuse.

He's sick and has to be on these pills now. I think it's from all the drinking he's done through his life. I need to make sure he takes the pills at the right time every day. He forgets if I don't do it. [Sally]

They were all out drinking, and he fell and hurt his neck, like it must have been his spine because his arm is paralysed. He can walk now and like move his arm a bit, but hardly – there's something wrong with the nerves in his hand...he needs help with everything. We even had to get a ramp made so he can get into the house. [Kara]

For Sally and Kara, daily life has changed because of their partners' drinking. Organising medication and taking the responsibility for ensuring that he takes it is now part of Sally's life. Kara is left with a partner who needs help with "everything." Her daily care-taking activities now involve caring for a disabled man.

The number of deaths through accident and suicide where substance use was a factor is high among First Nations people (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2006). Women end up taking responsibility for their own grief and also the grief of their families.

I found him [her cousin] *dead...he hung himself. My other cousin* [recently] *hung herself too. She was sorry that her kids got taken away. We were drinking a little bit - well I guess we were drinking a lot. And then she went in the bathroom. A while later I just heard someone say, "Get a knife! Dora, get a knife!" I freaked right out. "Call 911!" I tried to get a knife, I went to call 911, then Will got a knife real quick and I ran back to the telephone and called 911. She was already dead. I'm just sick over it all – it's taken so much out of me. ...I even went to a psychologist once – I've been torn up by so many losses.* [Dora]

He was going through a hard time - his father drowned due to drinking. When he went into his self-pity moods - when somebody's in his alcohol state, that's when it [grief] *would come in. And I used to say to him that it's not up to us, it's up to the creator or God to say when that time comes to go, and I used to tell him it's not us, we don't take*

our own lives in our own hands. When he was drinking I'd just ignore him. And I would never question him then because I knew it was the alcohol that was talking. [Kathy]

Dora's quote speaks to the need for self-care in the face of such losses. Kathy acts as counsellor to her husband. She manages and adapts her care-taking role as a function of her husband's behaviour.

Comments regarding financial problems resulting from women's partners' substance use were prevalent in the interviews. Women noted how their partners would take money to finance their addictions.

Well he takes some of my money. That's what I don't like about it. I even told him, go clamming, go do something if you want to smoke up and do all that drinking, get the money yourself. Because I only get $160 every week and that's not enough. [Kara]

We never had any money even though he worked sometimes. Any money we got, he drank. At times he would be dipping into our food money, and I had to make what was left stretch so there would be enough to eat [Kathy]

The quotes above highlight the destructive impact of substance abuse and some of the complications it creates for women. As previously noted, one major component of substance abuse for women is the violence that often accompanies it. Violence against women has typically been categorised in the literature as psychological/emotional, physical/sexual, and financial. The following section employs these categories to further

examine how women's lives are complicated by the violence that is associated with the alcohol and drug problems in their lives.

Psychological Abuse

For men, the abuse of substances provides them with personal power and control in their relationships because women are fearful of their partners' drinking. This fear is because of the abuse with which drinking is frequently paired.

He'd be out partying, and I'd be home - waking up, listening for everything, every little sound. It was scary – the not knowing. I don't know which one was worse -- him staying out, like all the time or him coming home. [Katie]

I was scared of him. When he started drinking I'd just gather the kids up and we'd leave. And we'd go home when he sobered up. [Kara]

It was a nightmare! I stayed at my friend's house because I knew he was out drinking, and we didn't open the door when he kept knocking to come and get me. My friend didn't open the door because she said if he takes you out of here, he's just going to beat you up anyway, the way he's been doing. [Leah]

This fear expressed by Katie, Kara, and Leah gives men leverage in the relationship and allows them to exert control over women's behaviour. While the fear factor in abusive relationships is not unique to First Nation women (Saunders, 1990;

Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995), for women living on a reserve, choices of how to deal with it are significantly constrained. Of the fourteen reserves represented in the data, only one had a women's shelter. Consequently, most women like Kara relied on friends to provide safety for them and their children. Nursing stations were another source of protection identified by some of the women interviewed; however, only the most remote communities had nursing stations. The Aboriginal leadership in 13 of the 14 communities provided no 24-hour protection services to its women members.

Financial Abuse

Another common means of controlling women's behaviour is through financial domination.

We fought about money because he put limits on what I could do for groceries and stuff and if I went over he got mad, because he always had to have his drug money. [Ellen]

He brought in so much booze, and he was bootlegging it. And while he was doing that, I was hiding the money underneath the rug so that the kids could eat...he would never give me money to buy food and clothes for the kids. [Leah]

I'd hear that he was in town drinking and I'd drop whatever I was doing. I'd get someone to drive me [into town] *so I could clean out our bank account and keep it until he was sober.* [Helen]

High rates of poverty among First Nations people limit women's options. Financial abuse for these women directly influences their capability to provide for themselves and their families. These quotes aptly illustrate how their partners' substance abuse constrains their ability to feed their children and how women's lives are organised by it.

Physical and Sexual Abuse

Men's control over women is extended through intimidation and threats of harm, either harm to self or other, as well as the overt physical and sexual abuse of their female partners.

When he drank hard stuff he was mean. He didn't hit me but, he forced me to stay with him and held me down so I wouldn't leave, that kind of thing. But he never hit me. [Bertha]

And then there were a few times when I knew he was drunk and he'd come home and he'd climb on top of me, and he'd be rough. And I'd be like, it wasn't quite rape, but it wasn't making love either, you know what I mean? [Ursala]

He was drinking and I wanted to leave. "No, you're not going anywhere, you're going to stay here with us," he said. I told him, "I'll be back later," and then he starts shouting; "I'm going to kill myself, I'm going to kill myself" and he grabbed a knife and I knew he was going to stab himself. I jumped in front of him and he stabbed me over here [points to shoulder] [Dora]

I didn't drink with him. I was too afraid to. I always felt like I had to have my wits about me, because I was afraid of what he might do to me if I drank and passed out– so I wanted to be fully there in order to defend myself in case I had to" [Ellen]

Psychological, financial, physical and sexual abuse is part of a substance abuse cycle for these women. The complications that arise as a result of alcohol and drug addictions are a daily reality for many First Nations women.

Schematic Analysis

Women used a number of schemata to make sense of the role of alcohol and substance abuse in their lives. They are presented as follows: *I Can't Expect Anything Different; Socialising*; *No Choice; It's the Drinking, It's the Drugs!*; and *Indians are Drunks*.

Most of the women who were interviewed had multiple relationships that were characterised by substance abuse and often extreme violence against them. Witnessing or experiencing abuse in childhood and then living it in their adult relationships seems to converge on a schema that speaks to expectations: *I Can't Expect Anything Different*. The quotes that follow illustrate this schema.

I should have left long ago, but why? What difference would it make? They're all the same. [Kara]

What can you expect right? I mean, how many relationships have I had and they've all been the same. [Hannah]

All the booze and drugs and everything! It's not ever going to end – at least, I can't see how. [Delma]

This schema encompasses a feeling of hopelessness that their relationships with men could be anything but what they are. Interestingly, this schema helped women preserve their personal integrity. Specifically, it allowed them to draw on a cognitive process that provides women a way to avoid engaging in extreme self-blame when their relationships fail, and to avoid seeing themselves as women who make poor partner choices. This appears to be a healthy and self-preserving way of making sense of their lives.

Some women drew on the schema of *Socialising*. Included in this schema is an understanding of alcohol as a normal and legitimate aspect of socialising and a means of meeting potential partners and spending time together.

We'd do most of our drinking and stuff there [behind a building on the reserve]. *We were together every day just drinking. That's what we did together. And we frequently went to bars in the evenings. Even though he had to work or I had to go to school the next day we went to bars.* [Kristin]

We met in a bar because I'd go out drinking too. ...Back then, it was the thing to do. [Marlene]

We didn't really go out, we just drank together and sometimes we'd watch TV. [Marcy]

But where else do you meet men [other than a bar]*?* [Cindy]

These quotes illustrate how commonly drinking is viewed as an integral part of socialising for First Nations women. The normalisation of drinking behaviour as an activity in its own right is especially evident in Marcy's statement where drinking and watching television appear to be equally acceptable ways of spending time together. Drinking is also identified as an activity that allows women to meet potential partners, as Cindy and Marlene's statements suggest. The normalisation of drinking as a shared activity allows women to view their own use of substances as benign, and it gives cognitive legitimacy to their behaviour.

The schema *No Choice* was evoked for many women to help them cognitively deal with substance use, violence, and self-protection.

He'd go to the bars every weekend and he'd make me go with him and leave the children. I didn't want to but I didn't have a choice. [Kathy]

He used to force me to drink and I wasn't a drinker. He even hit me with a hammer if I didn't drink, he'd hit my hands with a hammer. So I drank. ...I saw so much of it [alcoholism] *in my life, I didn't want that for myself.* [Kara]

Drawing on this schema provided these women with a way to understand why they engaged in behaviour they may not have otherwise. The schema *No Choice* functions as a self-protective mechanism that permits women to cognitively manage the dissonance between their values (i.e., related to childcare for Kathy and abstaining from alcohol for Kara) and their behaviour.

Women also made sense of the complications that arise from this OM by evoking the schema *It's The Drinking! It's The Drugs!* as a way of displacing the responsibility for the violence. This is illustrated in the following quotes.

Because when he's sober, he's really nice [Leah]

He's into drugs and then when he mixes it with alcohol, he snaps. He'll snap in a second - his personality changes and he gets mean, real mean. And this is what happened to me [pointing to her face. At the time of the interview Delma's face and right eye were swollen and discoloured] [Delma]

I kept hoping that [the relationship] *would go back to the way it was – before the booze took over his life.* [Katie]

And there was a part of him that I really, really loved and I still think about him all the time – that fuckin' cocaine! If it wasn't for that, we'd probably still be together. [Ursala]

Evoking this schema allows women to reconcile the cognitive conflict present in loving someone who hurts you. To blame the abusive behaviour on drugs or alcohol is a common mechanism used to distance the individual from his unacceptable and hurtful behaviour (McLeod, 1987).

Not surprisingly, many women drew on the socially available schema of *Indians are Drunks*. As noted earlier, this idea has its roots in the colonisation period. The myth

has been internalised and transformed into a schema that Native women evoke to deal with the prevalence of substance abuse among their people.

...all the men I've ever been with have been drinkers. [Sally]

It's not just the Indians you see falling all over [name of street], *drunk out of their minds, it's leaders, elders, Chiefs. It's a real problem in Native communities.* [Ursala]

Coping Strategies

In the previous OM, *Elder Support*, the coping strategies women used seemed to differ on the basis of which schema was evoked. In contrast, for this particular OM, coping involved either or both action-oriented strategies and cognitive strategies.

Many women utilized strategies that focused on attempting to change their partners' behaviour. Their attempts included talking it out, threatening to leave, and trying to induce a greater sense of family responsibility. The following quotes highlight how three of the women in the study employed this strategy.

I used to talk with him when he was sober – tell him, it's more important that the kids eat, and we have bills to pay [Kathy]

I thought if I told him I was going to leave, he'd quit [drinking]. [Hannah]

When he was sober – that was a different story. I'd tell him what he had done and he'd be all sorry and everything. He'd make all kinds of promises about not doing it again and he wouldn't. We'd make up and it would be good. Until he started drinking again. [Naomi]

For most women, these attempts to make lasting changes in their partners' behaviour failed. Only one woman reported success.

We used to drink – he was mean so I left him with my baby. He came for me a week later, promised he wouldn't drink again. He kept his promise. That was 17 years ago. We would have never made it otherwise. [Bertha]

Leaving the relationship was another pattern of response that many women used. Leaving typically followed a series of attempts to be change-agents for their partner or multiple attempts to end the relationship.

I tried and tried. After a while, I just couldn't do it any longer and I left. [Kristin]

He had the nurse call me to say that he's ready to go for counselling, for treatment. I thought, "Why now?" I needed to go on with my life. I'm not going to drop this and just go back into the same relationship. Been there and done that and it's always been the same anyway. It was just too late. [Leah]

He'd say "Can I come back home now?" I said, "If you stay sober." That happened quite a few times. And finally, at last, I said I can't take it anymore and I kicked him out for good. [Dora]

Many women successfully ended their abusive relationships by leaving their partners. Unfortunately, for most of them, the relationships that followed were also abusive.

Some women used a form of coping that included both behavioural and cognitive components. The cognitive element functioned as a revised schema that supported the action element. Specifically, some women turned to substance use themselves, as Naomi, Dora, and Ida's quotes indicate.

So then I started to drink. I figured, you can't beat him, join him. [Naomi]

I'm alcoholic now. [Dora]

Using alcohol yourself is a way to cope with the shittyness of your life –lots of people do it. [Ida]

These quotes highlight the use of the schema *If You Can't Beat Him, Join Him,* which serves as a cognitive strategy that enables women to justify why they drink. Interestingly, all of the women who utilized this way of coping identified their partners' drinking or drug use as the most significant problem in their relationships.

Other women chose to remain alone and sacrifice that part of their lives. Five of the women interviewed made a conscious decision to avoid intimate relationships with men after successfully extricating themselves from one or more abuse relationships. They have built their lives around work and/or their families.

I have no intention of getting into another relationship - it's just not worth it. My daughter is the focus for me. [Cindy]

Well, it will have to take some miracle before you'll see me in another relationship. There's no drugs or alcohol allowed in my home. My daughter needs to be in a healthy environment, she needs me to be healthy. My relationships have not done that – far from it! [Ursala]

I work. ...I don't do relationships anymore. [Kensia]

For these women, reorganising their priorities has been a successful way of eliminating partner addictions and woman abuse in their lives.

In examining the patterns of schemata and coping strategies used, it appears that the schemata *I Can't Expect Anything Different*, *No Choice*, and *Indians are Drunks* can lead to Native women's decision to cope by drinking. These schemata seem to function for these women in ways that take power away from them. Specifically, drinking as a coping strategy is itself disempowering and self-destructive. In contrast, the women who left relationships primarily drew on a more individualistic schema *It's the Drinking! It's*

The Drugs! Even when the overarching schema was also present, the *It's the Drinking! It's The Drugs!* schema allowed these women to retain a sense of hope that healthy relationships with men are possible.

Interestingly, the five women who chose to remain free of intimate relationships altogether drew most heavily on the broad-based schemata, as did the women who turned to substance use themselves. These two groups of women had similar relationship experiences and had experienced or witnessed substance abuse and violence against women in their childhoods. The main differences between them are education level and employment/income. Specifically, women who chose to focus on work and/or family were employed full time at the time of the study and they had been to university or college.

Commentary from Institutional Representatives

Only three Institutional Representatives responded to this set of findings. These individuals were First Nations leaders. Each leader's comments were informed by an individual approach to these issues, which is exemplified in the following quote by one of the Native male Institutional Representatives:

Life is suffering; more for some than for others. But [adopting] a victim-role is MY choice. We have to become more than victims. We have the inner strength to step away from that role and arise to our destiny. Healing is an individual and community responsibility. [Institutional Representative #1]

This Native leader acknowledged that there is a time to mourn the losses Aboriginal people have incurred, and a time to act to make positive changes, both as individuals and as whole communities. His response reflects agreement with the participants' experience; what is different, however, is that he broadens the analysis to include the need for community healing. It is also possible to see the victimisation role identified in the above, as the basis for the following quote from another Native Institutional Representative.

When more resources are put in place to address the impacts of residential school, we will then see more hope. Where we see high unemployment, we see...more substance abuse which walks hand in hand with violence. [Institutional Representative #2]

The belief upon which this quote rests is that violence against women is a consequence of, or co-occurs with substance abuse. This leader also makes the connection to low socioeconomic status as the root of both substance abuse and the abuse of women.

The third leader focused her comments on the energy required for Native women to survive. She says:

When there is substance abuse in a home, it takes all of the family's energy – usually the woman's - to tend to the tasks of daily living. She has no energy left for the political or social organising, [which is the avenue] through which change comes about. That's what my role is: I work on behalf of those who cannot because they are in the cycle of abuse. [Institutional Representative #3]

These three Native leaders hold important National positions. Each has his/her own understanding of violence against Aboriginal women and its relationship to substance abuse. These positions likely inform their strategy regarding their role in creating positive change in the Aboriginal population. For example, out of these three positions come three starting points: individual responsibility for making better choices, government responsibility to provide resources, and personal responsibility to act politically for those whose life circumstances prohibit their own political action.

Organisational Moment #4: Transparency in the Distribution of Band Resources and Services

Definition

Transparency in the Distribution of Band Resources and Services meets the criteria for an OM: First, the way in which Bands currently manage operating funds negatively influences Native women's lives, especially those living in abusive situations. Abused women often require assistance in order to extricate themselves from their abusers. That assistance could come from the Band office in the form of funds or other resources. First Nations women, however, frequently have inadequate knowledge of how the system operates, and consequently, are unable to obtain the needed assistance. Second, the lack of clarity and transparency in the management system, while problematic for many women, provides specific benefits to both the Band leadership and the Federal government (described below).

First Nations remain largely controlled by the Federal government through the Indian Act, and part of the Act specifies that Bands receive Federal financial support (Indian Act, Section 61). To facilitate the management of these funds, Tribal Bands

utilize a Chief and council system. Specifically, the Chief and Band Councils are responsible for the management of these funds to ensure that the economic, social, educational, membership (i.e., handling membership transfers and infant registration), and health care needs of its members are met (Indian Act, Section 61). The Band Chief and council system, therefore, serves to oversee the use, development, and allocation of resources and services on behalf of its members.

Distribution of Band Resources and Services: Benefits to the Federal government

During colonisation, the colonial government required First Nations to reorganise their governance structure into a Chief and Band Council system (McIvor & Nahanee, 1998). As noted above, this system remains in place today. This imposed administrative structure was similar to the political structures found in Europe (e.g., exclusively dominated and controlled by men). By imposing European tradition of only recognising males as authorities, colonisers effectively blocked Native women from positions of power within their communities. Over time, Native men became the exclusive political decision-makers. European patriarchal traditions were consequently strengthened, and women's power was eroded (Bear Nicholas, 1994; Braveheart-Jordan & DeBruyn, 1995; Hill, 1992).

By designing and implementing its own system, the colonizing government was able to enjoy the advantages of a self-serving system tailored to meet its own needs (e.g., political men of the time were not accustomed to dealing or negotiating with women). Thus, as the government determined the rules, policies, and procedures under which the relations of ruling (Smith, 1987) would operate, the imbalance of power between the Native and European peoples was entrenched. In addition, the assimilationist goals of the

colonisers were also advanced by instituting a government structure that replicated European values and beliefs.

Federal governing parties of today continue to benefit from this historical legacy. Federal funds are allocated to Bands for internal management by each First Nation's Chief and Council. The system has transformed from one based on paternalism, to one theoretically based on partnership. This shift in approach by government, from paternalism toward partnership, permits greater political autonomy for First Nations people. However, with a history of dependence on government, Native people are still learning the skills needed to manage their affairs competently. Mistakes have been made by Aboriginal leaders and some First Nations bands have mismanaged their funding (e.g., see the Chronicle Herald, March 29, 1999 regarding 1.2 million dollars unaccounted for by the Indian Brook Reserve in Nova Scotia; the National Post, December 2, 2000 regarding honoraria for the Sheshatshiu First Nation [Labrador] Band Council members totalling $100,000 over the entitled amount; the Globe and Mail, 1998 reported that the chief and 12 councillors of the Samson Band in Alberta earned almost 2 million in salaries and benefits, while the unemployment rate was 85%).

When mishandling of monies occurs, negative stereotypes about Native people are reinforced and strengthened. Generally, the public perceives the government as blameless in such situations. There is neither acknowledgement of the government's culpability for its past paternalism, nor responsibility for equipping Aboriginal leaders with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to effectively operate a municipal government. The Federal government benefits from the public perception that the government is meeting its Treaty responsibility in ways that foster greater Native

autonomy by enabling Bands to manage their own money (e.g., see debates regarding the Charlottetown Accord for further discussion regarding the division of management power; Weaver, 1993).

Transparency in the Distribution of Band Resources and Services: Benefits to the Chief and Band Council

The creation of a Band Council system appears to be a necessary and simple solution to effective management of resources and services. However, it also creates a power differential between those who are part of the management body and those who are not. When such differences in power occur, those in control have the freedom to determine how they will manage and distribute resources. How the Band Council accomplishes this task is typically unclear (Fiss, 2005). The lack of clarity and transparency benefits the council by allowing flexibility in allocation, but also the possibility for inequality and unfair distribution.

One way inequality manifests itself is through favouritism. P. Lane (personal communication, August, 2004), an Aboriginal researcher and scholar, suggested that favouritism is a means by which Band Councillors can retain positions of power and status, and in so doing, maintain the economic and social disparity on reserves. Ellen and Bertha refer to this type of favouritism on their reserves:

Locally, I think our politicians are very corrupt. I think they're only out for themselves. They're only out for their own around here and you know, that's what every Native lives with. [Ellen]

Did you see that big, beautiful house? Must be nice. Her Dad was Chief before. I don't know how that went but I just know they're all rich now. [Bertha]

Complications for Women

For those outside the circle of decision-making power, this dynamic creates complications when the need for a specific service or resource arises. In part, what complicates women's lives is the lack of clarity about how Band decisions are made with respect to the allocation of funds for education, housing renovations, membership decisions, and woman abuse. Bertha's quote speaks about this lack of clarity.

I don't even know how it [the Band] *divides up the money. I know it has to do with age because some families have the same amount of kids but they get less or more. It's weird. I don't know how those decisions get made. I should find out – but I don't even know how!* [Bertha]

Many of the women interviewed talked about making requests to the Band Council for resources or services. In the next quote, Ellen describes her experience of seeking help from the Band office.

I went to the council for help and this councillor turned around and looked at me and says, "Who are you and why should we help you?" This was one of my leaders, one of my so-called leaders – they're supposed to help me. Well, ever since then, I've been turned off by them completely. [Ellen]

Ellen's quote highlights two important things: First, her request is general, which illustrates her lack of knowledge regarding what exactly can be requested; and second, the reply she reports does not seem to inform Ellen of what help there is or who can ask for it. From Ellen's perspective, the response communicates an unwillingness to help her navigate the system.

While Ida's request is for assistance with making specific home repairs, it demonstrates her lack of knowledge about the procedure and a failure on the part of the Band to respond to her needs.

We called some councillors to come and look at the house. They came and took a lot of pictures but we haven't seen them again – and that was a long time ago. You know that big window in the living room? It's broken. It was like that when we moved in. They [Band] *put tape on it. During the early spring, there was still a lot of snow and it was up over the steps so we had to get buckets and buckets to drain it out when it started melting. It was flooding every day. The Band is supposed to help with that, like to do the repairs to the home but...they've never been back. I don't know what we're supposed to do now, just wait I guess.* [Ida]

Schematic Analysis

Three main schemata were evoked by the women to make sense of and deal with the Transparency in the Distribution of Band Resources and Services. One schema is *Entitlement to an Equal Share*. Delma questions what is done with funds that are given to the Band in her name.

The Band still gets money for me every year because of my Band number. Every person that has a Band number, they get money for that person. I don't know how much they get in a year. Every year, every spring, money comes in. So what do they do with my portion of the money? I sure as hell don't see it! [Delma]

Women also drew on a schema about the expectations placed on those elected to council positions. Specifically, the *Servanthood Mentality* schema is defined by altruism and respect. Bertha and Leah's comments illustrate parts of this schema:

If I was a counsellor, I wouldn't keep the money for myself, I'd help everybody else – that's what it should be about. [Bertha]

They [chief and council] *are in there to help us. Reserves are in trouble – there are so many problems – drinking and drugs and who knows what else, and these people don't seem to care about that. That's what I don't understand – in our culture, caring for women and children is the top priority – but we're not. Not here anyways.* [Leah]

These quotes illustrate that the *Servanthood Mentality* schema includes the belief that those in leadership positions should be motivated by the interests of the people they serve. Moreover, the schema includes an expectation that leadership decisions should reflect this altruistic motivation.

Many women interviewed also utilized the socially available schema of *Political Corruption*. The following quotes from four women highlight the use of this schema to

make sense of their experience of trying to access Band resources and services. These quotes reveal the depth of scepticism that many First Nations women expressed about the leadership in their communities.

Unless you decide to brownnose, in other words, kiss their butts and play their little games and stuff like that then you don't get anywhere. ...the people in control here are busy lining their own pockets – it's not right...They learn it. They learn it from the person that was in their seat before them. [Ellen]

It doesn't matter who gets voted into council 'cause they're all the same. They get into power and then they're all driving new fancy cars! [Katie]

Democracy doesn't exist up there. There are people that are in power and they make decisions based on how it suits them. That's why they don't ever bother to tell you why. [Ursala]

It's a farce. They do what they... well it's like any politician I guess, eh? They make some promises and don't follow through. [Dora]

Coping Strategies

Women appear to invoke these schemata sequentially, which facilitates meaning-making. However, these schemata are also entwined with others, and to identify only one would obscure the context. Specifically, women tend to draw from the *Entitlement* schema (i.e., "I/we are entitled to X), then tap into the *Servanthood Mentality* schema

(i.e., "Band Council should provide X"), and move toward using the *Political Corruption* schema to explain their experiences (i.e., "But they do not provide X because they are only out for themselves"). Women thereby use a cognitive strategy to reconcile the contradictions between their expectations of entitlement and access to resources, and the experience of attempting to access those resources. Consequently, a revised schema, *Nepotism Rules,* emerges as the primary coping strategy women used to reconcile this OM.

The following statements from Dora and Ellen succinctly capture this commonly employed revised schema:

If you are related to them though – then you get stuff done. [Dora]

You ever hear that thing about being born in the wrong clan? That's me. I don't have the right last name to get anywhere in this community. [Ellen]

In addition to utilizing a cognitive coping strategy to make sense of this OM, many women subsequently took action to find alternative ways of meeting their needs. Ursala's decision to bypass the Chief and Council and do things for herself was typical of the women interviewed.

I got no response – letter after letter after letter and nothing! Finally, I got the word saying "We don't allow this" and that was it. There was no explanation given, and they don't seem to feel like they have to tell you why. So...I kind of got discouraged and said

the hell with all of you then- I'll just do it on my own. I'm always doing that saying, "Forget it I'll do it myself" because I'm learning over and over again that the Band isn't there for me. [Ursala]

The utilisation of this coping strategy has significant benefits to the Chief and Council. Specifically, when women tap into their own resourcefulness and creativity to meet their funding or resource needs, the Council then has fewer requests to process. As the demands from individual members decrease, there are obvious financial savings and the division of resources becomes easier to administer.

Commentary from Institutional Representatives

Three of the six Institutional Representatives who responded to the request for comment addressed this issue. Two of the three acknowledged that the mistrust and scepticism toward Band Councils expressed by the participants is warranted. For example, one leader stated:

Political corruption is everywhere: look at the number of scandals within the Canadian Federal government in recent years. These are supposed to be our National leaders! [Institutional Representative #1]

One Aboriginal leader, however, side-stepped the issue of the mismanagement of funds. She couched her response in focusing on the lack of resources bands have to provide for their members. She stated:

Band resources are limited...and many Bands lack the capacity to properly provide for their members. [Institutional Representative #2]

The *Servanthood Mentality* and *Political Corruption* schemata were evident in the comments from the two leaders who acknowledged that mismanagement of funds often occurs at the level of Band Councils. For example, one leader stated:

It [mismanagement of funds] *happens all the time. Many many Band counsellors and other Native leaders are in those positions through political favouritism.* [Institutional Representative #3]

This quote highlights the *Political Corruption* schema that women drew on to understand their experience with respect to the politics on their reserves.

The *Servanthood Mentality* and *Political Corruption* schemata are raised in the following quote:

Native governments were guided by principals of inclusion and consensus...we knew that system intimately and functioned very well within it. The process involved the community and the decisions benefited the community as a whole. We now have to function within an adversarial system, where only a few people are in control. That can't work in any society...corruption is inherent in that kind of a system of governance. How many Canadian citizens really know how the government works, what its policies are, how decisions are made? That lack of knowledge is even more acute in Native communities

because they are relating to something that is totally foreign. [Institutional Representative #1]

Both of these leaders identified the need for a radical restructuring of the current political system in order to improve the lives of Native Canadians.

Organisational Moment #5: Education for Native People

Knowledge is power. To be powerful is to have the knowledge of that society. ...back in the [olden] *days, knowledge used to mean being able to hunt and trap, and knowing the traditions. What it means for us now is recognising that we have to be educated in the same way White people are. Native women need more power and education is the way to do it.* [Cindy]

Definition

The *Education for Native People* is an OM because it provides the Federal government and Band Councils with a feasible solution to the economic and social problems that plague First Nations communities. Indeed, education is a core component of one's worth in society (Mingat & Winter, 2002) and an important determinant of productivity and other economic outcomes for a nation (de la Fuente, 2002). Officials from 180 countries agreed that "...a necessary condition for reducing poverty...is better-educated workforces" (Mingat & Winter, p. 1). Aboriginal people have the lowest rates of educational attainment and the highest rates of poverty in Canada (Statistics Canada,

2003d). It seems ironic then, that the *Education for Native People* would be conceptualised here as an OM that causes complications in women's lives. Yet, the reality of obtaining a high school or post-secondary education is a complicated process for First Nations women (Battiste & Barman, 1995). Many of the participants' experiences regarding educational attainment contradict the promise of what education ought to provide. In addition, the Federal government and Band Councils benefit in specific ways from promoting the education of Native people as the answer to systemic marginalisation and poverty. Consequently, the *Education for Native People* meets the criteria as an OM because it serves the needs of the institution by providing a means to alleviate many of the problems of Native communities. However, as will be elaborated below, it complicates the lives of women because they are doubly disadvantaged in terms of their ability to obtain an education and to utilise it to improve their lives.

Promotion of Native Education: Benefits to Federal Government

Historically, the Federal government's approach to Native education has not served the needs of First Nations' communities (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002). Federal jurisdiction over education through treaty agreements led to the establishment of residential schools that "[f]or nearly 100 years mandated English curricula and assimilationist objectives" (Battiste & Barman, 1995). As a result of the residential school experience, there has been criticism of and subsequent litigation against the Federal government by Aboriginal rights coalitions. This action has prompted significant change in the government's approach to Native education.

This shift began in 1972 when the Federal government adopted the policy of Indian control of Indian education (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002). It was

further solidified in the 1982 constitutional reforms that guaranteed protection of Aboriginal rights, including cultural and linguistic protection. In addition, the Supreme Court of Canada supported and affirmed that Aboriginal rights include the right to practice and teach their traditions. In spite of this shift in policy, research suggests that there have been relatively few changes to Native education in Canada (Battiste & Barman, 1995; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada). Government action in the past two decades indicates the willingness to acknowledge that earlier assimilationist education policies eroded First Nations cultures and caused physical, social, and psychological damage to individuals and communities (Battiste & Barman). Specifically, the Federal government funded studies, initiated partnerships with Aboriginal organisations to examine Native education, and worked with provincial governments to implement recommendations to improve education for First Nations people.

The government presents its interest as being motivated by the desire to raise the standard of living for First Nations people (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2003). Education is put forward as the most feasible pathway to achieve this goal (de la Fluente, 2002). The government's public position is that investing in an education system that meets the needs of Native people will lead not only to improved socioeconomic status, but also to stronger Aboriginal communities equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to be meaningful contributors to Canada's social and economic growth (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2003). Yet, in spite of 20 years of research, the Final Report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education (2002) concluded that "...to date, there has been very limited or no political will to implement these changes" (p. 2). That being said, residential schools were abolished in the early

1980s and a First Nations University was established in Regina, Saskatchewan in 2003. Clearly, there has been progress toward providing improved education for Native people in the past 20 years. According to some Aboriginal scholars, however, there continues to be barriers to education for Native people (Battist & Barman, 1995).

The government benefits from its public image of being an advocate of educational reform. It can concretely demonstrate the initiatives undertaken (i.e., financial expenditures) to improve Native education. At the same time, however, the progress is slow and the radical changes that have been proposed (to be discussed below) have yet to be acted upon. The government stands to gain from its middle-of-the-road position in two direct ways: financially and in terms of electoral support. These two benefits are discussed next.

Financial benefits to the federal government. The recommendations toward meeting the vision for renewed Native education involve significant funding. According to the Final Report of the Minister's National Working Group on Education (2002), there are three immediate actions required: (a) transferring the jurisdiction for education to Native people; (b) creating the infrastructure and providing the supporting mechanisms to allow Aboriginal people to exercise education jurisdiction; and (c) revising the education budget in a way that accurately reflects the costs of education reform. Together, these actions require significant funding. To date, some monies have been spent by the government on research and strategic planning, but these are insignificant in comparison to the total monies needed to implement all the reforms. The government is therefore able to spend less money and maintain the image of being an advocate for Native education.

Benefits related to electoral support. High among its priorities, the government seeks to maintain electoral support. This requires acting in ways consistent with its reading of the mood and will of the Canadian public. The non-Native citizens of Canada have much to lose if the recommendations of the Working Group are implemented. Indeed, Canadians would bear the cost through taxation and reallocation of funds. It is arguable that current National programs (e.g., Employment Insurance) would sustain budget cuts. Many people believe that National social programs are already under-funded (Barlow, 2001) and it is feasible that the public could react by withholding support for any government that made a firm commitment to implementing all of the recommendations regarding education for Aboriginal people. Consequently, the government itself has much to lose, not the least of which would be its mandate to govern.

Promotion of Native Education: Benefits to Band Council

The importance and value of Native education is a message that is widespread and comes from many sources, including the Chiefs and Band Councils at the municipal level. The belief that education is a necessary mechanism for improving the lives of First Nations women cuts across the data. The quotes from Kara and Ursala below are representative of the participants' views:

The Band office is always trying to put more and more money into education. I support that because our young people need a good education now-a-days – especially our girls. [Kara]

On the whole, we [Native people] *need to become more educated...I think that is something that holds us back... and keeps us in this cycle of poverty and violence and suicide. It all links back to not having the education behind us to get ahead.* [Ursala]

Kara's quote highlights two important points. First, she perceives her Band as working toward investing money into the education of Native children. Second, it is evident from her comment that she has internalised the idea of the inherent importance of formal education for Native youth. As a result of the interaction of these two factors, the Band Council continues to have her support because she views their work as valuable and necessary. The quote from Ursala suggests that a lack of education is a significant barrier to advancement for First Nations people. She too has internalised the belief in education as the primary means by which Native people will be liberated from the oppressive conditions in which they now exist.

Therein lies the crux of how Band Councils stand to benefit from participating in the promotion of Native Education: Support for Native education and the perceived will of the leaders as committed to education appear to be enough to retain member support. Added to this is the fact that the message "education is the way to get ahead" has been internalized. These factors combine to offer a semblance of change and hope. The status quo is preserved, however, without the practical action necessary to reduce or eliminate barriers to successful educational outcomes for Native people. Indeed, the verbal support for education by Band Councils does not always translate into financial commitment and action. This political dynamic on reserves is similar to that of the Federal political

dynamic: balancing the perceived mood of the electorate and acting in accordance with whatever will best ensure a renewed mandate to govern.

Complications for Women

A number of complications that emerged from the data indicate how barriers to education for women are systemic thereby impeding their attainment of education. Indeed, women encountered complications in completing school as girls, continuing their education as adults, being educated off reserve, and receiving a diploma or degree.

Complications to completing high school. In many cases, women were not able to complete high school in their teens because they had adult responsibilities. As Hannah's quote illustrates, her education was sacrificed for the duty to assume the care of her younger siblings:

I think I was in grade 10 when my mom left. I didn't know when she would be back – or if she would ever be back. I tried to find someone to look after them when I was in school, but that didn't work. I was the oldest and it [her siblings' care] *fell onto me. ...I was so exhausted... so, I ended up leaving school.* [Hannah]

Complications of continuing education as adults. Many women who sought educational training in their adulthood already had their own families. This created significant complications for their intimate relationships. Kathy and Kara describe how returning to school disrupted their families, and how this disruption became a barrier that kept them from completing their education:

I was determined that I was going back to school. It meant being away for chunks of time; like I'd be gone for a month and then back for a month. It was hard. Joe [husband] *got it into his head that I was cheating on him – but here I am, slaving away, studying night and day, and having to deal with him accusing me of being with other men!* [Kathy]

I did my upgrading here [on her reserve] *and then left for college. He* [husband] *looked after the kids. He was drinking a lot and I was scared they weren't being looked after right. We'd be fighting on the phone and I couldn't get my school-work done. I used to cry sometimes when I didn't pass a subject...I'd cry right in the classroom. It was just too hard fighting with him and trying to study and being scared for the kids and they'd say "Come home Mommy." I ended up quitting and coming home.* [Kara]

Disrupted family life is a persistent cost to obtaining education or training for many Native women. This is a significant factor in their decision regarding the pursuit of an education. Many women, like Kathy and Kara, attempted the dual task of obtaining educational training while trying to maintain their relationships at a distance, without success.

With increasing access to distance education, some women attempted to avoid the disruption of home life by tapping into the available technology. This proved ineffective, however, because as Natalie and Bertha explain below, there can be difficulty meeting the criteria for educational funding established by their Band Councils.

I wanted funding for school but the answer was "Sorry, you live off reserve so you're at the bottom of the list. If there's anything left over, maybe we'll consider you." That's how I was treated. It shouldn't be like that. It should depend on what you're going to school for or how well you're doing, instead of looking at you and saying, "Well, you don't live on the reserve now so too bad for you." [Natalie]

I just didn't meet their criteria. They didn't consider home study [distance education] *good enough I guess. But I couldn't go away to school – I had kids to care for. So fuck them* [Band Council], *I'm paying for my education myself.* [Bertha]

Despite the promotion of education as the pathway to success, reduced poverty, and decolonisation for Native people, the necessary infrastructure and support services are often lacking. Even when there are options for education without leaving communities, such as distance education or computer-based home learning, not all Band Councils fund such alternatives. Consequently, women are either not funded or choose family over education.

For some of these women, returning to school in their adulthood was a difficult transition. Katie describes the fear of having to live off the reserve:

I got accepted [by the school she applied to] *and I was excited at first. But then I thought "Oh my God, what have I done!" It was too far from home...I wouldn't know anyone, it was a big city and I'm from here...I'd be lost.* [Katie]

Fear and cultural isolation emerged as important paralysing factors contributing to women's decisions to return to their home communities without completing their educational training. The following quotes from Leah and Katerie illustrate the impact of these factors for them:

I just couldn't stand being away from home. I hated every minute of it. I was so scared – I didn't say a peep to anyone. [Leah]

We were the only Aboriginal students there. It was an awful experience! We were outsiders and didn't know how to get to be insiders. It's awful not to be with your own kind...it makes you suspicious and feel stupid because you don't know things that everyone else seems to take for granted. [Katerie]

Complications to receiving education off-reserve. The issue of receiving education off-reserve was raised by women who lived off reserve and attended public and secondary schools within mainstream society. They described how these early experiences negatively influenced the development of their Indian identity. Their descriptions exemplify a cognitive struggle between the value of education and the value of belonging to Aboriginal communities. Sally and Cindy's quotes illustrate this experience:

I was lucky that my parents valued education. They left the reserve so that we would get a good education because the quality of education on reserves was really bad. So I grew up

here and went to school here. So I'm thankful to have had a good education. But, I'm one of those "Apple Indians." I learned really quickly that it wasn't OK to be Indian, it was bad, dirty, inferior...so I did everything I could to make myself White. It worked. It worked so well that I'm not seen as being a real Indian now. When I go home [to parents' reserve] *I'm not accepted. They think that I think I'm better than them. It's sad...I'm not Indian and I'm not White, so what am I?* [Sally]

In junior high, I remember feeling like I was living two separate lives: I'd go home to my Indian family with all the alcohol and drinking and fighting, and the next day I'd go to school and pretend to be White. Most of my friends then were White and I pretended that my life was like theirs – it wasn't. ...But, you know, one of the good things for me I think was that I graduated [from high school] *and I did OK in school so I had the confidence to go off to college. It was funny though, because after I graduated, I think I was blown away, because I was the first one in my family to graduate, so it was like – who am I...how do I fit in here now?* [Cindy]

These two excerpts from Sally and Cindy clearly speak to the cognitive dissonance that was present for them during their development. While they value the education they have received, they also acknowledge that it came at a significant cost to their Indian identity and sense of belonging to their families and to the wider Native community.

Complications with having received a degree/diploma. Despite the barriers, some women obtained college and university degrees. They were able to achieve the promised

dream of employment success and reduced poverty. However, they experienced an unusual form of alienation. Specifically, romantic isolation from Native men has been a consequence of their academic success. Cindy and Kensia speak to this phenomenon:

So I've got all this education, and you know what? I can't even get a date! Native men are threatened by educated women. Look around at the educated Native women here [names community]; *they are either single or married to White guys. ...So, maybe I make more money than I would have if I hadn't gone to school, but I have to tell you, it's lonely. I'm lonely and to me, having a family, an intimate relationship is a big part of what makes life worth living, and I don't see that changing for me, unless I'm willing to marry a White guy. So you tell me where are all the benefits that education is supposed to bring!?* [Cindy]

To be an educated Native woman is a pretty isolating experience. I've gotten used to being alone. I take care of my mom and I work. That's my life. There are not too many of us around here and I've often wondered if maybe it's because they [younger women] *see that education ends up costing you in terms of your personal life – the romantic part of life. So, they can see that getting an education is not all that it's made out to be.* [Kensia]

The trade-off some Native women encounter between academic achievement and intimate relationships with Native men was evident in these quotes. For these women, academic achievement has been an alienating experience. Family life, at least marriage to a Native man, and educational success appear to be mutually exclusive.

Women also identified language as a source of internal struggle that has significant ramifications for future generations. Kathy speaks to this issue:

I knew our children had to get a good education and I knew Ojibwa was, at that time, a barrier. My husband did not want the children to be laughed at or embarrassed because they spoke Native, so he forbade me to speak to them in our language. I felt kind of obligated to believe him then because my first language is Ojibwa and I know how hard it is to try to speak English because I think in Ojibwa first and translate into English so it takes me a while to make it sound right. I did not want the children to have to do that. ...I also know what it was like to try to learn in school and always be thinking in Native. I really struggled with that as they were growing up because I wanted them to speak our language, but I also didn't want them to have the troubles I had. [Kathy]

Kathy's quote delineates the hardship she encountered as a child educated in a foreign language. It also describes the difficulty she still has in processing information and translating between languages. Further, her quote highlights the pivotal role of racism in her decision to raise her children in an English environment. She noted specifically the reactions of children to speaking a Native language (i.e., laughter) that her husband predicted would be a source of embarrassment for their children. Kathy's desire to protect her children from encountering this kind of racism and the potential barriers that she experienced herself as a Native-speaking woman coalesced to bring her to raise her children with English as their first and only language. It was a decision that Kathy now regrets:

I am so sorry that I did that to them [raised them in English]. *I see them struggle to be Indian now because they don't have the language. Language helps you to know who you are – they don't have that and they are caught between two different worlds.* [Kathy]

Again, the underlying theme of alienation surfaces in this quote. First, Kathy is partly alienated from mainstream society because she predominately functions and thinks in a language other than Canada's two official languages. Second, she believes her children have suffered in their development as First Nations people as a result of her desire to facilitate their integration into mainstream society.

In sum, many factors combine to discourage First Nations women from achieving their educational goals: being young, having adult responsibilities, being an adult trying to balance the needs of school and family life, and trying to negotiate a personal identity among feelings of isolation and fear emerged as significant barriers. How women make sense of their experiences within the context of the *Education for Native People* is examined next.

Schematic Analysis

There were two overarching schemata that influenced women's thinking and action with respect to the *Education for Native People* as the key to liberation from oppression: *Traditional Gender Roles* and *Education Equals Success.*

The *Traditional Gender Roles*[2] schema is a socially-available schema that is derived from patriarchy's division of gender. The schema subsumes the directive that women should stay at home to care for their husbands and children. Accordingly, if they

[2] Traditional here is not linked to Aboriginal culture.

deviate from this prescription, punishment is to be expected. Leah and Katie illustrate the power of this schema in the following quotes:

I saw myself as a cry baby because I wanted to go home...it didn't feel good being so far away from family. I just couldn't do it [stay to complete her course]*...I guess I'm not smart enough.* [Leah]

I tried going to college but it wasn't so good. Sometimes I'd go to school with bruises on my face, and one time he [husband] *came after me at school and dragged me back* [home]. *I didn't have the strength to finish, so I quit.* [Katie]

These quotes highlight how the belief about the domestic sphere as the proper place for women shapes their decisions. Leah and Katie diverged from the traditional gender role, and when faced with challenges, it is this schema they evoked to explain their decision to leave school and return home. They internalised their experience as personal failure and engaged in self-blame as a means to understand their negative experiences. Specifically, in Leah's case, she left home to attend school. While she commented on how difficult it was to be away from her family, she makes sense of her failure to complete her education as a deficiency in her intellectual ability. Katie also internalised the responsibility for not finishing school. In her case, she explained it as a flaw in her character that ultimately led to her decision to quit school. Katie assumed that she should have been strong enough to successfully negotiate life with an abusive husband and successful academic achievement. The power of the *Traditional Gender*

Roles schema is so incessant that rather than choose to leave her husband, Katie left school instead. There is no indication from these women that external factors, such as the pervasive message that women's place is in the home, or the culture shock they encountered, or the circumstances of their lives, or the way in which education is provided, may have contributed to their experience of education.

The *Education Equals Success* schema is one that taps into the dominant hegemony that education leads to jobs, money, and personal fulfilment. It informed women's expectations about how their lives would change as a result of successful attainment of an education. Wilma's quote below illustrates this schema as the backdrop shaping her current thinking.

So where are all the jobs? We get educated and then what? We can't go back to the reserve because there is nothing there for us. That's exactly what happened to me. We're not stupid. Lots of people quit even before high school because they know there is nothing at the end. And, there is a perception that if you have a little bit of education you're too good for your people. We don't want to be alienated from our own people. Sure, they [Band Councils] *say "Education, education, education" – but really – for what?* [Wilma]

This quote is evidence of the schema *Education Equals Success* as the primary schema Wilma utilises in her analysis of the high school drop out rates for Aboriginal people. It also highlights the contradiction between the schema, which promises what education will provide, and the reality of those who obtain education and return to their reserves. When this schema was evoked, women were confronted with a need to explain

the discrepancies that exist between the schema and their experience of this OM. *Education Equals Success* was adopted primarily by women who had obtained college or university diplomas and degrees or had partially completed college and university programs.

Some women drew from both schemata, *Education Equals Success* and *Traditional Gender Roles*. Kathy's quotation below provides an example of the combined influence of these two prominent schemata.

It took me a long time to get through [school]. *It wasn't because I couldn't do the work or I wasn't smart enough. It was because I had no help...even his family would say to him "What more do you want out of Kathy? She's trying to improve your life, the lives of your children." Because we had a house and payments to make, I had three different jobs so that I could pay the bills, get the food on the table, and take care of the children, and in the meantime – he's not there and I'm trying to study. I wonder about it – if it* [education] *was really worth it.* [Kathy]

From Kathy's quote, it is possible to see how *Education Equals Success* and *Traditional Gender Roles* operate together to influence her expectations. Specifically, Kathy performs the duties of womanhood (i.e., caring for the children), in addition to providing financially for her family without her partner's help. She is meeting these demands while obtaining an education in order to improve their lives. There is a clear contradiction between the promise of an improved life through education and Kathy's experience. Moreover, *Education Equals Success* appears to be operating for Kathy as

well as her husband's family. The verbal support from her in-laws that likely provided additional affirmation of this schema's validity for Kathy.

Coping Strategies

Women coped with the contradictions between their personal educational experiences and the message that obtaining an education will improve their lives. They did so by making cognitive revisions to the schemata used to make sense of the OM. In addition, the schema revisions led to action-based strategies to cognitively understand and cope with the complications created by the *Education for Native People.*

Schemata revisions. Many of the women who tapped into the *Traditional Gender Roles* schema and engaged in self-blame as a means to understand their experiences revised the schema: *It's Different Now.* The addition of this component illustrates the use of cognitive reframing as a means to reduce the emotional distress associated with self-blaming and to increase their sense of hope for the future. The following quotes from Katie and Kara illustrate its use and function:

I think it's better for kids now-a-days though. ...I think they're smarter than we were back then and there are more supports for them. [Katie]

Young people today have a better chance in life. English didn't come easy to me. They don't have that problem because they don't speak Native anymore. And I think they are more strong-minded, even the girls. [Kara]

This coping strategy allowed women to conceptualise what they view as reasons for their personal failure as non-relevant to the younger generation. Believing that children are smarter and more determined than before provides hope that this generation will experience the successful educational outcomes that they did not.

Cognitive restructuring was also part of the coping strategy for women who utilised the *Education Equals Success* schema. Kensia's quote below demonstrates how she reduces the cognitive dissonance inherent in her experience of being an educated Native woman and the lack of intimate relationships.

Don't get me wrong – I'm thankful for my education! It has helped me to see the world differently than I would have I think. That's important – more important to me than being in love. I guess I'm in love with my work – that's where my passion is. [Kensia]

This coping strategy provides women with a cognitive means to accentuate the benefits derived from being educated women, while minimising the costs that they have incurred in their personal lives.

Action-based coping strategies. The schema *Education Equals Success* formed the basis for action for some of the women who drew on this way of understanding the contradictions inherent in this OM. Cindy's quote below is an example of a coping strategy she uses:

We have this little dinner club – there's three main women in it and we cook and eat and talk about our experiences. Our analysis is that we're smart and sure we're attracted to some men and it's not that nobody wants us, it's that nobody can handle us. [Cindy]

While this exemplifies an action-based strategy, specifically the formation of a support group, there is also a cognitive component operating as well. Part of the support element is the sharing of experience and the development of an analysis to explain that experience. This method of coping with social contradictions was the basis for the feminist consciousness raising groups of the 1960s and 70s.

Natalie revised the *Education Equals Success* schema to *Education Threatens the Status Quo*. It is that revision which underlies her action-based coping strategy:

Band Councils are male-dominated in the North with very little education. They'd rather be stuck with somebody that's got very little education and who is going to promote nepotism and not deal with the hard-core issues in the community. Anytime I get a chance to speak to groups of Native kids, I take it. I think we have to get the message out that things need to change politically if we expect improvements in our lives – kids need to start hearing that message early [in their lives]. [Natalie]

It is clear from the quotation above that Natalie's analysis of the politics on reserves includes a belief that educated people threaten the existing power dynamics. She utilises this revised schema as a way to understand the contradiction between her

experience and the OM *Education for Native People*. It also informs her decision to use the education of young people as a political strategy to bring about change.

Commentary from Institutional Representatives

The three Institutional Representatives (two Native, one non-Native) who responded to this OM indicated that the obstacles identified in this study negatively affect access to and achievement of education for Native women. For example, one leader stated:

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, and First Nation education representatives commenced a comprehensive review of the Department's post secondary education program in early 2005. The preliminary survey and research results support the comments made here [this study's findings]. [Institutional Representative #5]

The non-Native leader focused his comments on the supports needed to facilitate access to education and academic achievement for First Nations people:

...culturally relevant curricula, the integration and recognition of traditional Native values and culture into mainstream programming, and the responsibility of mainstream institutions to create positive and welcoming environments are the kind of supports needed to improve success rates of Aboriginal people. [Institutional Representative #5]

The two Native leaders also highlighted the need for integration of traditional Native values and culturally-relevant curricula. In addition, these Institutional

Representatives addressed the participants' experience of becoming outsiders to their own communities following their achievement of an education. The following quote highlights their understanding:

There is great shame among our people for not being educated, by that I mean education according to how it is defined in Canadian society. At the same time, there is anger and resentment toward that very system because of the residential schools, because they robbed us of our families, our childhoods, our culture and traditions. It's a hard issue. [Institutional Representative #3]

This Native leader identifies an intra-psychic conflict that exists among Aboriginal people. Given the depth of the trauma experienced by whole communities resulting from the residential school experience, it is unlikely that the supports identified by the non-Native leader will be a sufficient solution to the problem of low levels of academic achievement for First Nations people.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate intimate partner violence within the context of racial oppression, through a focus on Aboriginal women's experiences of relationship abuse. The discussion begins with a review of the methodological considerations for the study and a summary of the results. These sections set the stage for the subsequent discussion of the connections among the Organisational Moments (OM) and woman abuse. Next, the applicability of feminist theories to Native women's experience of abuse is reviewed in light of the findings, followed by the implications of the Institutional Representatives reaction to the results. Political and clinical implications of the results are discussed next, followed by the limitations and strengths of the present study and directions for future research.

Methodological Considerations

Aboriginal scholars have emphasised the need for socially-based research issues to be contextualised within the historic factors that have shaped Native society (Cheshire, 2001; Chester, Robin, Koss, Lopez, & Goldman, 1994; Frank, 1992; Hamby, 2000; Longclaws, Barkwell, & Rosebush, 1994; Norton & Manson, 1995; Stout & Kipling, 1998). The Psycho-Social Ethnography of the Common Place (PSEC, Gouliquer & Poulin, 2005) was adopted as the methodology for this study in response to Aboriginal scholars' calls for contextualised investigations. PSEC permitted an examination of the influence of historic and current socio-political factors on Aboriginal women's reality. In addition, PSEC provided a means to identify the psychological process of reconciling cognitive discrepancies between experience and social ideology. Specifically, PSEC calls for the examination of women's lives, their daily experiences, cognitions, and coping

strategies. It provides a systematic approach to reveal the contradictions and complications caused by the gaps between institutional needs and those of marginalised individuals. The schemata evoked to make sense of these gaps or contradictions shed light on the psychological processes involved. It also leads to an analysis of the coping strategies, both cognitive and behavioural, used by the marginalised group. Consequently, an essential step in PSEC is to identify OMs, or instances when the needs of the institution usurp the needs of women. This process permits an examination of how organisations benefit from maintaining the status quo and why resistance to change occurs. Identifying OMs then, provides the means to uncover competing schemata that arise when social ideologies complicate Native women's daily lives. In doing so, we tap into the intersection between the social and the psychological, which is essential for contextualised knowledge and understanding of women's psychologies (Gouliquer & Poulin; Lerman, 1986).

Schemata are essential for efficiently interpreting our environments (Widmayer, n.d.) and influence our decisions and actions (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). This study demonstrated how women rely on schemata to make sense of their experience, and how those schemata were subsequently modified as a result of their experience. Thus, this study supported the view that schemata-use is a process of sense-making that allows women to cognitively understand, resolve, and then act based on that understanding (Fiske & Taylor; Gouliquer & Poulin, 2005).

Some schemata are readily available in society. These socially-available schemata reflect the experience, beliefs, values, and understanding of the relations of ruling (Smith, 1987) or the hegemonic social ideologies (Khayatt, 1992; Montenegro, 2002). According

to Standpoint Theory (Harding, 1991), the dominant class has the power to influence beliefs and values (i.e., socially-available schemata). While marginalized groups have access to the socially-available schemata to interpret experiences, these schemata do not typically reflect their reality. When this mismatch occurs, it can create a situation of cognitive dissonance that must be resolved. This study demonstrated that First Nations women encounter multiple instances that require cognitive resolution, some of which resulted in schemata modification. Aboriginal women either reframed their interpretation of their experience in order to fit into existing schemata (e.g., blaming partner violence on substance abuse illustrated the use of a socially available schema, *It's the Drinking! It's the Drugs!*), or they rejected the socially-available schemata so that their experience could be cognitively interpreted (e.g., rejecting the schema that *Education Equals Success* for an understanding that education often leads to alienation for Native People).

Examining the schemata of marginalized people not only provided insight into the psychology of the group, but also into the psychology of the individual (to be discussed below). Specifically, the analysis revealed that schemata were shared among Aboriginal women despite differences in Band affiliations and geographic locations. This commonality was further evidenced in the feedback from the study's consultants. For example, when discussing the OM *Elder Support* and the schema *Elders are Victims*, one of the Métis consultants stated the following,

Your description of how using the Elders are Victims schema protects us from disregarding our traditions is exactly what I do. I never thought about it as a cognitive tool before. [Consultant #4]

The schemata common among Native women suggest that their experience, while unique in many ways, has fundamental qualities that are shared, which shape the way they interpret their reality. The finding of shared experiences and shared schemata contributes to the political implications of the present study (to be discussed below).

Summary of Results

The analysis yielded five OMs. First, the *Institutional Response to Violence against First Nations Women* OM identified how the absence of initiatives and services addressing the needs of abused Native women constrains women's options for seeking assistance. The Federal government benefits from this missing response by not having to spend money or risk the political displeasure of the White majority. The Band Councils benefit in much the same way financially. Moreover, by silence and inaction, they protect the gendered power differential in their communities and councils. According to critical realist theory, the advantages to the government and Band Councils just outlined are likely unintended consequences of the intentional actions and decisions of the politicians (Joseph, 1997). It is through this unintended behaviour that structures are reproduced (Joseph). The schemata women evoked to understand their experience influenced their internalized view of self and their methods of coping with the lack of services. Some women drew on the socially available schema that held the abused woman responsible for finding her own solutions to her predicament. Others tapped into schemata that included a contextualized political analysis of abuse. Regardless of the schemata used to make sense of the contradiction resulting from a leadership that does not act to protect them, all women took concrete and tangible action to deal with their victimization. This

primarily took the form of soliciting assistance from informal sources for protection (i.e., seeking shelter at the homes of friends and family).

The second OM, *Elder Support*, explicated the under-utilisation of this traditional form of guidance by Native women. Elders have lost credibility with the majority of participants. The analysis suggests that co-optation of the Eldership system by the Federal government provides specific benefits to the government and to Elders who participate in the co-optation. Briefly, the Federal government has contracted Elders to provide spiritual guidance in organisations. By doing so, it garners a public image of being sensitive to First Nations' traditions, while effectively deflecting responsibility for any hardship onto the Native leaders themselves. It also serves to divide the loyalties of First Nations peoples. For example, some Native people are employed by the government, thus, it is difficult for them to critique policies formulated by those who provide their livelihood. For those not employed in this way, issues of trust and credibility can emerge, and be directed toward Native people who may be seen as having sold out for the sake of a job. Historically, government and religious leaders' co-optation was much the same. With the advent of paid positions for Aboriginal Elders, the mechanism of co-optation has changed. Both of these two distinct mechanisms have a discrediting effect on the Elder system, thereby contributing in distinct but compounding ways to this OM.

Elders benefit as well. They have become willing civil servants and thereby participate in the reproduction of oppressive social structures. They have bought into a system where some Elders have power over others, have paid positions, and have become more accountable to and dependent upon the Federal government. This situation creates

an intrapsychic conflict for Native women who reject Elder support: In so doing, they reject an aspect of their own culture. Women drew on schemata that allowed them to cognitively resolve the dissonance between their *Elder* schema and their personal experiences of Elders. Specifically, they accessed one of two schemata: *Elders as Victims* and *Good Elders/Bad Elders*. Broadly speaking, these two schemata represent analyses that permitted women to retain the traditional concept of Elder, while distancing themselves from its present embodiment. Participants relied primarily on these cognitive methods for coping with the contradictions arising from this OM. Their actions, born out of the cognitive restructuring process, involved intentional observation and evaluation of Elders' behaviour prior to requesting assistance, or the elimination of Elder support as a personal option.

Addictions was the third OM examined. It explicated the links among the history of alcohol use during colonisation, the subsequent internalization of negative stereotypes, and the ways in which the widespread substance abuse problem in Native society today serves the political interests of Federal and Aboriginal leaders. Historically, the Federal government used the disabling results of alcohol to gain power over Native people (e.g., in land and treaty negotiations with First Nations; Brady, 2000; Duran & Duran, 1995). It then used the resultant alcohol addictions against Aboriginal people to foster and maintain belief in their biological inferiority. This belief in turn provided a rationale for maintaining paternalistic policies with respect to First Nations people. Currently, the Native leadership also benefits from the status quo regarding addictions. Systemic dysfunction and concentration of power are masked by the more immediate issues that result from addiction. The schemata evoked by participants were joined thematically by

an underlying sense of hopelessness; the belief that breaking the cycle of substance abuse and violence against them is not possible. Specifically, the schemata were: *I Can't Expect Anything Different; No Choice; It's the Drinking! It's the Drugs;* and *Indians are Drunks.* The participants coped with the complications resulting from this OM in several ways, including exiting the relationship, attempting to change their partners' behaviour, using alcohol themselves, or choosing to live without romantic intimacy.

The fourth OM, the *Transparency in the Distribution of Band Services and Resources*, revealed a gap in First Nations women's knowledge about how Bands operate at an administrative level. The Band and Federal leadership benefit from this lack of knowledge in specific ways. The Band benefits because a differing knowledge base creates a power differential between the Band leadership and its members. This differential affords the leadership the freedom to determine how resources are managed without public scrutiny. The Federal government benefits by appearing blameless in the eyes of the public when the mismanagement of resources by Band Councils occurs. While these advantages fit within the hegemony of the dominant class, critical realist theory maintains that the benefits are not consciously derived; rather, it is part of the unintentional reproduction of the status quo. The schemata women drew on to understand the complications inherent in this OM indicated a pervasive mistrust of the leadership and skepticism about the possibility for change. Specifically, the schemata were *Entitlement*, *Servanthood Mentality*, and *Political Corruption.* These schemata were utilized and then revised as a cognitive means of resolving the discordance. In addition, action-based coping strategies were then employed to deal with this OM, including finding alternatives to Band Council resources and political abstinence (e.g., not voting in elections).

The *Education for Native People* was the fifth OM examined. It highlighted the discordance between the message women receive about the value of education for improving their lives and the institutional barriers that make it difficult for Native women to obtain education. By constructing education as the key to reducing poverty and improving the lives of Native people, the Federal government and Aboriginal leaders inspire a sense of hope for the future for Aboriginal communities. Government and Native leaders are rewarded through electoral support for promoting this avenue of hope. The participants, however, experienced multiple challenges to obtaining an education, including the inability to access funding for school, battling internalized fear and cultural isolation, feelings of alienation, and the inability to negotiate the plethora of demands placed on them by family life and school commitments. The women drew on specific schemata to understand the disconnection between their experience and the social message of support of education for Native people. In particular, two schemata predominated: *Traditional Gender Roles* and *Education Equals Success*. These schemata informed their methods of coping, which involved cognitive restructuring and action-based strategies, such as the formation of a support group of similarly educated women.

Connections Between Organisational Moments and Woman Abuse

In previous studies, risk factors for partner abuse have been identified for Canadian women regardless of race (Brownridge, 2003; MacMillan & Gartner, 1999). The high prevalence of violence against Aboriginal women (e.g., more than three times the prevalence of reporting violence than non-Aboriginal women; Trainor & Mihorean, 2001) has been associated with many of them, including low educational attainment, patriarchal dominance, poverty, and heavy alcohol consumption by women's male

partners (Brownridge). The OMs identified in the present study helped to explicate some of the specific ways these risk factors operate for Native women.

In the only study to date to have examined individual risk markers for Aboriginal women, Brownridge (2003) found that for every unit of increase in Aboriginal women's education achievement, "[h]er odds of violence increased by 22%" (p. 74). This finding runs counter to the hypothesis that lower educational attainment increases the likelihood of violence, which has been found in studies investigating intimate partner violence among non-Aboriginal women (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997). The present study offers an explanation for the discrepancy. The results suggested that educated Aboriginal women represent a threat to the status-quo on reserves. This was evidenced in their experiences of employment opportunities on reserves being denied to them upon completion of their education, Native men's disinterest in intimate relationships with them, and the community's conveyance of betrayal and negative judgment regarding acceptance of these women in their home reserves. With respect to the latter, women indicated that the community's sense of shame and inferiority was brought to the foreground when its members achieved academic success and returned home. Native Institutional Representatives also commented on the frequency with which reserves shun educated members, and treat them as outsiders. Together, these factors led many of the educated women to choose to live off-reserve in order to find employment and acceptance outside of their home communities. This study suggests that the increased risk for violence for educated Aboriginal women may be the result of the threat they pose to the status quo on reserves, which may also be linked to the devaluation of women in Native society.

It has been suggested that violence against Native women by Native men may be a reaction to the devaluation of Native peoples and cultures, and that Native men assuage their own sense of worthlessness through exerting power and control over their partners (Brownridge, 2003; Duran & Duran, 1995). Brownridge found that patriarchal dominance, as measured by male-partner control of family income, increased the risk for abuse for all women. For Aboriginal women, however, the risk of violence was almost twice that of non-Aboriginal women. It can be argued that control of family income by a male partner is one facet of patriarchal domination. The present study expanded that definition and linked the concepts of patriarchal domination and racial oppression. Specifically, the results of the present analysis indicated that the over-representation of men in positions of power in Native society, male control of community resource distribution, and the lack of institutional response to violence may all be linked to the devaluation of Native people and internalization of oppression that is further expressed through violence against Aboriginal women. Thus, the results of the present study also supported the hypothesis that the internalization of patriarchy's devaluation of women by Native men may be associated with higher rates of violence against First Nations women (Brownridge, 2003; Duran & Duran, 1995).

Historical records indicate that sex-based division of labour among Native peoples predated colonization (Emberley, 2001). In pre-colonial times, however, community and kinship relations modeled respect for and equality between the sexes in terms of power and status (Emberley; Hamby, 2000; RCAP, 1996). The restructuring of the Aboriginal family, based on European values, and the disentitling of Aboriginal women from indigenous governance combined to create "fissures within Aboriginal

families along gender lines" (Emberley, p. 62). Feminist scholars have explicated how the gendered division of labour under patriarchy ensures women's dependence on men for resources (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Khyatt, 1992; MacKinnon, 1982; Yllö, 1983, 1993). Women's financial poverty, therefore, is not surprising in the context of male domination. Neither is it surprising that economic deprivation has been identified as a risk marker for violence for Aboriginal women (Brownridge, 2003): Economic independence would increase women's options for extricating herself and her children from a violent partner. In contrast, economic dependence on a male partner would limit the options available to her.

The results of this study broaden the concept of poverty, however, to include a more global lack of access to power. The data from the *Institutional Response to Violence Against Aboriginal Women* and the *Lack of Transparency in the Distribution of Band Services and Resources* shift the discussion of women's deprivation beyond a lack of financial resources and into the arena of social and political disempowerment. In spite of violence against Aboriginal women being identified as one of the most pressing issues in modern society most reserves do not have any shelters or resources specific to victim services. Neither do many women possess the knowledge of how Band Councils operate, or knowledge of the policies and practices employed by Band Councils that directly affect them, such as how to obtain information about available resources, how to apply for funding for home repairs or education, or on what basis their social assistance payments are calculated. Given these factors that act to limit access to resources, the extent of women's poverty, including but not limited to economic poverty, increases their

risk for violence, and reproduces the conditions that allow violence against Aboriginal woman to persist.

Heavy alcohol consumption by male partners is another factor associated with increased risk of violence for Aboriginal women (Brownridge, 2003). Specifically, in his analysis of the General Social Survey (1999) data, Brownridge found a 17% increase Aboriginal women's risk of violence for each additional time that partners consumed alcohol heavily. The relationship between alcohol consumption and violence, particularly for Native people, can be understood as multilayered and complex, including a specific historical development, an organising everyday effect, and a social context that includes the construction of the "drunken savage Indian."

Borrowing from Gramsci's concept of hegemony, it is possible to make visible the invisible ideology that supports the acceptance of drunkenness as a rationale for perpetrating violence against women. Hegemony refers to the articulation of ideology by the dominant class that preserves the status quo and is given a material basis through institutional structures (Khayatt, 1992). One of the important elements of Gramsci's concept is that in order for ideology to be hegemony, it must be accepted as *common sense* at all levels of society (Khayatt). In other words, hegemonic ideology is normalized or seen as *natural* in society and not recognised as a system of beliefs that can be deconstructed or changed. Returning to the association between alcohol and violence, then, the hegemony that supports this association has been internalised by Native women, and indeed, has become common sense. The present analysis revealed that the majority of participants drew on socially-available schemata that reproduce the hegemonic ideology surrounding the relationship between violence and alcohol consumption. For example,

the schemata *I Can't Expect Anything Different, It's the Drinking! It's the Drugs!, and Indians are Drunks* translate into rationalizations that displace the responsibility for violent behaviour from the perpetrators onto the consequence of alcohol consumption. These schemata were utilized in spite of participants' acknowledgment that their partners' violence was not restricted to instances of intoxication.

The individual risk markers for violence against Aboriginal women are given greater substance and depth of understanding through the examination of these OMs. In doing so, our knowledge of how these factors operate for Native women is enhanced.

Applicability of Results to Feminist Theories of Woman Abuse

This study demonstrated the applicability of feminist theories of woman abuse to First Nations women populations. Specifically, the foregoing analysis highlighted the multiple benefits to White society, the Federal government, and First Nations people in positions of power for continuing to ignore, hide, and silence Aboriginal women's voices and their experiences of abuse. In so doing, this research supports feminist theories. These theories suggest that gender inequality, social daily practices and expectations based on gender stereotypes, and male control of resources legitimize violence against women as a means to maintain their subordination (Dobash & Dobash, 1990; MacKinnon, 1982; Smith, 1990; Yllö, 1983). The results of this study support these assertions. Specifically, the issue of Aboriginal woman abuse is not on the political agenda of most First Nations communities. This is evidenced first through the lack of formal support for victims or an integrated plan for addressing the issue of violence against Native women, and second by the paucity of responses to requests for reaction to

this study's findings from Institutional Representatives (both Native and non-Native political leaders).

Violence against Aboriginal women appears to be a non-issue, which is further highlighted in a recent report in the Edmonton Journal. The Journal reported that the Assembly of First Nations representatives who met with The Edmonton Journal's editorial board stated that "They did not want to 'cherry pick' an issue such as domestic violence, just because it's 'sexy'." That a national First Nations political body would refer to violence against women as "sexy" illustrates a lack of respect of women, a lack of understanding of the devastation of abuse victimization and its impact on whole communities, and a lack of commitment to seeing this issue as a crisis of epidemic proportions worthy of national time, attention, and money.

Implications Based on Institutional Representatives' Reaction

The aspect of the study's design utilising Institutional Representatives yielded information beyond the researcher's intent, and therefore requires further comment. Originally, input from institutional representatives was sought in order to provide context for the OMs by having the Institutional Representatives confront and react to the findings. When this input was given, however, it revealed patterns and dynamics the study had not anticipated.

Feminist standpoint theory would predict that those who are part of the institution as a result of their positions of power would be able to understand and provide additional context to the socially-available schemata. They would not be expected however, to share the more personalized schemata of the women in this study. In this case, the responses from Aboriginal Institutional Representatives not only corroborated the women's

personalized schemata, but unanimously responded to the findings by telling their own stories. These personal stories, unsolicited by the researcher, echoed the very schemata, both personal and socially-available schemata, used by the women in the study. There appeared to be no gap in life experience, or the interpretation of that experience, between the women in the study and the Aboriginal representatives of the institutions oppressing them. To be sure, these observations are limited because the Aboriginal Institutional Representatives were not giving full interviews, nor was the PSEC applied to their stories to reveal schemata. However, their responses do raise questions about the nature of research within First Nations communities, and indeed, among any marginalised group. Do the tenets of standpoint theory apply? Specifically, how does standpoint theory deal with shared schemata between Institutional leaders, who are part of the elite class, and marginalised women? It would seem that modification to standpoint theory may be necessary in order to more accurately understand the dynamics when the power differential resides within a marginalised group rather than between one group and another?

Perhaps the reason for the corroboration between the participants and the Aboriginal Institutional Representatives was due to the fact that the Institutional Representatives were not directly implicated as being responsible for the current situation on reserves in the same way that Band Chiefs and Councillors would have been. Chiefs and Band Councillors are the political body responsible for the economic, social programming, and services on reserves. Thus, this group may have reacted differently to the results than the Aboriginal Institutional Representatives who are more removed from reserve life. It is also possible, and in accordance with the concept of hegemony, that the

socially available schemata utilised by women in the study to understand the discrepancies highlighted in the OMs, would also have been tapped into by the current local leadership on reserves. It does not account for shared personalised schemata, however. It would be wise for future research to consider the positions of the Institutional Representatives with respect to their involvement in the day-to-day operation of Native local government in order to determine if reactions differ on the basis of their perceived level of direct responsibility.

As would be expected, Aboriginal Institutional Representatives responded, in part, by echoing the socially-available schemata used by the women, which is part of the hegemony from which institutions benefit. These schemata reveal a sense of dissolution and powerlessness. For example, the *Individual Responsibility* schema is a victim-blaming approach that makes abused women responsible for the abuse they experience. The schema *I Can't Expect Anything Different* was evoked by women discussing their partner's alcohol and drug addictions, which is a disempowering schema for women. It would be hoped, that those in positions of relative power would move beyond this to a place of action. Assuming a position of powerlessness when one is strategically placed to affect change, effectively keeps leaders from having to take responsibility for the situation. These Institutional Representatives have a measure of Institutional power, and consequently, the means to move beyond simply agreeing with the women (although it could be viewed as the first step before taking concrete action, given that in many cases, those in power simply will not or cannot understand the concerns of those with no power). It is important to note three aspects regarding the interviews with Institutional Representatives and the process of change for Aboriginal women:

1. The leaders were not asked what changes they are initiating or taking part in to address the problems revealed by the findings. Instead, they were asked to respond to a summary of the results of the present study. Future research should include such queries.
2. It is clear from their responses that many are working toward change but change takes place very slowly within institutions.
3. It is clear that changes need to happen at both the macro systematic level, and within the psyches of individuals and grass roots communities.

The responses from Institutional Representatives broke down along racial lines. The non-Aboriginal Institutional Representatives responded by reciting a set of prepared answers regarding the initiatives and changes for which they have been responsible. There was no evidence of dealing with the material at a personal level. This is not surprising. As non-Aboriginals, they have no personal experience with the issues in the way that the Aboriginal Institutional Representatives do. Perhaps it is also testimony to a cultural difference: Reality in Aboriginal life is often engaged and expressed through story-telling, whereas those with a European background tend not to utilise this mode of communication. In addition, three of the four Aboriginal Representatives who responded to the request for comments did so in a more personal way (i.e., by phone or in-person interviews). In contrast, the two non-Native Representatives faxed or sent their comments by mail. The reasons for the difference in response mode may be the result of time constraints, or the number of demands on their time, especially given that Canada was preparing for an election at that time, or it may reflect a more significant distinction that

speaks to the importance of violence against Native women at a personal level versus a career level.

Political Implications

Delineation of the OMs revealed that Aboriginal women have an underlying and pervasive mistrust of government and First Nations leaders. The majority of the participants identified political corruption as an inevitable outcome of power, and they named practices, such as nepotism, as a means by which personal power is retained. Thus, they identified Native politicians as self-serving and uninterested in issues, such as relationship abuse, that affect Native women. This has implications for current and future social and political practices. Specifically, Canadians generally have lost respect for and faith in political leaders (Guppy & Davies, 1999; Sims, 2001). Evidently, Aboriginal women are no different in this respect, and their disenchantment seems present at all political levels, including toward the Band Councils.

The most striking finding in this regard was women's apathy toward the political process. Women's political disempowerment began during colonisation, when patriarchal European practice was imposed onto First Nations (Dickason, 1992; Hill, 1992; McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999; Paul, 2000). Women's position within the Band was subsequently devalued and their voice in decision-making was absent. Currently, the small number of women in leadership positions at the municipal level is testament to the enduring absence of women's political participation and mirrors the White hegemony of Canadian politics. Moreover, the majority of women who identified political corruption within their Band had withdrawn from participation in local elections. It appears that

women do not view the current process of elections as a means of engendering change. Their voices are also absent, therefore, at this most basic level of political participation.

Native women's groups, such as the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and Assembly of First Nations Women's Council have emerged as organizations committed to the issues facing First Nations women. As witnessed during the Charlottetown Accord talks (1992), there seemed to be clear divisions between the interests of Native male leadership and Native women (see Native Women's Association of Canada V. Canada at http://reports.fja.gc.ca/fc/src/shtml/1993/pub/v1; Weaver, 1993). This sense of gendered political division is also observed at the grass roots level, as demonstrated in this study. Specifically, women perceived the lack of political and social action regarding woman abuse as being a consequence of having a male-dominated leadership motivated to keep the issue of woman abuse personal and not political. This is problematic given that having an "us/them" mentality within a group weakens its power to organise for change and decreases the likelihood of cultural restoration and healing (Freire, 1972). One of the Institutional Representatives who responded to my request for reaction to the study's results stated,

I've witness fractured relationships between men and women at all levels. When I've raised this with male friends and colleagues, they deny that it exists. They don't need to see the fracture because it does not have any adverse effect on them that they can see [Institutional Representative #4].

This woman identified the fracture between men and women as a "Phenomenon that requires immediate attention," because it is preventing movement toward regaining balance in relationships both personal and at the community level.

First Nations leaders are perceived to be working for themselves and not for the benefit of those they represent. It appears that part of the legacy of colonisation has been the adoption among Aboriginal people of the values of individual status, power, and money, and the desire to achieve these. In part, this speaks to Native peoples' ability to recognise what is needed for them to succeed and compete with the White majority. However, the cost of this is born by Native society as a whole as reports in the media of financial mismanagement and appropriation of funds for personal gain serve to strengthen negative stereotypes about Native people (Wheeler & Henning, 2006 for an editorial on the crisis at the First Nations University of Canada). In turn, this appears to be fostering increased feelings of hopelessness and political apathy among Native women. One of the Institutional Representatives, when commenting on this finding stated that

It is not surprising that there is political corruption on reserves. Political corruption is everywhere. It is a sign of the dysfunction of the system. [Institutional Representative #1]

He went on to say that it is not only Native women who are reacting with apathy and skepticism, but that this is a phenomenon occurring among people more generally, across this nation and others.

Based on the analysis, however, there appears to be little impetus for the Federal government to manage its relationship with First Nations people differently. In fact, there are many reasons to prevent Aboriginal Canada from becoming a healthy and strong society. First, the non-Native majority would have to come to terms with a loss of power if Native people were valued as full contributing members to society. In addition, such a major shift in power and finance would necessitate revisiting (or in some cases, visiting for the first time) a particular analysis of the past as reasons for changes. Specifically, acknowledging the extent of the losses incurred by First Nations culture and people as a result of the actions of one's ancestors is an uncomfortable position to hold. Further, it requires an ability and willingness to understand an analysis that, if accepted, would lead to the recognition of other social injustices (e.g., gender inequity, reproductive rights, poverty in developing countries). This kind of analysis (i.e., the understanding of the systemic nature of racism, capitalism, and patriarchy) does not benefit those who gain from that system most; in this case, the government and the non-Native majority. It would require accepting responsibility for injustice at many levels. The stakes are high in preventing such vision.

It is apparent that women's political apathy is associated with an "us/them" mentality that is dividing down lines of gender and position. While solutions need to be broad and creative, the most immediate need is to engage Native women in government and politics at the local and national levels. Women's involvement in Band Councils in greater numbers would bring Native women's concerns to the fore. In addition, it would raise the profile of Native women in their communities. Women's experience and knowledge would begin to inform decision-making again, and the possibility for restoring

the value of the role of women would be possible. Moreover, Native women's active participation in politics would provide positive role modelling for children and youth with the potential to influence upcoming generations. One approach to ensuring adequate representation on Band Council is to implement designated seating, whereby there would be a requirement that 50% of the council's seats be filled by women. This strategy may increase women's participation in Band Council elections, as well as provide equal representation on the local governing body. In addition, the psychological benefits would likely be significant for all Native women through their reclaiming of a more equitable division of power in communities.

Clinical Implications

The clinical implications emerging from this study are a direct result of the schematic analysis, which attests to the value of PSEC approach for understanding the psychology of the marginalised individual.

The results of this study have the potential to inform clinicians who work with First Nations individuals. First, while it provided further evidence that woman abuse is experienced at an individual level, it highlighted how this experience is shaped by the larger historic, social, and political context. Therapists who work with victims of violence will gain insight into the specific ways in which violence against Native women is supported by organizational structures. Sharing this information with clients may help them view their victimization differently, and consequently, open other avenues of response. Second, it offers a strategy to adopt when working with individual women (i.e., listening for schemata), and thus provides an entry point for cognitive intervention. Specifically, investigating the unique features of schemata provides the therapist with

greater insight into the clients' cognitions with respect to their experience, which increases the number of areas in which to intervene. Intervention should teach and encourage reframing of problematic schemata, such as the *Individual Deficits*, *I Can't Expect Anything Different*, or *Individual Responsibility* schemata. Specifically, it may be therapeutic for a psychologist to create cognitive dissonance by challenging a Native woman's perception of being intellectually deficient, and contrasting that with her ability to financially support and protect her children. When enough doubt is created regarding her intellectual status using this method, the process of cognitive reframing can begin (Beck 1987).

The PSEC method also permits an exploration of the coping strategies women are using to manage the contradictions inherent in the OMs. The findings suggest that women rely on both cognitive and action-based strategies. In most cases, the coping approach is tied directly to the schema(ta) they utilise to understand the situation. For example, women who evoked the *No Choice*, *I Can't Expect Anything Different*, and *Indians are Drunks* schemata, coped with their partner's addictions by turning to alcohol themselves. The Cognitive Behavioural approach to therapy would predict that unhealthy coping behaviours will diminish if the cognitive basis that gives rise to them is altered. Thus, in exploring and modifying the schemata, behavioural coping strategies may be re-directed in positive directions.

Abuse needs to be viewed within the broader context in which it occurs, and then linked to problematic schemata that personalise violence. This then has the potential to empower women to move away from self-blame and toward an increased regard for their strengths and courage, and toward political action.

These goals are in keeping with the tenets of feminist therapeutic approaches (Burstow, 1992). Thus, there is potential to optimise both cognitive and behavioural functioning. For the clinician, such an enhanced understanding of the client can lead to an increased ability to develop a comprehensive case conceptualisation and greater sensitivity to First Nations abuse victims.

Limitations and Strengths of the Study

The limitations and strengths of this study are discussed with respect to the sample size and generalizability of the findings, insider/outsider issues, and the use of Institutional Representatives.

Sample and generalisability. Thirty-five First Nations women were interviewed for this study. They represented women of four tribal affiliations (Mi'Kmaq, Maleseet, Ojibwa, and Cree) and 14 reserves in two provinces. The size of the sample is larger than that comprising many qualitative studies due to the analytic approach utilised. Specifically, the PSEC calls for a focused analysis of the data. The researcher reads the transcripts systematically attending to very specific content. This method facilitates the participation of a greater number of individuals. However, generalisability to Native women of other Nations and reserves remains limited. On the one hand, generalisability among participants was not a central goal of this study. PSEC does, however, allow the identification of OMs, which represent institutional circumstances that are shared by participants. Further, some of the similarity of experiences and use of certain schemata by participants of different groups and locations do suggest the presence of a shared struggle (Harding, 2004). Still, readers are cautioned to respect the uniqueness of Canada's Native people. Aboriginal scholars have criticized researchers who assume homogeneity among

First Nations Bands (Foley, 2003; Lawrence, 2004). They call for recognition of diversity of cultures and traditions among First Nations people. Thus, it is important that the results of this study remain contextualised within the boundaries represented by this sample.

Insider/outsider issues. Foley (2003) argues that "The purity of research outcomes is enhanced if the Indigenous is researched by the Indigenous" (p. 46). Foley embraces Feminist Standpoint Epistemology in its position that the best way "to know a socially constructed world is to know it from within" (p. 45). The present study was guided by the tenets of Feminist Standpoint Epistemology; however, the researcher is non-Aboriginal. While this is a limitation and may become an area of critique with respect to the credibility of findings, several steps were taken to ensure the integrity of the research design, interview process and content, and interpretation of the results. Specifically, Aboriginal women from each of the Nations included in the present study served as research consultants. The development of this research process has its roots in feminist applications (Reinharz, 1992), and works well for bridging the insider/outsider issues that arise when a study's focus is on a group to which the researcher does not belong. Further, the researcher is a woman, and therefore shares a "culture of womanhood" with the research participants. It may be argued that there are various levels of insider/outsider status in most research studies that adopt standpoint epistemology. For example, an Aboriginal researcher may never have lived on a reserve, and thus her insider status would be so affected.

Having acknowledged the limitations of and potential risks in conducting research with a group to which the researcher does not belong, it is important to identify potential advantages to having outsider status. OMs are normalised within the institutions in which

they occur. It could be argued that the process of identifying OMs may be facilitated by a researcher's outsider status, making it advantageous in some instances. For example, within the culture of the military, postings to other locations routinely occur (Gouliquer & Poulin, 2005). Soldiers are expected to readily accept the plethora of difficulties and challenges this presents. They likely accept this as part of their lives because it is normal within military life. An outsider interviewing military members may be surprised by the routinised up rooting of families, and investigate further, coming to the conclusion that postings are OMs that serve the needs of the institution (Gouliquer & Poulin; Poulin 2001).

Outsider status may also serve an important protective function. Specifically, an outsider has the freedom to critique aspects of the culture without fear of reprisal by its members. Two consultants and one Native female Institutional Representative indicated that they would not have taken the same level of risk for fear that there would be negative ramifications to their careers, and even their families. This may be an important consideration in the design of future research studies and an additional value of research collaborations between insiders and outsiders.

Use of Institutional Representatives. Presenting the findings to and requesting comment from leaders or management within the specific organisation under study is fundamental to the methodological approach of PSEC. As discussed previously, this information is used to provide additional context to the participants' experiences, and to garner the official position of the organisation. One of the limitations of this study is that reaction was sought from Institutional Representatives at the provincial and national levels, and not the municipal level of government (Band Chiefs and Council members).

As mentioned above, it is possible that the reaction would have been different from leaders who were more directly tied to the politics of the OMs, and therefore had greater investment in defending their decisions. Thus, this aspect of the study may have sacrificed richness and depth in this regard.

Directions for Future Research

The current study advances our understanding of Native women's experience of violence and some of the organizational influences that shape that experience. However, gaps remain in our understanding of violence against First Nations women that could form the basis for further investigation. Specifically, this study did not address issues that may arise as a result of Federal and Provincial jurisdiction for areas such as mental health (e.g., addictions) and education per se. It is conceivable that gaps in services exist in these areas because provinces have jurisdiction over education and health, but not for Aboriginal people. While it was beyond the scope of this study to examine the psychological and social impact jurisdictional issues may have for abused Native women, it is an important area to examine in future research.

Similarly, the legal context influencing First Nations community's relationships with state-regulated apparatuses (Smith, 1987; Khayatt, 1992), such as the police and justice system was not the focus of this research. Certainly, these play a significant role in the dissemination of hegemonic ideology and represent social structures that impact Aboriginal women's experience of abuse. As a result, the study is limited in scope with respect to the legal framework that affects how violence against Aboriginal women is experienced, and additional research is required to address how policing, the justice

system, and the legal policies affecting First Nations people, such as issues involving membership, function within the framework laid out in this study.

The participants in this study represent less than 1% of the First Nations Bands in Canada. The sample was drawn from 14 reserves in two provinces. The results yielded significant information regarding common experiences of abused First Nations women, as well as common schemata women utilize to make sense of their experience. It is possible that women's shared experience and use of schemata are more typical than different among this diverse group. As noted above, however, sample size precludes such a statement. Additional research investigating commonalities and differences among Abused First Nations women and their experiences of abuse would enhance our understanding. Moreover, it would contribute to the development of appropriate recommendations that address the gaps in services that were identified in this study. While scholars emphasize the need for sensitivity to the heterogeneity among Native Bands, within the context of abuse, it is possible that commonality, not differences, in experience and cognitive schemata predominates.

Summary

The results of the present study indicate that abused Aboriginal women encounter gender, class, and racial oppression within political systems that work to render their reality invisible or frame it within the hegemonic ideology of individual responsibility. What is clear from this study is that Native women's decisions about the abuse in their lives and available resources, regardless of individual personalities, strengths, and coping abilities, are shaped and constrained by the larger historic, social, and political context which permits violence against Aboriginal women to continue. It is time that the

colonised hegemonic understanding of the abuse of Aboriginal women, and the strength of its impact, be fully understood, and that strategic policies which reflect that understanding replace psychological and individualistic victim blaming and solutions. Only then can we hope to begin addressing this tragedy.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide for Individual Interviews

Section 1.

Demographic Information

1. Birth date: _____ Age: _____

2. Tribal affiliation: _____ Band: _____ Status? Y or N

3. Number of Children you've given birth to: _____ # of children in your care: _____

Ages of children in your care: M/F _____; M/F _____; M/F _____

M/F _____ ; M/F _____; M/F _____; M/F _____

4. Do you have other friends or family who live with you? Y or N

_____

_____

5. Do you live on the reserve? Y or N When did you last live on reserve: _____

6. Marital Status: _____

7. Did you complete high school? Y or N

If no, what was the last grade you completed: _____

If yes, have you taken any college or university courses?
College: Y or N University: Y or N

Do you have a college diploma? Y or N Do you have a university degree? Y or N

8. What is your employment status?

9. Please estimate your yearly income: _____

10. Please estimate your family's yearly income: _____

Section 2.

11. I'd like to talk about what your intimate relationships have been like for you. Let's begin with the first time you were in a romantic relationship.
    - How old were you, how old was your partner
    - How did you meet? What attracted you to this person?
    - How long were you together?
    - Was your partner Aboriginal? From your reserve?
    - Did you have children together? How many? Girls or boys?
    - Did you live together? Where?
    - How often did you leave/return to the reserve?
    - Walk me through a typical day for you in that relationship
        *(if having difficulty) Well, for e.g., what time would you get up in the morning? Did you have breakfast together? Who prepared the breakfast?

12. Were you employed during this relationship?
    - Was your partner employed?
    - Did you have enough money to live on? How did you get money to live on?
    - How did finances affect your relationship (e.g., did you have disputes or was it easy, who had control of the money? did you have enough money to buy the necessities or basics?)

13. What did your family think about your relationship?
    - Was there anyone in your family who didn't think you should be in the relationship?
    - How did you know? Did you ever talk about it with them?
    - How did your family affect the relationship? How did your partner's family affect the relationship?

14. What did your community think about your relationship?
    - Was there anyone in your community who didn't think you should be with this person?
    - How did you know? Did you ever talk about it with them?
    - How did the community affect your relationship?

15. How did your relationship end?
    - When, during the relationship, did you start to think that it wasn't going well?
    - Do you remember a particular incident that made you think that the relationship was doomed?
    - How long after that did you leave?
    - Did your partner ever hit, slap, punch you, in play or otherwise?
    - Did your partner call you names or put you down? Could you give me some examples. Please talk about _____ incident.
    - Did your partner ever discourage you from going out, or visiting with friends, family, or neighbours? How was that for you?
    - Did your partner want to know where you were at all times? How was that for you? Did you talk about it with anyone?

- Was your partner jealous? How did you know? Did you talk about it with anyone? What advise did they give you?
- Was there ever a time when you had no money because of your partner? Can you tell me more about that? How often did your partner withhold money from you? How was that for you?

16. Did you ever get back together with this person? If so, please tell me about it (why, for how long, how many times)
    - Did you ever think about it?
    - Did anyone influence your decision to stay or to leave the relationship? How?

17. Can you take me step by step through the break-up period?
    - What was the most difficult thing for you?
    - Where did your support come from?
    - How did your family react?
    - How did your children react?
    - How did the community react?

18. What services are available here to help people deal with relationship issues?
    - did you use any of these? Why/why not?

Repeat above sequence for every intimate relationship she has had

Section 3.

19. We hear a lot about woman abuse. What does that term mean to you?

20. How would you know if someone was being abused?
    - What does it mean to offer assistance to an abused woman? How do you think people should respond?
    - Does her family have a role in helping her? If so, how? If not, why not?
    - Does her community have role in helping her? If so, how? If not, why not?
    - What role, if any, do the Elders play in cases of woman abuse?

21. Do you think the Aboriginal leadership is doing enough to address issues of woman abuse among Aboriginal people?

22. Finally, what needs to happen for Aboriginal women to live a life that is free from violence?

Appendix C

Consent Form for Interview Participants

BEFORE SIGNING THIS FORM, PLEASE TAKE THE TIME YOU NEED TO READ AND UNDERSTAND IT.

I (full name)_____ have agreed to participate in the study being conducted by Bette Brazier.

My decision to participate in this study reflects my understanding that:

1. Bette Brazier (the researcher), or her research associate, will interview me at a mutually acceptable place and time. The general topic of discussion will be my life experience in intimate relationships.
2. I will be asked if the interview can be audio-taped. If I agree to this condition, I will show my consent by signing at the bottom of this form beneath the statement "I consent to the interview being taped." If I disagree, the researcher will take notes during the interview.
3. My participation in this research will be kept confidential. This is the only sheet of paper on which my name will appear. Only Bette Brazier, Dr. Carmen Poulin (research supervisor), and the research assistant (who transcribes the interviews) will have access to the unprocessed (raw) data and the identity of the interviewee. They are all bound by confidentiality principles.
4. In any oral or written presentation of the results of this study, my personal identity will not be traceable or recognisable.

Do you wish to have a copy of the study results? YES - NO -
If yes, please provide your mailing or email address.

Appendix D

Debriefing Letter for Participants

The debriefing letter will be given to individual and focus group participants upon completion of the interview.

Thank you for participating in this study and for sharing your experience of intimate relationships and your knowledge of woman abuse.

Below you will find some information on domestic violence, with a specific focus on violence against Aboriginal women. I have also included a reading list if you would like more information. In addition, there is a list of agencies and their phone numbers attached to this letter. These are places that offer services for women who are having a difficult time in their relationships and need some help. You can keep this list for yourself, or pass it on to a woman who may need it.

Literature overview. Woman abuse gained public attention in the 1970s. Since that time, research has focussed on several areas that are important for understanding the complexity of violence against women, including risk factors, prevention, healing, and the process of leaving abusive partners. From this research, we know that most victims of domestic violence are women, and that woman abuse includes physical and sexual assaults, and also emotional, spiritual, and financial abuse. Domestic violence cuts across age, cultural background, and socio-economic status. In other words, simply being a woman means you are at greater risk. Research shows that the risk for violence is higher when couples are young and have low family incomes.

We also know that many social factors make it difficult for women to leave their abusers. For example, having no other place to live, little money, limited education, and little or no job training or experience. There are also psychological factors that keep women in abusive relationships, such as fear of more violence from her partner if she leaves and wanting to keep the family together. In addition, living in an abusive situation has significant mental health consequences for the woman (i.e., depression, anxiety, guilty, lowered self-esteem). All of these barriers together make leaving an abusive partner a difficult process. Viewing it as a process helps to explain why most women leave an abusive partner several times before leaving the relationship for good.

Violence against Aboriginal women is gaining research attention because many Native women's groups and feminist organizations are making Aboriginal women's situations more public. However, most of what we know about violence in Aboriginal communities is statistical. For example, the Ontario Native Women's Association found that 8 out of 10 First Nations women were abused. Knowing what percentage of Aboriginal women are abused is important, but it is equally important to understand *how* Aboriginal women live with abuse in their everyday lives, and how they make decisions about staying in the relationship, or leaving it.

List of Local Services Provided to Participants Following Interview

LIST OF SERVICES

All areas of NB

Emergency

Calls.....911

RCMP.....1-800-665-6663

Chimo Helpline.....1-800-667-5005

Victims Information.....1-800-265-8644

Fredericton Area

Gignoo Shelter.....458-1236

Transition House.....459-2300

Mental Health Centre.....453-2132

Family Services of Fredericton.....458-8211

Social Services.....453-3953

Dr. Everett Chalmers hospital.....452-5400

Victims Information.....1-800-265-8644

Fredericton Police Department.....460-2300

Woodstock area

Sanctuary House.....325-9452

Woodstock Mental Health Centre.....325-4419

Family Services and Community Social Services Woodstock.....325-4412

Carlton Memorial Hospital (Woodstock).....325-6700

Woodstock Police Department.....325-3000

Appendix E

Consent Form for Consultants

BEFORE SIGNING THIS FORM, PLEASE TAKE THE TIME YOU NEED TO READ AND UNDERSTAND IT.

I (full name)_____ have agreed to act as a consultant in the study being conducted by Bette Brazier.

My decision to participate in this study reflects my understanding that:

1. I am being asked to be a consultant for this study by reading and providing feedback to Bette Brazier on her results and interpretation section of her Ph.D. dissertation.

2. the contents of this document must remain confidential until Bette's dissertation is defended according to the University of New Brunswick's regulations. Therefore I agree that I will not share the contents of the document with anyone.

3. if my interpretation differs from Bette's, it is unlikely that Bette will change her interpretation. Rather, my comments and reactions will become part of a reflection section that will be included in the final document.

4. this research project has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, and the Research Ethics Board of the University of New Brunswick.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THIS FORM AND FOR CONSIDERING WHETHER OR NOT TO BE A CONSULTANT FOR THIS STUDY.

I agree to act as a consultant for this study.

_____(signature) _____(date)

I agree to have my name appear in the list of acknowledgements as a consultant.

_____(signature)

Intimate Partner Abuse: First Nations Women's Experiences

Please reflect on any or all of the issues in the space provided. If you require additional space, please feel free to add pages, but please indicate which issue you are reflecting on by using its number and letter.

FINDINGS:

1. The missing institutional response to violence against First Nations women:

a. When asked about services for victims of abuse, the majority of women stated that there were no services on their reserves and that there were no services within reasonable distance. What are your thoughts about this?

b. Many women perceived a lack of commitment on the part of Band Councils to address the problem of woman abuse on reserves. They felt that the issue that is often swept under the carpet and ignored. What are your thoughts about this?

c. Ignoring the issue of woman abuse was seen by many as a way for Band Councillors to avoid dealing with their own abusive behaviour. Keeping abuse hidden was seen by participants as a possible protection for the Aboriginal leaders' positions in the community. What are your thoughts about this?

d. Some participants raised the issue of the over representation of men in leadership positions. What are your thoughts about this?

2. Provision of Elder Support

a. Within Native tradition, it is a wise and appropriate course of action for people to seek the advice and assistance of Elders. For many women in this study, Elders' credibility had been lost. Two women reported positive experiences after seeking the counsel of an Elder. Most who went to an Elder for guidance came away feeling unsupported and even disempowered by the advice they received. Overall, women expressed disillusionment with Elders. On the one hand, they said Elders are to be respected and revered for their wisdom and teachings. On the other hand, their observations and experiences of Elders led them to feel that many Elders are not living up to the high calling of the tradition, and are using the position for personal gain. As one woman stated: "What happened to tobacco? What happened to respect? What happened to trying to help people without trying to get something in return? And that's what I see...they [Elders] are part of the problem, they are out to make a buck". What are your thoughts about this?

b. For some, the thought of talking to an Elder about the abuse in their relationships did not enter their minds. When asked more about that, women stated that it was not part of their thinking about possible sources of support or assistance. What are your thoughts about this?

3. Dealing with addictions

a. Asked about the role of substance abuse in their lives, the participants indicated that their partners' drinking essentially organised their lives. Women talked about the financial costs, as well as the impact of having to care for an alcoholic or drug-addicted partner. Women reported that they arranged their daily activities around their partners' addictions. Several stated that they turned to alcohol themselves – two reported drinking because of being physically forced to do so by their male partners, two more because of psychological coercion by their male partners, and the rest, as a way to escape their reality. What are your thoughts about this?

b. Many women are left feeling hopeless. They stated that they saw no way out of this cycle of abuse and believed that the leadership in their communities is not a source of hope, because its members are also paralysed by their own issues with substance abuse. What are your thoughts about this?

4. Missing Transparency in the Distribution of Band Resources and Services

a. Women reported significant frustration with trying to access Band resources or services. It was clear from the interviews that women do not know the processes and policies with respect to how money is transferred from the Federal government to the Bands, or how Bands make decisions about its allocation. Neither did they know how to access services and resources to which they felt entitled. Overall, there seemed to be a sense of hopelessness about Band Councils' commitment to helping their members. What are your thoughts about this?

b. Women expressed great scepticism that the financial and social responsibilities of the Band Councils were being well managed. In fact, most women indicated that political corruption within the leadership in communities is commonplace. They expressed a belief that decisions, especially financial decisions are driven by selfishness on the part of the leadership, not community well-being. What are your thoughts about this?

5. Promotion of Education for Native people.

a. Native people receive the widespread message that education is important. This message comes from many sources, including the Chiefs and Band Councils. Part of its content seems to be that education is a way out of poverty, which in turn, would alleviate some of the other social problems, like substance abuse, woman and child abuse, suicide, and so on. Women talked about this push to pursue an education, and their belief that it would improve their lives. However, they also talked about the barriers to achieving that goal. Specifically, they noted that being young and having adult responsibilities limited their ability to study. Other barriers included being an adult and trying to balance the needs of school and family life, and trying to negotiate a personal identity among feelings of isolation and fear. They also stated that there were no jobs for them in their communities upon completion of an advanced education. What are your thoughts about this?

b. One of the themes that emerged in the interviews was the idea of alienation. Women who had successfully completed post secondary education talked about negative reactions from other Native people. They believe that Native men are threatened or intimidated by them, and so they experience an unusual form of alienation – romantic alienation from Aboriginal men. They suggested that perhaps they were seen as a threat to the status quo, and that is why the Aboriginal leadership does not welcome them into positions of influence within their communities. Women talked about this as an isolating experience and not what they expected after having achieved academic success. What are your thoughts about this?

c. Finally, some of the participants received all of their education in mainstream schools. For these women, their experience has also been alienating. Although they valued the education they received, and believe it was of higher quality than the education provided on reserves, they talked about not fitting into either culture as a result. What are your thoughts about this?

List of Recipients of the Results Summary for Reaction

Phil Fontaine	Grand Chief of Assembly of First Nations
Ko'waintco Michel	Assembly of First Nations Women's Council
Paul Martin	Prime Minister of Canada
Jack Layton	Federal Leader of the NDP
Stephen Haper	Federal Leader of the Conservative Party
Gilles Duceppe	Federal Leader of the Bloc Quebecois
Andy Scott	Minister of Indian Affairs & Northern Development
Beverly Jacobs	President of Native Women's Association of Canada
Sherry Lewis	Native Women's Association of Canada, Exec. Director of Aboriginal Women against Violence Everywhere
Liza Frulla	Minister responsible for the Status of Women Canada
Phil Lane Jr.	President of Four Directions International
H. Chiasson	Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick
Cheryl Ward	New Brunswick Native Women's Council
Mary-Jane Peters	New Brunswick Native Indian Women's Council
Elvy Robichaud	Minister of Health and Wellness (NB)
Ginette Petitpas-Taylor	NB Advisory Council on the Status of Women
J. Bartleman	Lieutenant Governor of Ontario
Dawn Harvard	President, Ontario Native Women's Association
George Smitherman	Minister of Health (Ontario)
David Ramsay	Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs
Sandra Pupatello	Minister Responsible for women's issues

CURRICULUM VITAE

Candidate's full name: Bette Lorraine Brazier

Universities attended:

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1991-1993

University of New Brunswick
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B.A. Hons (Psychology)
1993-1996

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Doctoral Candidate, Clinical Psychology
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Publications:

Newman, K., Poulin, C., **Brazier, B.** Cashmore, A. L. (2005). Conflict and abuse in dating relationships: young university women react to a film clip. In D. Pawluch, W. Shaffir, & C. Miall (Eds), *Doing Ethnography: Researching Everyday Life* (pp. 200-211). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press

Poulin, C., Gouliquer, L., **Brazier, B.**, Hughes, J., Brazier, B. C., Arseneault, R., MacAulay, S., & Thériault, L. (2004). Keeping it confidential: A struggle for Transition Houses. In M.L. Stirling, N. Nason-Clark, A. Cameron, & B. Miedema (Eds). *Understanding Abuse: Partnering for Change* (pp. 85-108). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Szeligo, F., **Brazier, B.**, & Houston, J. (2003). Adaptations to writing posture in response to task demands in right- and left-handers. *Laterality, 8*, 261-276.

MacAulay, S., Poulin, C., **Brazier, B.**, Hughes, J., Gouliquer, L., Brazier, B.C., Arseneault, R., & Thériault, L. (2003). Confidentiality and transition houses: Institutional violence against women. *Canadian Psychology / Psychologie Canadienne, 44:2a,* 78.

Houston, J., **Brazier, B.**, Claybourn, M., Oates-Johnson, T., & Szeligo, F. (2000). Inducing changes in writing posture in left handers. *Canadian Psychology / Psychologie Canadienne, 41:2a*, 81.

Brazier, B., & Poulin, C. (1998). Aboriginal Women's Transition: Predicting Readiness to Leave Abusive Relationships. *Canadian Psychology / Psychologie Canadienne,, 39:2a*, 18.

Conference Presentations:

MacAulay, S., Poulin, C., **Brazier, B.**, Hughes, J., Gouliquer L., Brazier, B.C., Arseneault, R., & Thériault, L. (2003). *Victim Blaming: Legitimate Victims and Illegitimate Victims.* Paper presented at the 20th Annual Qualitative Analysis Conference: Studying Social Life Qualitatively, Ottawa, Ontario.

Brazier, B. C., & **Brazier, B.** (2002, May). *Christ and culture: The relationship between Christology and approaches to social issues.* Paper presented at the 19th Annual Qualitative Analysis Conference: Studying Social Life Qualitatively, Hamilton, ON.

Brazier, B., Brazier, B. C., Poulin, C., Gouliquer, L., Arseneault, R., Hughes, J., MacAulay, S., & Thériault, L. (2001, May). *Doing team research: Issues, challenges and rewards.* Paper presented at the 18th Annual Qualitative Conference, Hamilton, ON.

Brazier B., Poulin, C., MacAulay, S., Gouliquer, L., Brazier, B.C., Arseneault, R., Hughes, J., & Thériault, L. (2000). *Applying the concept of reliability to focus group data.* Paper presented at the 17th Qualitative Analysis Conference, Fredericton, NB.

Gouliquer, L., MacAulay, S., Poulin, C., **Brazier, B.**, Brazier, B.C., Hughes, J., Arseneault, R., & Thériault, L. (2000). *"Folio Views" a qualitative software program? Some of the cons, frustrations, and joys.* Paper presented at the 17th Qualitative Analysis Conference, Fredericton, NB.

Poulin, C. & **Brazier, B.** (1999, May). *Quest for validity in qualitative psychological research.* Workshop presented at the Section on Women in Psychology Institute, Annual Meeting of the Canadian Psychological Association, Halifax, NS.

Gouliquer, L., Poulin, C., **Brazier, B.**, Brazier, B.C., Hughes, J., Thériault, L., & Arseneault, R. (1999, May). *The ins and outs of qualitative research: A community/academic collaborative perspective.* Paper presented at the 16th Annual Qualitative Analysis Conference, Fredericton, NB.

Brazier, B. & Poulin, C. (1998, May). *Aboriginal women's transition: Predicting readiness to leave abusive relationships.* Paper presented at the Canadian Psychological Association Annual Convention, Edmonton, AB.

Brazier, B. & Brazier, B.C. (1997, November). *Dimensions of obesity and anorexia: An experiential perspective.* Workshop presented at the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women Conference, Fredericton, NB.