

**News Coverage of Officer-Involved Domestic Violence (OIDV):  
A Comparative Content Analysis**

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **NEWS COVERAGE OF OFFICER-INVOLVED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (OIDV): A COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

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An increasing amount of international academic and media attention focuses on officer-involved domestic violence (OIDV), with U.S. prevalence rates ranging from 20 to 40 percent. The majority of this research is derived from the United States, whereas research relating to OIDV in Canada is non-existent. Accordingly, data for this content analysis were drawn from online Canadian newspapers published between 2000 and 2014. More than 250 cases were analyzed to compare how the media portray police officers and civilians who perpetrate intimate partner violence (IPV) in Canada while simultaneously producing preliminary empirical data on OIDV in Canada. Findings reveal significant differences between media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV in terms of typifications, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations made by claimsmakers. The preliminary data on OIDV in Canada shares several commonalities with U.S. research. This thesis concludes with a discussion of policy implications and directions for future research.

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## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

‘My home was a war zone, a prison, with no way out...And my keeper was the very person who promised to protect and serve. My life was a nightmare beyond your imagination. I could not foresee how things could ever get worse, until I left. You see, it's not going in the door that's hard. It's coming out.’ She lived in shelters after leaving [the officer]. He told her that, as a cop, he could track her down wherever she went. [The] constable believed he was above the law. That if she went to the police, they would believe him, not her. That the thin blue line would stand by him (Clairmont 2006).

The above excerpt illuminates some of the difficulties victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) face when the perpetrator is a police officer. The typical avenues available for IPV victims are not applicable or feasible when the perpetrator is a police officer. Police have unique access to information which allows them to easily track victims should they leave. Officer solidarity may further limit departmental response and victim support. The credibility and knowledge acquired from being a police officer can be used to manipulate the justice system in favour of the accused (Worden 2015; Wetendorf 2003).

These obstacles run counterintuitive to advancements made by the women’s movement in the 1970s, which prompted legislative revisions to the *Criminal Code of Canada*, resulting in the criminalization of IPV (Brown 2000). Transformations in police training further accompanied legislative reforms of the 1980s, mandating that all officers be trained in responding to domestic violence within the community (Brown 2000; Toronto Police Dept. 2013). These advancements and transformations lead to the development of zero-tolerance policies that were designed to deter and denounce IPV in the community by guaranteeing that incidences of IPV would be charged and prosecuted (Brown 2000). Arguably, these factors have contributed to the overall decline in IPV over the past decade, with the prevalence of serious incidences of violence resting at approximately two to 10 percent (Johnson and Dawson 2011: 67). Yet these statistics cannot

be generalized to all subgroups within society; for example, rates of IPV are significantly higher in policing families, with U.S. prevalence rates ranging from 20 to 40 percent (Lonsway et al. 2003; Johnson et al. 2005; Kurtz 2008; Oehme et al. 2011).<sup>1</sup> The nature and prevalence of OIDV in Canada, however, is unknown. Research is required to determine if Canadian police agencies are facing a problem of comparable proportions, and if so, what needs to be done.

IPV within police families, commonly known as officer-involved domestic violence (OIDV), was highlighted as a pertinent issue facing US police officers when Eleanor B. Johnson brought prevalence rates to the attention of US Congress in 1991. Subsequent research substantiated her claims (Oehme et al. 2011; Lonsway et al. 2003; Kurtz 2008; Neidig, Russell and Seng 1992), leading the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to devise a model policy, defining OIDV as acts of domestic violence perpetrated by a police officer against an intimate partner (IACP 1999). The IACP recognized that OIDV is at least as common as IPV in the general population and that departmental responses vary dramatically; for example, some departments report OIDV incidences in great detail whereas others handle allegations of OIDV as an internal issue (IACP 1999).<sup>2</sup> Based on national summits held by the IACP, police leaders, advocates, and victims of domestic violence all advocated for the development of a comprehensive policy that can be tailored to specific departments. They highlighted the need for departments to address OIDV as a multifaceted issue that requires a number of prevention and

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of OIDV research has been conducted in the US; however, this is not to say the problem is unique to this country. In 2003, the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland drafted a model policy relating to police officers who commit domestic violence. This policy emphasizes victim protection, screening police applicants, handling reported incidents, arrest and detention procedures, adjudicative and departmental investigations, risk assessment and management, dealing with officers who have domestic violence related convictions, etc. (ACPO 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Many US police agencies have been proactive with developing and implementing OIDV policies, yet other police administrators are adamant that a problem does not exist and refuse to train their officers on appropriate response protocols (Sgambelluri 2000)

intervention techniques focused on education and training, the recognition of early warning signs, development of incidence response protocols, victim safety and protection plans, and post-incident administrative and criminal case actions (IACP 1999).

Subsequent to OIDV being recognized as a problem inherent to policing, a growing body of literature emerged to explain the causes, correlates, risk factors, and adjudicative and organizational responses to OIDV in the United States (Johnson et al. 2005; Oehme et al. 2012; Blumstein, Fridell, and Jones 2012; Gershon et al. 2009; Lonsway et al. 2003; Erwin et al. 2005). Additionally, an investigation was conducted by the US Department of Justice on OIDV in the Puerto Rico Police Department (PRPD) which concluded that “domestic violence infects the ranks of PRPD and interferes with the ability of PRPD to provide police services in a constitutional manner” (Civil Rights Division 2011: 16). More recent studies have attempted to compile empirical data on the demographic and situational characteristics associated with OIDV by examining media coverage (Stinson, Liederbach, and Freiburger 2012; Stinson and Liederbach 2013). There are gaps in this research, however; for example, research on OIDV in Canada is nonexistent, and no research to date has applied the constructionist framework in analyzing media representations of OIDV.

These gaps are important to explore because how an issue is constructed by claimsmakers has practical implications as “the words we use [and] the typifications we construct, are very real in their consequences” (Loseke and Best 2003: 253). How OIDV is constructed in Canadian media, therefore, may generate or hinder departmental and governmental policies about this issue. Further, it is vital to explore how news organizations have constructed OIDV because many North Americans rely on various news outlets for information about current events (Collins 2013; Barak 1994; Berns 2004). This can be problematic as “news coverage can be framed to give distinctly different views of social problems, influencing how audience members



see their world, its problems, and the solutions to those problems” (Bullock and Cubert 2002: 475). If media representations of OIDV are framed based on information provided only by the police, the public may develop a poor understanding of the problem as it exists in Canada. Consequently, OIDV may be interpreted as isolated incidents that do not require unique policy development or improvement. The aim of the current study, therefore, is first to compare and contrast media representations of OIDV and civilian-perpetrated IPV cases and interpret findings within the constructionist framework to account for any differences in media portrayals. These findings will then be compared to what is already known about media coverage of police violence and civilian IPV, with the underlying goal to see if Canadian media differ from US media, in reporting techniques or strategies. The secondary aim of this study is to use information contained in news articles on OIDV to compile some empirical data on the phenomenon while evaluating findings against prior research.

Aside from addressing gaps in the literature, this research will generate some preliminary empirical data on OIDV in Canada. OIDV was discussed recently at the Ontario *Legislative Assembly* and was recognized as a problem in need of research by the *Domestic Violence Death Review Committee* (DVDRC 2009).<sup>3</sup> As an advocate (and claimmaker) for victims of OIDV and officer-involved sexual violence (OISV), Worden (2015) highlighted the systemic nature of the problem. OIDV is not due to individual aberrations and should instead “be understood as an intentionally cultivated form of deviant police behaviour that is deeply embedded and accepted within police culture, practices, norms, and traditions” (Worden 2015). Worden (2015) recognized OIDV and OISV as problems facing Canadian police departments and cautioned that OIDV poses an escalating threat in need of comprehensive research.

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<sup>3</sup> The DVDRC, established in 2003, is a multi-disciplinary advisory committee comprised of experts who assist the Office of the Chief Coroner in the investigative review of domestic violence homicides.

Similarly, the DVDRC has published at least three annual reports (2004, 2009, and 2011) which involved cases where a current or retired police officer was the perpetrator of a domestic homicide. Two of the three cases were homicide-suicides committed with the perpetrators' service-issued firearm. The first, occurring in 2003, involved a couple who were in the process of divorce. The perpetrator had 22 years' experience as a police officer and had been involved in an on-duty altercation several years earlier. The divorce proceedings caused the perpetrator to feel betrayed, hurt, and vulnerable. The victim felt the divorce was necessary as they were no longer compatible, and he was self-centred and controlling. The impending divorce coupled with the victim mentioning the divorce in the presence of their daughter triggered their deaths. The perpetrator, while off-duty, retrieved his service firearm, returned to the residence, went into the victim's bedroom, shot and killed her before killing himself. The DVDRC made three recommendations. First, a shift in organizational culture is necessary to establish an environment where officers are encouraged to disclose mental health issues and emotional problems. Second, police at all ranks should be trained on how to recognize the link between job-related stressors and harm to self and others. Third, there should be a supervised control mechanism in place for removing agency-issued firearms while off-duty.

The second case involved a female perpetrator and male victim who were in the process of ending their relationship. Minimal information was provided, but it was concluded that she retrieved her service pistol while off-duty, with the victim in the car, and on their way back to her residence, she shot him and then herself. Again, the DVDRC made several recommendations. First, police agencies should continue to provide officers with mental health support and enhance promotion of employee assistance programs. Second, it was recommended police departments recognize the unique demands faced by female officers in a male-dominated profession. Third, the development of trauma and stress management initiatives and

collaborative liaisons with community partners. Finally, the DVDRC recommended ongoing education for officers and their families on “domestic violence, suicide, mental health issues and balanced health and wellness” (DVDRC 2009). To that end, provincial and national research emphasizing these unique aspects of the Canadian police culture is required (DVDRC 2009).

The final case occurred in 2008 and involved a retired police officer. The victim expressed concern about her husband’s increased drinking and medical problems. She told a friend that he could get mean when he drank and that he would occasionally get mad at her for working too much. A friend of the perpetrator arrived to pick him up for a hunting trip on the morning of the homicide. The perpetrator appeared drunk and was stumbling when he told his friend he had shot his wife. The DVDRC provided more specific recommendations tailored to addressing OIDV as a preceding factor in some police-perpetrated domestic homicides.

Specifically, it was recommended that police be trained on victim vulnerability in cases of IPV, particularly with victims of OIDV and police understand the additional barriers victims face when determining whether to disclose abuse (e.g., perpetrator has a gun, knows how to manipulate the criminal justice system in his/her favour; fear of poor investigation when investigating officers are fellow officers).

Despite the paucity of research on OIDV in Canada, testimonials made by Worden (2015) and conclusions drawn from DVDRC indicate that OIDV has been recognized as problem in Canada that requires comprehensive research at the provincial and federal level. Moreover, there is a concern raised by criminal justice officials and the general public: how can police officers effectively respond to domestic violence calls when they have been perpetrators of IPV? (Erwin et al. 2005). Accordingly, this research is important to raise additional awareness, in an aggregated form, of the nature, correlates, and consequences of OIDV in Canada. It can identify if there is a disconnect between media constructions of OIDV and its “reality” and can

potentially inform and improve departmental policies for responding to OIDV. It will also expand on existing research of media representations of police violence (analyzing an off-duty criminal behaviour), media representations of IPV (comparing two types of violent offenders), and OIDV. Furthermore, because this is the first research in Canada to compile empirical data on the nature of OIDV in Canada, it provides a foundation for future research.

### **Thesis Outline**

To analyze whether media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV differ, prior research on media representations of police violence, media representations of IPV, and OIDV will be amalgamated and presented in the following chapter. Compiling these findings allows for the development of expectations regarding how media may construct cases of OIDV compared to civilian IPV. The constructionist framework will then be reviewed to understand which tenets of the theory will be borrowed and applied to understanding why media constructions may differ. Specifically, information will be given on the claimmaking process, including information on typifications, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations as each informs the other in constructing issues as social problems.

Chapter three provides a comprehensive overview of the methodological approach taken in this study. A mixed-methods content analysis was used to analyze media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV while simultaneously producing some preliminary empirical data on OIDV in Canada. This method is the most feasible given time restraints and anticipated difficulty in gaining access to police departments to conduct research on sensitive issues (Klein and Klein 2000). Within this chapter, I review the fundamentals, strengths, and limitations of content analysis with supplemental information on the steps involved in conducting both quantitative and qualitative analyses. In the second half of the chapter, focus shifts toward applying the above

information to the current study by reviewing data collection, sampling, and analysis procedures aligned with the method.

Chapter four provides results to the first research question: *How is OIDV constructed in the media compared to news coverage of IPV perpetrated by civilians and how might differences be explained?* In answering this question, results will be presented in a stepwise fashion. First, descriptive information will be provided on case characteristics of OIDV and IPV, in general, without distinguishing between the two. Next, cross-tabulations will be used to demonstrate any significant differences between OIDV and civilian IPV media coverage followed by results from logistic regression, which are used to measure the effect of media variables on the dependent variable (i.e., whether the offender is a police officer) while holding other variables in the model constant. Focus will then shift to qualitative findings where direct quotations are provided to not only validate quantitative results but also to examine *how* media constructions differ between OIDV and civilian perpetrated IPV. Within this section, excerpts will be taken from media coverage to determine whether typifications, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations differ between OIDV and IPV cases. Risk factors unique to OIDV will be discussed within the *Causal Interpretations* section, as these factors tap into claimsmakers' interpretations of the causes and correlates of OIDV.

Chapter five illuminates the findings for the second research question: *What do media constructions reveal about the nature of OIDV in Canada and how does it compare to prior research?* Within this chapter, quantitative and qualitative results are integrated to provide the most comprehensive answer. The chapter begins with an overview of demographic and situational characteristics as identified through descriptive statistics. Next, as a means of avoiding repetition in material from the previous chapter, bivariate analyses will be used to compare and contrast demographic and situational characteristics based on whether the

perpetrator is a police officer or civilian. Adjudicative and organizational responses are then reviewed quantitatively and supplemented with qualitative findings to substantiate results. Findings are summarized in the concluding section of the chapter.

Chapter six offers an overall comparison between current results and prior literature. Accordingly, the chapter begins with a succinct review of how OIDV and civilian IPV cases are constructed in the media followed with plausible explanations to account for differing constructions. Details will be provided on how media has constructed OIDV in Canada based on news articles published between 2000 and August 2014. Aligned with the contextual constructionist perspective, these findings will then be compared to what has been found in existing literature, providing plausible explanations for any inconsistencies that arise. Next, information will be provided on original contributions of the current study and how it advances research on OIDV and media constructions of violent offenders. All limitations are noted with suggestions for how they could be addressed in future research. A brief section is provided on policy implications generated by this research followed with concluding remarks.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

This thesis examines how the media construct cases of officer-involved domestic violence (OIDV) relative to civilian-perpetrated cases of intimate partner violence (IPV).<sup>4</sup> A secondary focus of the research is to compile preliminary empirical data on the nature of OIDV in Canada. Within the international academic community, research has focused on the prevalence and correlates of OIDV (Erwin et al. 2005; Johnson et al. 2005; Oehme et al. 2011; Gershon et al. 2009; Lonsway 2006). Much of this research is based on survey or interview data involving US officers, aside from the recent investigation by the US Department of Justice on OIDV in the PRPD (Civil Rights Division 2013). There remains, however, a gap in knowledge surrounding media constructions of OIDV. As previous scholars have shown (Collins 2013; Barak 1994; Berns 2004; Bullock and Cubert 2002; Loseke 2003), how an issue is constructed or framed in the media influences how audience members perceive the nature of the problem and its solution(s).

In order to provide a contextual and theoretical framework for this research, the following sections compile research findings from three bodies of literature: OIDV research, media representations of police violence, and media representations of IPV. By drawing together these research findings, hypotheses can be developed regarding how OIDV, relative to civilian IPV, will be constructed in the media and what these constructions can reveal about the nature of OIDV in Canada. Accordingly, this chapter will begin with an overview of OIDV including information on risk factors and organizational and adjudicative responses. This information will be important in understanding how media constructions may differ from research on this issue.

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<sup>4</sup> The acronym 'IPV' is used throughout this research instead of domestic violence (DV) because it delineates that the case must involve an intimate partner. DV is interpreted as an umbrella term encompassing all forms of familial violence, which is not the focus of this study.

The subsequent section focuses on the broader literature examining media representations of police violence with a discussion of factors impacting event coverage, including framing techniques and the asymmetrical relationship police share with journalists. Next, more specific research on media representations of IPV is covered with additional attention given to framing and source considerations.

Secondly, this chapter will provide an overview of constructionism: the theoretical framework informing this research. More specifically, I will examine the emergence and critiques of social constructionism. Next, the contextual constructionist theoretical framework is also reviewed to explain why media constructions of police violence and IPV may differ. Of primary importance in this section are the theoretical contributions developed by Spector and Kitsuse (1977), Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) and Joel Best (1993; [1995] 2009). Lastly, I will conclude the chapter by outlining how my research will contribute to the broader literature on media constructions of social problems, intimate partner and police violence, and OIDV.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **What is OIDV?**

While conducting a study on the effects of police stress and family life, Johnson (1991) discovered that over 40 percent of officers stated they were violent or behaved aggressively toward their spouse or child(ren) within the past six months. In response to this finding, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP 1999: 1) devised a model policy defining “police officer domestic violence” as:

Any reported, founded, and/or prosecuted incident of domestic violence wherein a sworn police officer is the suspected offender... ‘Domestic violence’ refers to any act of violence (threatened or actual) perpetrated by a police officer (on or off duty) or any police department employee upon his or her intimate partner. ‘Partner’ refers to any individual (opposite or same sex) the officer has dated, cohabitated with, married, and/or has a child in common.



Johnson's (1991) findings were replicated with subsequent research confirming higher rates of IPV in police families with prevalence rates ranging from 20 to 40 percent (Lonsway et al. 2003; Kurtz 2008; Neidig et al. 1992; Kirschman 2007).<sup>5</sup> These estimates are significantly higher than what has been found in the general population where violent IPV incidents occur within two to ten percent of intimate partnerships (Johnson and Dawson 2011: 67). Researchers have identified several risk factors unique to policing to explain OI DV prevalence rates.

### **Identifying and Explaining Risk Factors**

Several risk factors associated with OI DV identified in prior research can be understood within a subcultural framework. Although the traditional police subculture has been contested (Herbert 1998; Paoline 2004), an interplay of six normative orders—law, bureaucratic control, adventure/machismo, safety, competence, and morality—influence how officers define and respond to situations (Herbert 1998).<sup>6</sup> These normative orders recognize both formal and informal norms and procedures that enable, constrain, contradict, and sometimes conflict with one another, creating tensions within the department and between police and citizens (Herbert 1998). Depending on which normative orders are valued by individual officers/departments, a unique subculture may develop, valuing “control, authority, solidarity, and isolation” (Johnson et al. 2005: 4). These values are transmitted throughout academy and field training and further reinforced when interacting with fellow officers (Sgambelluri 2000). These subcultural values will be discussed in detail below.

### **The Police Officer's Paradox: *Power, Control, and Authority***

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<sup>5</sup> Other studies have claimed lower prevalence rates than this figure (some as low as 1%), however the majority of these studies were conducted and reported internally (Johnson et al. 2005). Other police departments deny the existence of OI DV in their department and oppose implementing a training curriculum for officers (Sgambelluri 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Herbert (1998: 347) defines normative order as “a set of generalized rules and common practices oriented around a common value.”

Paradoxically, the same work habits that are instilled during training, reinforced by fellow officers, and praised by superiors can be detrimental to officers' intimate relations (Kirschman 2007; Johnson et al. 2005). First, officers are taught to maintain an occupational persona where they appear emotionally distant, unafraid, and always in control (Lott 1995; Kirschman 2007; Sgambelluri 2000; Johnson et al. 2005). This mentality becomes a habitual behaviour that is not easily turned off while at home and has consequential effects on officers' family life (Kirschman 2007; Johnson et al. 2005). Second, cynicism and overprotectiveness may develop in response to prolonged exposure to the worst people in society, as the public is recognized as a key source of officer cynicism (Kirschman 2007; Miller 2007). Cynicism refers to a suspicious mentality with a general distrust of citizens; overprotectiveness stems from this cynical mentality and involves restricting familial activities to protect loved ones (Kirschman 2007; Blumstein et al. 2012; Miller 2007). Third, within the paramilitary police structure—where power is assigned according to hierarchal rank—officers are trained to give and receive instructions without argument and may become anxious when family members are noncompliant (Kirschman 2007; Edwards 2006). Finally, hypervigilance is reinforced in recruits from day one. Hypervigilance involves maintaining a sense of alertness of one's surroundings with a preoccupation toward detecting potential threats (Miller 2007; Kirschman 2007). All of these work habits, which are essential to surviving a potentially dangerous occupation, become hazardous when they spillover into the home.

***Authoritarian Spillover.*** Given the unpredictable and potentially dangerous nature of police work, officers receive continual reinforcement from their organization and colleagues when they successfully exercise their authority while maintaining control on the streets (Johnson et al. 2005). At the same time, officers are sanctioned for taking unnecessary or stupid risks; so this may explain why some, but not all, officers develop an authoritarian mentality: a set of

personality traits centred on domination and submission (Anderson and Lo 2011). Authoritarian spillover occurs when officers are unable to leave this mentality at work, and treat their “family like citizens, expecting the last word, doing things by the book, and being overly critical” (Johnson et al. 2005: 7). Because the majority of police officers have difficulty in becoming emotionally detached while on duty and emotionally available at home, the result is “often emotional detachment and withdrawal, decreased communication, inhibited expression of affection and intimacy, and subsequent marital distancing” (Honig and White 1994, as cited in Sgambelluri 2000: n.p.). This association is important to explore when examining predictors of OIDV as subsequent research revealed a correlation between authoritarianism and psychological IPV in police families (Blumstein et al. 2012).

### ***Solidarity, In-Group Isolation, and the Code of Silence***

In addition to valuing power, control, and authority, the police subculture promotes an insular worldview and fosters solidarity amongst fellow officers (Edwards 2006; Sgambelluri 2000). To quote Bouza (1990: 74),

It is called the *brotherhood in blue*, and it inspires a fierce and unquestioning loyalty to all cops, everywhere. It is widened by the dependence that they have on each other for safety and backup. The response to a summons for help is the cop’s lifeline. An ‘assist police officer’ call is every cop’s first priority. The ultimate betrayal is for one cop to fail to back up another.

Solidarity is reinforced further through canteen talk,<sup>7</sup> where purpose and meaning are given to problematic behaviours by discussing experiences with fellow officers, bridging the gap between expressive talk and action (Waddington 1999). Note, however, Waddington’s (1999) thesis was that canteen talk typically does not translate to how officers behave elsewhere. This may explain why not all officers faced with similar circumstances engage in OIDV. Moreover, the nature of

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<sup>7</sup> Canteen refers to the backstage arena where officers can share work-related stories with their peers (Waddington 1999).

policing, coupled with the use of typical coping mechanisms prescribed by the police culture (i.e., real men do not cry, suppress emotions, alcohol use, etc.), fosters in-group isolation and solidarity (Paoline, Myers, and Worden 2000).

In-group isolation involves officers' reluctance to socialize outside of the blue brotherhood and may serve to encourage OIDV by keeping the problem "in the closet" (Sgambelluri 2000). Social distancing from citizens leads to the development of an "us vs. them" mentality and officers experience difficulty when attempting to socialize with non-police friends or acquaintances (Paoline et al. 2000; Waddington 1999; Paoline 2004; Johnson et al. 2005). Johnson et al. (2005) note how organizational forces contribute further to isolation: long, irregular work hours and shift work limit opportunities for officers to socialize outside of the department. Johnson and associates (2005) proceed to argue that those who marry a police officer, marry into the police subculture and are expected to accept subcultural norms and practices. When incidences of OIDV arise, this association becomes problematic for victims who fear an inadequate investigation by responding officers in order to protect the accused and departmental reputation (Wetendorf 2000; Johnson et al. 2005).<sup>8</sup>

Other academics have suggested subcultural solidarity perpetuates the "blue wall of silence" when allegations of misconduct are made against officers (Hale 1989; Skolnick 2002). Solidarity may encourage OIDV through a rhetoric shared by officers supporting aggressive tactics to maintain control in the home. Solidarity may also discourage victims from reporting OIDV incidents, fearing fellow officers will not investigate the complaint (Blumstein et al. 2012; Johnson et al. 2005).

### ***Exposure to Critical Incidents and/or Work-Related Stressors***

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<sup>8</sup> Underreporting may also be evident if the victim desires to remain in the police community.

Aside from subcultural risk factors, research has alluded to a link between work-related stressors and OIDV (Gerson et al. 2009; Johnson et al. 2005; Oehme et al. 2012; Erwin et al. 2005; Karaffa et al. 2015). Occupational stressors are inevitable given the nature of police work. Officers are expected to remain hypervigilant when encountering risky situations, and susceptibility to danger depends on rank, unit assignment, and officer demographics (Gachter, Savage and Torgler 2011; Waters and Ussery 2007; He, Zhao and Archbold 2002; Erwin et al. 2005; Gershon et al. 2009). These factors lead to differential exposure to stressors, as minority and female officers, those assigned to high-crime districts, and officers employed in specialized units (e.g., sex crimes, drugs, gangs, undercover, etc.) were at an increased risk of experiencing stressors which then impact family involvement, marital satisfaction and IPV (He et al. 2005; Kirschman 2007; Erwin et al. 2005).

Turning to organizational stressors, Gershon and colleagues (2009) have shown how shiftwork, workplace discrimination, irregular hours, and a rigid bureaucratic structure were factors perceived as stressful by the majority of officers. Consequently, job burnout occurs when officers are unable to cope and is experienced as feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization from peers, and a lowered sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach 1998; Johnson et al. 2005). If this stress is not channeled properly, negative behaviours—including IPV—may develop (Johnson et al. 2005; Anderson and Lo 2011).

***Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.*** Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) occurs after exposure to an emotionally traumatic event and is characterized by the development of symptoms after exposure (Marin 2012).<sup>9</sup> PTSD has a devastating impact on officers' intimate relationships and may lead to increased risk of OIDV (Marin 2012; Oehme et al. 2012).

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<sup>9</sup> PTSD symptoms include “re-experiencing the original trauma through flashbacks or nightmares, avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, and increased agitation such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, anger, and hypervigilance” (Marin 2012: 15).

Academics have attempted to demonstrate a link between exposure to critical incidents, PTSD, and OIDV (Oehme et al. 2012; Gershon et al. 2009). Oehme et al. (2012) surveyed 853 Florida law enforcement officers about alcohol use, PTSD, and domestic violence. The research found rates of alcohol abuse and PTSD were high in comparison to the general population. More specifically, 18 percent of the sample reported symptoms of PTSD and 23 percent had engaged in alcohol abuse (Oehme et al. 2012: 8). Officers who displayed PTSD symptoms were four times more likely to engage in IPV and officers who drank hazardously or developed an alcohol dependence were eight times more likely to engage in IPV (Oehme et al. 2012: 8). It should be noted, however, that other research examining alcohol abuse and policing have produced largely inconclusive results, and so this finding should be interpreted with caution (Lindsay 2008).

Both Gerson et al. (2009) and Johnson et al. (2005) note that exposure to violence does not have a direct impact on OIDV, and this association is mediated by other variables. Gershon et al. (2009) surveyed over 1000 officers from a large police department and found that exposure to critical incidents, workplace discrimination/dissatisfaction, and lack of cooperation among fellow officers significantly impacted work-related stress. This stress was predictive of adverse outcomes, including depression and IPV (Gershon et al. 2009). Johnson et al. (2005) found the association between violence exposure and OIDV is mediated by job burnout and authoritarian spillover. These risk factors offer explanations as to why there may be a heightened prevalence of IPV within police families and are important to explore when analyzing media constructions of OIDV.

### **Responses to OIDV: Institutional and Adjudicative**

Researchers and advocates alike argue that officers involved in a domestic violence-related offence are treated leniently throughout all stages of the criminal justice process (i.e., in police charging practices, court proceedings, and departmental action taken)(Stinson et al. 2012;

Worden 2015; Wetendorf 2000; Erwin et al. 2005). Leniency may be partially explained by police involvement at all stages of the criminal justice process: police respond to emergency calls, gather, and document evidence, serve as witnesses at trial, etc. Therefore, victims of IPV and OIDV are reliant on police for a successful criminal prosecution.

### ***Initial Police Response***

Stinson, Liederbach and Freiburger (2012) conducted a content analysis to examine the nature of off-duty police crime including information on institutional and adjudicative responses. Within their study, IPV cases were rarely reported compared to other off-duty offences and the authors attributed this to preferential charging decisions (Stinson et al. 2012). There were multiple cases where police responded to a domestic disturbance involving an off-duty officer that resulted in an arrest for a less serious offence such as public intoxication, disorderly conduct, or resisting arrest (Stinson et al. 2012: 154). These preferential charging decisions were interpreted as unintended consequences of the Lautenberg Amendment of 1996 which prohibits all individuals convicted of a domestic assault related offence from carrying firearms (Stinson et al. 2012; Lonsway 2006). According to Lonsway (2006: 400), enforcement of the amendment has been rather limited and police officers have been able to avoid repercussions, through preferential charging practices, retain their firearm and, hence, their job.

### ***Adjudicative and Departmental Response***

The criminal justice system is the most appropriate, and best funded, avenue for responding to IPV incidents in the US (Buzawa and Buzawa 2003); therefore, it is important to explore how cases of OIDV are handled by the courts. Stinson and Liederbach's (2013) second content analysis on cases of OIDV exclusively, found that many officers who committed IPV received lesser charges than what were warranted, which were then used during plea negotiations to avoid an assault-related conviction.

Despite the formulation and revision of the IACP's (1999; 2003) model policy on OIDV, many US police agencies do not have a policy in place to respond to allegations of OIDV (Lonsway 2006). In a national survey of large police agencies, 29 percent indicated they had a policy in place.<sup>10</sup> Of these policies, some "had specific provisions pertaining to the department-wide and communications response, most common being the statement that the investigation of domestic violence perpetrated by an officer would be the same as for any other citizen and that superiors would be notified and/or sent a copy of the report" (Lonsway 2006: 411). More specific examples of departmental response to OIDV include immediately suspending the officer, charging the officer with an administrative offence, and/or termination (Erwin et al. 2005; Stinson and Liederbach 2012). Based on these studies, it can be concluded that officers arrested, charged, and/or convicted of an IPV-related offence may receive preferential treatment throughout each phase of the criminal justice process. Officers were charged with lesser offences than what was warranted through plea negotiations and discretionary decision-making practices of criminal justice officials. Officers, thus, avoided more serious penalties both within their department and throughout criminal justice proceedings (Stinson et al. 2012).

Despite this growing body of literature analyzing the nature and institutional/adjudicative responses to OIDV, no studies have analyzed media constructions of OIDV. Therefore, the following section provides a literature review of media representations of police violence more generally followed by a section focusing on media representations of IPV specifically. The two bodies of literature are integrated to identify expectations about media coverage of OIDV. Again, this research is important in comparing and contrasting media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV. If media constructions differ between the two, it will provide support for prior

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<sup>10</sup> The authors note this figure may be artificially high as further investigation revealed that some of these departments only had a general domestic violence policy in place and it was applied to officers (Lonsway et al. 2003; Lonsway 2006).



literature by highlighting inherent differences between the nature of OIDV and civilian IPV. Moreover, differences may also be attributed to how the issue is framed; for example, depending on what information is included and what is repressed, the issue will be constructed differently by the media (Edelman 1993; Entman 1993). Consequently, the public may or may not believe the issue is a social problem requiring social, governmental, and/or departmental action.

### **Media Representations of Police Violence**

According to Ericson et al. (1989), news coverage of police deviance is inevitable given society's obsession with procedural propriety and the symbolic function of police as denoting what is proper. Based on dominant cultural images of criminals as dangerous and police as honest and heroic public servants, news organizations "employ various strategies of symbolic communication to construct images and mobilize meanings that legitimize police violence" (Hirschfield and Simon 2010: 156). According to Ross (2000: 3), police violence is "a type of misconduct, deviance, and police abuse and is used as a generic term for brutality, extralegal force, riots, torture, shootings, killings, and deadly force." However, not all police violence gains public attention. Coverage depends on the context in which the violence occurs: only police violence that has gained public attention or that has been recognized within the department can be potentially covered (Ross 2000). How the public perceives police violence, however, is influenced by the framing techniques used by journalists.

### ***Framing Techniques and Source Considerations***

According to Entman (1993: 52), "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, *in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described*" [emphasis added]. Altering the frame in which a social problem is presented alters its reality; thus, "the character, causes, and consequences of any

phenomenon become radically different as changes are made in what is prominently displayed, what is repressed and especially in how observations are classified” (Edelman 1993: 232). In other words, depending on how an issue is framed and which aspects are made salient, it may or may not be perceived by the public as a social problem requiring immediate action.

On average, news coverage of police violence is framed episodically and relies primarily on official sources that make individualized claims (Lawrence 2000).<sup>11</sup> Episodic framing involves reporting on the specific circumstances and individuals involved in the incident, as opposed to thematic framing, which highlights the underlying societal circumstances and cultural forces in which the behaviour is embedded (Iyengar 1991; Lawrence 2000; Carlyle et al. 2008). For example, following the Rodney King beating, police brutality and racism were recognized but the underlying forces leading to the brutality were not analyzed (Kasinsky 1994: 227).<sup>12</sup> Rather, brutality and racism were individualized to the officers involved while the entrenchment of these beliefs within the police culture was ignored. When reporting on the King beating, journalists were able to take a more proactive role since the incident was caught on video, yet in other cases, officers were the primary claimsmakers. Police then constructed the incident to excuse the officers’ actions by placing blame on the uncooperative and violent nature of the other party involved (Lawrence 2000). Still, in other cases police will withhold the names and identifying characteristics of officers involved in civilian deaths, preventing journalists from delving deeper into officers’ backgrounds and characters (Hirschfield and Simon 2010).

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<sup>11</sup> This may not be as pertinent today given the increased attention on officer-involved shootings of African Americans.

<sup>12</sup> On March 3, 1991, police were in pursuit of Rodney King, an African American motorist, for speeding. Subsequent to a brief chase, King was met by 21 officers employed by both the California Highway Patrol and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). He was severely beaten by three LAPD officers as the other officers did nothing. This event was captured on video tape, provoking public outrage over police brutality and racism (Jacobs 1996).

Framing incidents of police violence in this manner can be explained partially by the asymmetrical relationship between police and journalists. Many scholars have noted the reciprocal relationship between police and media: police depend on journalists to promote their departmental mandate while media depend on police for credible information about crime (Chibnall 1977; Mawby 2010; Ericson et al. 1989; 1991). Police, however, dominate this relationship as they maintain an advantageous position as gatekeepers to information and are not solely dependent on the media to achieve their goals (Mawby 2010). Accordingly, the relationship is asymmetrical in favour of police. This relationship was transformed with the expansion of information technologies as large police agencies in the UK, Canada, and the US have appointed corporate communication officers (CCOs), public information officers (PIOs) or media relation officers, to respond to external pressures exerted by the media (Chermak and Weiss 2005; Mawby 1999; 2010; Ericson et al. 1989). These specially-trained officers act as gatekeepers to information, offering prepackaged narratives to journalists, thereby increasing the likelihood of the department being reported on favourably (Chermak and Weiss 2005). For example, Mawby's (2010) research has shown how CCOs strategically withhold certain information that would bring the police department under scrutiny. Journalists accept this limitation and were careful not to "burn police in such a manner as to lose access to this critical source of information" (Chermak and Weiss 2005: 503).

Moreover, Hirschfield and Simon (2010) argue that news coverage of police use of deadly force is framed to legitimize the violence by casting the officer as heroic while reporting on the victim's faulty character or prior criminal record.<sup>13</sup> Only 16 percent of the news articles examined aroused suspicion regarding the officers' actions and "the victims of police homicide

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<sup>13</sup> This research finding, however, may have changed since 2010 in light of the high-profile officer-involved shootings.

are generally not presented in the same manner as are most murder victims” (Hirschfield and Simon 2010: 175). This too can be explained by the close relationship that has been fostered between crime beat reporters and police officers; “collegiality with and privileged access to police may foster identification with police values and obligations to carry out public relations functions on behalf of the police” (Hirschfield and Simon 2010: 158). Note, this relationship is not as asymmetrical as in the past. With changes brought about by the Internet and the increasing number of civilian journalists, news of police brutality spreads at a faster rate.

By framing incidents of police violence in this light, police departments can deny any patterns across multiple events that could be attributed to faulty leadership, lack of oversight, or police subcultural values (Lawrence 2000). Even when police are found to have employed excessive force, “officials then tend to blame the individual officer for inadequate attention to proper procedure or for losing control of themselves” (Lawrence 2000: 38). This finding is compatible with the bad apple theory stipulating that the problem of police deviance is confined to a few misguided individuals or ‘bad apples’ while the remainder of the barrel is unspoiled (Lersch and Mieczkowski 2005). Employing this explanation individualizes the problem, allowing police departments to maintain organizational integrity under public scrutiny (Lersch and Mieczkowski 2005; Gottschalk, Dean and Glomseth 2012). While this individualized explanation appears to be endorsed by police administrators (Lersch and Mieczkowski 2005; Gottschalk et al. 2012), it has come under academic scrutiny for failing to recognize the social determinants and systemic failures underlying police deviance including subcultural pressures, strict bureaucratic guidelines, bad practice, and scarce or poorly managed resources (Seagrave 1997; Gottschalk et al. 2012).

In summary, news coverage of police violence is framed episodically and individualized by reporting on the details of isolated use-of-force incidents. This can be attributed to a number

of factors including, the organizational structure of news outlets, time and geographical constraints, the overreliance on simple narratives given by police and other officials, and the amount/quality of information provided by these sources (Ross 2000; Ericson et al. 1989). Victims are often held responsible for the officers' use of force and do not receive as much sympathy as other murder victims. When the excessive use of force is shown, police departments often divert responsibility from the institution and place it on the offending officer.

### **Media Representations of Intimate Partner Violence**

Similar to media representations of police violence, research on media coverage of IPV indicates the majority of incidents are framed episodically and individualized to the parties involved (Anastasio and Costa 2004; Carlyle et al. 2008; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013). Therefore, victims may be blamed for their victimization, and any implementation of community-wide support mechanisms might be ignored (Carlyle and Slater 2008). Alongside individualizing IPV, prior literature analyzing media representations has highlighted the importance of framing, victim-blaming and excusing the perpetrator, as well as selective sourcing.

#### ***Framing***

Researchers studying media representations of IPV have identified some unique framing techniques (Carlyle et al. 2008; Berns 2004; Bullock and Cubert 2002). According to Berns (2004), three frames have emerged when analyzing popular magazine portrayals of IPV including the antifeminist frame, the social justice frame, and the victim empowerment frame. The antifeminist frame holds the female victim responsible for the abuse while emphasizing the culpability of female perpetrators and IPV advocates in an attempt to resist progress made during the battered women movement (Berns 2004). The social justice frame emphasizes the socio-political contexts in which violence occurs, thereby challenging the reader to consider the

cultural and structural forces that foster violence (Berns 2004). Finally, the victim empowerment frame places responsibility on the victim for solving her “private” problem of IPV; the story is framed to sympathize with the victim in an empowering way (Berns 2004).

Also, Bullock and Cubert’s (2002) research on news coverage of intimate partner homicides produced alternate frames including the police frame, an abnormality frame, and a victim-blaming/excusing the perpetrator frame. The police frame, or “just the facts,” described how the case transpired without speculating on the victim-offender relationship; rather, the case was portrayed as a “legal situation that was already under control” (Bullock and Cubert 2002: 490). Two other frames were developed which sought to characterize the individuals involved as different, whether it be culturally, ethnically, or economically, from the norm. One frame stressed the victim and perpetrator’s abnormality (e.g., the couple were already known to be troublemakers, had a criminal past, lead risky lifestyles, etc.), while the second focused exclusively on the culpability of the “deviant” perpetrator (e.g., deceitful, nasty, monster, etc.) (Bullock and Cubert 2002). The final frame, victim-blaming and excusing the perpetrator, has attracted additional academic attention and will be discussed in detail below.

***Victim-Blaming and Excusing the Perpetrator.*** Depending on how news coverage of IPV is framed, victims may be subtly or overtly blamed for the incident (Bullock and Cubert 2002; Anastasio and Costa 2004; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013; Meyers 1997). Although victim blaming has diminished over the years (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013), studies have revealed how victims are blamed for seeking out abusive relationships, failing to prevent the violence, or for remaining in the relationship (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013; McManus and Dorfman 2003; Bullock and Cubert 2002). Moreover, Meyers (1997) argued the attribution of blame results from journalists attempting to explain *why* the violence occurred. For example, reporting the victim had been

intoxicated and/or was suspected of infidelity facilitates the attribution of blame (Palazzolo and Roberto 2011: 15).

Similarly, McManus and Dorfman (2003) were interested in determining whether news coverage of IPV deflected responsibility from the accused. Their research revealed that excusing the perpetrator occurred when mentioning the accused was intoxicated, acted out of character, or that the violent event occurred in an attempt to save the relationship or maintain custody of children (McManus and Dorfman 2003: 7). Research has also revealed that when perpetrators are named in media reports, the public will perceive the event differently (Easteal, Holland and Judd 2015). Media coverage of IPV fostered sympathy for the victim when the perpetrator was not named but rather dehumanized by labeling him/her a monster, fiend, or beast (Easteal, Holland and Judd 2015). Media representations of IPV “that were less sympathetic to the victim named the perpetrator and added ‘an excuse for his behaviour next to his name’” (Easteal, Holland and Judd 2015: 106). Overall, however, it was rare for the perpetrator to be explicitly exonerated of responsibility, but excusing IPV perpetrators occurred more often than media portrayals with other types of violent offenders (McManus and Dorfman 2003; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013).

***Episodic vs. Thematic Framing.*** Alongside the development of media frames unique to IPV, journalists continue to use episodic frames when covering IPV incidents (Carlyle et al. 2008; Bullock 2007; Palazzolo and Roberto 2011; Sellers et al. 2014). In doing so, the majority of media coverage on IPV characterized cases as isolated criminal events without giving heed to the broader societal context (Sellers et al. 2014). This frame shares commonalities with the previously mentioned police frame as “just the facts” are reported out of context (Bullock and Cubert 2002).

In contrast, thematic framing involves reporting the underlying societal circumstances and cultural forces in which the behaviour is embedded (Carlyle and Slater 2008; Palazzolo and

Roberto 2011; Brossoie, Roberto and Barrow 2012). IPV may be framed thematically by referring to “victimization rates, elements of the criminal justice process, government response to IPV, or a public health perspective addressing prevention or the health consequences of IPV” (Carlyle et al. 2008: 173). Due to journalists’ overuse of episodic framing techniques, it is not surprising that thematic framing is evident in only a fraction of IPV cases (Bullock and Cubert 2002; Carlyle et al. 2008; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013).

### *Selective Sourcing*

The final theme identified in the literature, and arguably the most important for this research, pertains to the sources used to construct a particular social problem. How media outlets portray IPV has much to do with the sources they choose to use. Criminal justice officials, and police officers in particular, are considered the most credible sources for crime-related news (Ericson et al. 1989; Hirschfield and Simon 2010; Chermak and Weiss 2005; Chermak 1995). Due to their proximity to crime, their political and social status as law enforcers, and their close relationship with beat reporters, the police are perceived to have first-hand knowledge not available to others, affording them the position to designate certain individuals and behaviours as criminal (Ericson et al. 1989; 1991; Surette 2007).

According to Bullock and Cubert (2002), journalists’ reliance on police for information when reporting on IPV results in cases being portrayed as a legalistic and individualized problem without providing contextual information on the broader social forces contributing to IPV. Fairbairn and Dawson (2013: 24) validated this finding, demonstrating that Canadian news coverage of intimate partner homicide failed to contain “information on or from shelters, advocacy groups, or researchers on IPV. In large part, this is likely due to the continued (and increased) reliance on police and legal sources for information on these and other cases of violence.” The heavy reliance on police and legal sources is unlikely to change as the police and



news organizations have a mutually-beneficial, although asymmetrical, relationship: journalists receive credible information in a timely fashion while police provide information that promotes their public image and policing mandate (Ericson et al. 1989; 1991; Surette 2007; Chermak 1995; Chermak and Weiss 2005; Dowler and Zawilski 2007; Mawby 1992; 2010).

### **Section Summary**

This chapter began with an overview of what OIDV is, the associated risk factors, followed by information on institutional and adjudicative responses to it. The subsequent sections combined two bodies of literature: media representations of police violence and media representations of IPV. It was revealed that there are similarities between media representations of police violence and IPV; for example, both are framed episodically, individualized, and constructed based on narratives provided by police. Thus, media coverage of police violence tends to excuse the perpetrating officer's behaviour by placing blame on the uncooperative and violent nature of the other party. Excusing officer behaviour may partially be attributed to the asymmetrical relationship between police and journalists. When the excessive use of force is shown police departments often divert responsibility from the institution by placing it on the offending officer, further supporting the claim that cases are framed episodically and individualized. Thematic framing, by contrast, involves providing information on the societal and cultural forces in which police violence and IPV are fostered and maintained. For example, thematic elements refer to risk factors associated with OIDV (i.e., the police subculture, authoritarian spillover, and occupational/organizational stressors), government and departmental responses, and/or victimization rates.

Similarly, research on media portrayals of IPV has revealed the majority of cases are also framed episodically and individualized to the parties involved. Researchers have attributed this to journalists' overreliance on police for information about IPV cases. Police often provide a

generic narrative of the course of events or just the facts. Similar to police violence, victims of IPV are more likely blamed for their victimization and perpetrators more likely excused for their actions. Victim blaming can be partially explained through framing techniques and journalists' attempting to explain *why* the victimization occurred.

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: CONSTRUCTIONISM**

This research will borrow some ideas from the constructionist framework to understand why media representations of OIV and civilian IPV cases may differ. In brief, "Constructionist perspectives focus on how people create and respond to conditions, how we categorize and typify, how we subjectively construct the meanings of problems, and how our constructions influence how we act toward these conditions" (Loseke and Best 2003: 4). This perspective originated from Berger and Luckmann's (1966) publication, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Fundamentally concerned with the ways in which knowledge is shaped by social processes, Berger and Luckmann (1966) built on the phenomenological writings of Alfred Schutz. Schutz was concerned with common-sense thinking and its emergence within social environments. He argued human beings use language to assign meanings to the world and, thus, focused on the role of social interaction in creating these meanings (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Social constructionism became associated with labeling theory in the late 1960s (Best 2008). In the 1970s, however, labeling theory came under attack but efforts continued to develop a theoretically coherent perspective to analyze and understand social problems (Spector and Kitsuse 1977; Best 2008). These efforts culminated in Spector and Kitsuse's publication of *Constructing Social Problems* (1977).

According to Spector and Kitsuse (1977: 75), social problems are constructed based on "the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions." By this constructionist definition, a social problem is not viewed as

an objective reality but as an interactive process between claimsmakers regarding the harm, undesirability, or unjustness of the “problem” (Spector and Kitsuse 1977: xi). Social constructionists, therefore, are not concerned with objective conditions assumed to exist in society, but rather in the meanings individuals create and assign to the objective condition. Accordingly, social constructionists examine claims made, within a moral universe, by claimsmakers and how these claims are perceived publicly (Spector and Kitsuse 1977; Loseke and Best 2003; Best 2008).

### **Claims, Claimsmakers, and Audiences**

Since Spector and Kitsuse (1977) were interested in constructing a theory of claimsmaking activities, it is necessary to provide a brief review of *claims*, *claimsmakers*, and *audiences*. Loseke and Best (2003: 39) define a *claim* as “any verbal, visual, or behavioural statement that tries to persuade audience members to take a condition seriously and respond to it as a social problem.” These statements are made by individuals, groups, or organizations who are recognized as claimants or *claimsmakers*. Typically, claimants with more power, larger membership, more money, and better organization are more successful in publicizing their assertions (Spector and Kitsuse 1977). Accordingly, social movement activists, scientists, and mass media are three of the most important types of claimsmakers (Loseke and Best 2003). Constructing an issue as a social problem involves typifying conditions by outlining the basic “facts,” defining terms, identifying who is harmed, and who or what is to blame (Loseke and Best 2003: 77). In constructing these typifications, claimsmakers construct a set of frames, including diagnostic frames, motivational frames, and prognostic frames (Loseke and Best 2003). Diagnostic frames encompass claims that make assertions about the *type* of problem while providing a causal explanation. Motivational frames speak to *why* the problem or condition is problematic. Finally, prognostic frames provide treatment recommendations to alleviate or

eliminate the condition (Best and Loseke 2003). *Audience* is a broad term referring to the general public who evaluate the believability and importance of competing assertions (Loseke and Best 2003).

How a social problem is constructed, therefore, depends on the interactive relationship between claims, claimsmakers, and audience members, together forming the claimsmaking process (Spector and Kitsuse 1977; Loseke and Best 2003). Who is making the claim and which audience members' attention they are seeking will influence which *value judgments* they rely upon when expressing the basis for their grievances (Spector and Kitsuse 1977). For example, claims made by academics and researchers in journal publications regarding a social problem will likely have a different rhetoric than what would be used by journalists in constructing news articles for the general population.

According to Spector and Kitsuse (1977: 92),

Claims express demands within a moral universe. Values are those statements that express *the grounds or the basis* of the complaint. They are used to justify a demand, to explain not simply what is wrong, but why it is wrong. Like motives, values are a resource in the language; they are used to justify a line of conduct.

These claims are discussed and debated within the symbolic arena managed by journalists who provide public access to competing perspectives (Gans 1979; Gamson et al. 1992). Successful constructions are recognized as legitimate by some official institution or agency, receive public endorsement, and come to be accepted as 'reality' (Spector and Kitsuse 1977; Blumer 1971). According to this perspective, media constructions of OIDV will differ depending on who is making the claim, which audience it is directed to, and the value judgments relied upon when making the claim. Police will make different claims regarding the nature and severity of the problem than domestic violence advocates. For example, from the police perspective, OIDV may be typified as a problem that is controlled and confined to a few officers whereas domestic

violence advocates may construct the problem as stemming from the police culture and/or occupational stressors.

This strict constructionist perspective was subsequently critiqued for inconsistency. In theory the primary focus is studying the *subjective* nature of social problems, while, in practice, social constructionists conclude their analysis with a definitional claim regarding the problem thereby recognizing its *objective* reality (Woolgar and Pawluch 1985). By selectively attending to certain objective conditions, Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) have accused constructionists of ontological gerrymandering. Broken down further, Woolgar and Pawluch (1985) accuse strict constructionists of constructing a problem based on their version of the problem's ontology (Schneider 1985). Gerrymandering involves manipulating boundaries to favour a position. A successful constructionist "social problems explanation depends on making problematic the truth status of certain states of affairs selected for analysis and explanation, while backgrounding or minimizing the possibility that the same problems apply to assumptions upon which the analysis depends" (Woolgar and Pawluch 1985: 216).

### ***Contextual Constructionism***

In one response to this critique, Joel Best (1993) pointed out foundational works by social constructionists that imply the desirability and feasibility of recognizing objective conditions when studying the construction of social problems. This fostered a new division within constructionist research: contextual constructionism.

Rather than retreating into general theories of condition categories and other abstractions, contextual constructionism seeks to locate claimsmaking within its context. Claims emerge at particular historic moments in particular societies; they are made by particular claimsmakers who address particular audiences. Claimsmakers have particular reasons for choosing particular rhetoric to address particular problems. Such specific elements form claimsmaking's context, and contextual constructionists argue that understanding social problems claims often depends upon understanding their context (Best 1995/2009: 343).

Thus, contextual constructionists argue that the study of social problems cannot be separated from the social and cultural context in which claims are made (Holstein and Miller 1993; Best [1995] 2009). Claims, therefore, must be studied alongside historical moments unique to particular societies with attention given to the audience in which claims are directed (Best 1995/2009).

By recognizing the objective reality of a social problem, contextual constructionism allows analysts to evaluate the accuracy of claims made regarding a social problem (Holstein and Miller 1993; Best 1995/2009). Evaluations are made based on official statistics, public opinion surveys, and/or research findings, all of which are social constructions. Contextual constructionists recognize this limitation, “but they assume that such information can be used to (imperfectly) describe the context in which claimsmaking occurs” (Best [1995] 2009: 346). Social problems claims are warranted if they appropriately describe the social problem and provide potential remedies that contextual constructionists deem successful (Holstein and Miller 1993). Most often, contextual constructionists use their analyses to extend the scope of a previously recognized social problem; however, they can also use their assessments to construct new and formerly unrecognized social problems (Holstein and Miller 1993).

In comparing and contrasting media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV, aspects of the contextual constructionist perspective can be borrowed and applied to account for differing constructions which may be due to source considerations, framing techniques, and/or value judgements. Contextual constructionism also allows the analyst to evaluate claims made about OIDV and civilian IPV against extant literature. This will be especially relevant when exploring the nature of OIDV in media coverage insofar as claims will be evaluated against existing research to determine if news media are providing an accurate depiction of OIDV. Claims regarding OIDV, therefore, are warranted if they accurately reflect past research. It is not solely

up to the claimmaker(s) to convince audience members their claim is the correct one – it must be supported by prior research.

To conclude this section it is necessary to reiterate Best's ([1995] 2009: 349) cautionary advice when conducting constructionist research. Contextual constructionists should not become distracted with the objective conditions of a problem and instead remain focused on analyzing the claimmaking process. The objective conditions are permitted to figure into the analysis, but at no point should the objective reality of a condition become the "analytical centrepiece" (Best [1995] 2009: 349). For the reasons outlined above, this study will borrow ideas from contextual constructionist framework to determine how OIDV and civilian IPV are constructed in the media and to evaluate the accuracy of claims by comparing news coverage to existing literature on the issue. At no point, however, will the conditions of OIDV, identified in prior research, be treated as the analytic centrepiece of this research.

## **Hypotheses**

Subsequent to compiling the above research findings from OIDV, media representations of police violence and media representations of IPV, many hypotheses were created as informed by the constructionist framework. With respect to the first research question, it is hypothesized that:

- (a) Both OIDV and civilian IPV will be framed episodically and will, therefore, individualize the problem
- (b) Cases of OIDV and civilian IPV will be constructed primarily based on simple narratives provided by police
- (c) Media coverage of OIDV and civilian IPV will differ in the use of diagnostic, motivational, and prognostic frames
- (d) Despite hypotheses (a) and (b), because of public fascination with police wrongdoing, thematic elements may appear more often in OIDV cases
- (e) When thematic elements appear, OIDV will differ from IPV by recognizing organizational or occupational stressors, the police culture, substance abuse and/or PTSD

Prior literature of media portrayals of police violence and IPV has revealed a tendency to employ episodic frames and individualize the issue to the parties involved (Anastasio and Costa 2004; Carlyle et al. 2008; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013; Lawrence 2000; Hirschfield and Simon 2010). Similarly, prior research signals a tendency for journalists to rely on police as the primary information source when covering incidents of police violence or IPV (Bullock and Cubert 2002; Fairbairn and Dawson; Kasinsky 1994). However, because police administrators typically endorse the bad apple explanation (Lersch and Mieczkowski 2005; Gottschalk et al. 2012), media coverage of OVID is expected to differ from civilian IPV in the use of constructionist frames. Scholars have recognized the public fascination with police wrongdoing, coupled with the increase of civilian journalists, it is hypothesized thematic elements may appear more often in media coverage of OVID compared to civilian IPV. Finally, based on OVID literature, it is predicted that coverage of OVID may allude to work-related stressors, police culture, substance abuse and/or PTSD (Gerson et al. 2009; Johnson et al. 2005; Oehme et al. 2012). Similarly, in answering the second research question, it is hypothesized that,

- (f) Officers accused of OVID will be treated more leniently by the courts compared to civilians accused of IPV
- (g) The empirical data generated on OVID will be similar to what has been found in US research. More specifically, it is hypothesized that the police subculture, organizational and occupational stressors, and substance abuse will play a role in explaining OVID.

Again, these hypotheses were created based on prior literature. Past researchers have noted the tendency for police to be treated leniently by the courts and, due to cultural similarities between Canadian and US police agencies, it is predicted that OVID in Canada will share several risk factors identified in US research (Lonsway 2006; Stinson and Liederbach 2013).



## CONTRIBUTIONS

The current research is beneficial for filling gaps in knowledge surrounding how OIDV is constructed in the media compared to civilian IPV cases while providing information on the nature of OIDV in Canada. It is important to explore media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV due to the general public's reliance on media outlets for information about current events. If OIDV and civilian IPV events are framed episodically and individualized, the public may develop misinformed opinions about the nature and scope of the problem. Moreover, there is a gap in the research on media representations of IPV as these studies have commonly looked at only one type of violent perpetrator. This study expands on this body of work by comparatively analyzing media portrayals of two different types of violent offenders, committing the same behaviour (i.e. police officers and civilians).

Secondly, the majority of research on OIDV has been conducted in the United States and is dedicated primarily to identifying risk factors, with some attention given to institutional and adjudicative responses. With few exceptions, these studies have relied on self-report surveys to determine OIDV rates, thus findings may have reduced validity because of social desirability biases and/or fear of administrative repercussions (Erwin et al. 2005; Stinson and Liederbach 2013). These drawbacks are not evident in the current study as the sample is based on media coverage of OIDV cases where the officer has been accused, charged, and/or convicted of a IPV-related offence. This study comes with limitations, however, as only cases that have received media attention were selected, thus underreporting remains an issue. Regardless, findings from this content analysis will contribute to OIDV literature by providing a Canadian perspective on the issue while producing knowledge surrounding media constructions of OIDV. Conclusions can then be drawn regarding whether media constructions of OIDV recognize and frame the issue as a social problem in need of corrective action.

## CHAPTER 3 – METHODS

The primary aim of this study is to compare and contrast media representations of OIDV and civilian-perpetrated IPV, with a secondary objective of acquiring preliminary empirical data on OIDV in Canada. These aims will be accomplished by answering the following two research questions:

- i. How is OIDV constructed in the media compared to constructions of IPV perpetrated by civilians and how might differences be explained?
- ii. What is revealed in the media about the nature of OIDV in Canada and how does it compare to prior research?

This chapter will begin with an overview of how the current research was designed, which paradigms were used, as well as the efficacy of adopting a mixed-methods approach. The following section provides an overview of content analysis and its related benefits. Next, the chapter will review how data was collected, coded, and analyzed. The latter will include a review of both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, including the benefits and drawbacks of each. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of validity and reliability in relation to the content analyses.

### Brief Introduction

Research decisions are guided by a researcher's pre-existing ontological, epistemological, and methodological beliefs and feelings about how social reality should be understood and studied (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Denzin and Lincoln 2011).<sup>14</sup> These beliefs have been collectively referred to as a paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

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<sup>14</sup> Ontology is concerned with how we understand the nature of reality and essentially has two views conceptualized by the objectivity-subjectivity dichotomy (Neuman and Robson 2012; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). Epistemology is a branch of philosophy "concerned with questions about whether and how valid knowledge about reality can be achieved" (Lincoln and Guba 1985 as cited in Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003).

Two major paradigms—positivist, aligned with quantitative designs, and interpretive, aligned with qualitative designs—are fundamental in conducting sociological research and have different ontological and epistemological orientations (Neuman and Robson 2012). Positivism holds there is only one true reality, and knowledge of that reality is acquired through systematic observation and logical thought processes (Staller et al. 2008; Palys and Atchinson 2014). Emphasis is placed on research objectivity and producing *value-free* knowledge about a social condition (Staller et al. 2008). The interpretive framework, on the other hand, stresses the socially constructed nature of reality where results are *value-laden* (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). It operates within relativist ontologies (multiple constructions of reality exist due to subjective interpretations) and an interpretive epistemology (the researcher and the subject interact to influence and shape the other) (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

Due to differing epistemological and ontological orientations of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, researchers have argued that integration is impossible because the two underlying paradigms are incompatible (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). In response to this incompatibility thesis, Howe (1988) forwarded *pragmatism*: the stance that integration of methodologies is possible when a researcher employs a combination of epistemological and ontological assumptions to answer his/her research question(s) (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003; Denzin and Lincoln 2011). This led to *methodological eclecticism*, a contemporary characteristic of mixed-methods research, which involves blending the most appropriate techniques from quantitative and qualitative methodologies to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2011).

## Research Design

Given the multifaceted nature of my research questions, a mixed-methods approach was used to complete this study. The purpose of this research was first to quantify features of media constructions of OI DV and civilian-perpetrated IPV cases to identify broad patterns, trends, similarities, and differences between the two.<sup>15</sup> This phase of the research process is aligned with the positivist paradigm where knowledge is deduced from hypothesizing and variable measurement, establishing causality, and allows “predictions to be made about ‘facts’ which have been properly evaluated by mathematical logic” (Grbich 2007: 4). Next, quantitative findings were supplemented with qualitative analyses: the primary methodology used in answering the first research question. Accordingly, and aligned with my theoretical framework, elements of the constructionist paradigm were borrowed and used to interpret findings. The aim of constructivism is to reconstruct understandings of social reality through analyzing human interaction and the ascription of meaning to everyday occurrences (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Constructivists argue that constructed meanings are essential in knowledge formation and will, therefore, be used to deconstruct then reconstruct meanings revealed in media coverage of OI DV and IPV (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Both quantitative and qualitative content analyses were integrated for the second research question, presenting a more comprehensive examination of the nature of OI DV in Canada (Morse 2003; Palys and Atchinson 2014; Creswell 2009). The following section provides an overview of content analysis in general prior to explaining the research procedures used in this study.

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<sup>15</sup> There has been some confusion among media scholars as to what is meant by ‘media’ (Meyrowitz 1993). Within this study, media can be described by the metaphorical construct of media as languages (Meyrowitz 1993). This metaphor takes the focus beyond the surface content and instead focuses on “the particular expressive variables, or production techniques, within each medium or general type of media” (Meyrowitz 1993: 58). The medium is therefore viewed as an active conduit that alters the presentation and meaning of social problems (Meyrowitz 1993: 58-59).

## Content Analysis as the Methodological Tool

Content analysis is defined as a means to “present a precise numeric account of the frequency, type, and features of words, ideas, actions, depictions, or other elements of interest present in textual or visual data” (Palys and Atchison 2014: 307). This definition aligns with quantitative content analysis, where a coding system is created *a priori* to objectively and systematically count and record characteristics of interest (Neuman and Robson 2012; Palys and Atchinson 2014). Quantitative content analysts use this coding scheme to track the surface content in a text (e.g., recording the number of times a word or phrase appears); which can be contrasted with qualitative content analysis where the aim is to present a thorough analysis of underlying themes, patterns, and frames (Palys and Atchison 2014; Braun and Clarke 2006). These analysts are less concerned with manifest content and instead classify “large amounts of text into a manageable number of categories that reflect either explicit or inferred meanings” (Neuman and Robson 2012: 321).

Researchers have come to a consensus that content analyses are neither inherently quantitative nor qualitative and most researchers are comfortable with blending both methodologies (Berg and Lune 2012).<sup>16</sup> Regardless of the chosen methodology, a general procedure is followed. A topic is selected, the unit of analysis is defined (e.g., words, sentences, or the whole text), and the variables/categories are conceptualized (Neuendorf 2002; Weber 1990; Altheide and Schneider 2013). Based on these variables, a coding scheme is devised *a priori* for quantitative analysis and further expanded or built upon throughout qualitative coding

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<sup>16</sup> Distinctions can be made, however, between quantitative and qualitative content analyses as the former adheres to an objectivist epistemology whereas the latter is more interpretive. This leads to differences in research goals, designs, emphasis, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation (Altheide and Schneider 2013). In sum, quantitative content analysis is “used as a method to determine the objective content of messages... [And its major competence] is that it verifies or confirms hypothesized relationships rather than discovering new or emergent patterns” (Altheide and Schneider 2013: 25).

(Neuendorf 2002; Palys and Atchinson 2014). Next, the coding protocol is tested on a sample of text to determine if revisions are required before coding remaining data (Weber 1990; Altheide and Schneider 2013; Neuendorf 2002). Once all text is coded, the analyst reports his/her findings in various ways depending on whether a quantitative, qualitative or mixed approach is adopted. Further detail will be provided in conducting quantitative and qualitative content analyses in the *Research Procedure* section.

Relative to other techniques used in social research, there are several advantages of using a content analysis to conduct the current research. First, content analysis is the most sensible method to use for analyzing and comparing media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV. Analyzing news articles provides a convenient and cost-effective sample that can be used to provide comprehensive answers to the research questions. Second, it is also the most feasible research method, at the current time, to acquire preliminary empirical data on the nature of OIDV in Canada. Survey and interview techniques would provide more insight into the nature of OIDV but in light of time restrictions and the anticipated difficulty of gaining access to police departments, the content analysis provided a suitable alternative. Third, analyzing newspapers preserves the context in which claims are made (i.e., who made the claim, whether the claim was contested, how the problem was evaluated, etc.) (Weber 1990; Krippendorf 2004). Accordingly, content analysis benefits from being context sensitive, allowing the researcher to identify meaning and significance in textual data (Krippendorf 2004: 41). Sixth, given that content is universally accessible to anyone with access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone, content analyses are cost-effective (Altheide and Schneider 2013; Berg and Lune 2012). Relatedly, having access to online databases (e.g., LexusNexus, ProQuest, University library databases, etc.) provides large volumes of news articles on OIDV and civilian IPV cases which can be analyzed reliably with the assistance of a qualitative software program (i.e., *NVivo*) (Krippendorf

2004). The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to providing an overall description of the research procedure used for this thesis, including information on sampling strategy, data collection, and analysis.

## **RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

The purpose of this research is twofold. The primary objective is to explore and describe how OIDV is constructed in the media compared to civilian-perpetrated IPV cases, to identify what explanations are offered, and to determine whether media constructions differ for each. The secondary aim is to gather empirical data on the nature of OIDV in Canada which will be compared with findings from prior research. Given the multifaceted nature of these objectives, a mixed-methods approach will be used to complete this study.

Subsequent to determining my research topic and objectives, the unit of analysis—all news articles published per case—was chosen. As such, the approach taken for analysis was case-based as opposed to analyzing each news story as a separate entity (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013). This was done for several reasons. First, amalgamating all articles per case allows for tracking the evolution of a case from criminal incident to trial disposition, thereby providing a richer understanding of the case and phenomenon. Second, to gather empirical data on the nature of OIDV in Canada, information is needed on the entire case and, if the article-based approach was used, this would potentially lead to double counting. Third, the case-based approach eases the pairing of OIDV and IPV cases. To provide a hypothetical example, if each OIDV article ( $n = 307$ ) was analyzed as a separate entity, each article would be matched with a similar civilian-perpetrated IPV case. This would equate to a final sample size of 614 articles to qualitatively (and quantitatively) analyze, which is an unmanageable sample size for the current research. Finally, since this study compares two types of violent perpetrators, it requires an understanding of how the entire case evolved to make a valid comparison.

The procedure began deductively as two preliminary coding protocols—one for quantitative data the other for qualitative data—were developed based on prior literature (*see Appendix A - F*). These protocols underwent revisions as concepts, themes, and patterns emerged from reading data that were not included in, or applicable to, past research (Palys and Atchinson 2014). Two different search engines were used for data collection –*Newspapers Canada Complete* and *Google News*. The former is a Canadian-based search engine containing access to full-text articles published in nearly 300 Canadian newspapers dating back to 1970 powered by the University of Guelph Library (ProQuest 2015). The latter is an amalgamation of news articles from more than 4,500 news sources and provides the option of grouping similar stories together based on personal interests (About Google News 2011). *Google News* is specifically designed to search news topics occurring within the past year; however, there is an additional feature allowing access to archived materials dating back over 200 years (About Google News 2011).

### **Sampling Strategy**

The most appropriate sampling strategy is determined by the research purpose and questions, methodology, and the feasibility of conducting the project with the selected sampling strategy (Kemper et al. 2003; Creswell 2009; Krippendorf 2004). Sampling strategies can be distinguished typically between probabilistic and purposive sampling strategies (Palys and Atchinson 2014; Krippendorf 2004). The former capitalizes on the rules of probability: each case has an equal probability of being selected and thus representative of, and generalizable to, the population from which they were sampled (Krippendorf 2004; Palys and Atchinson 2014). The latter are used to select cases that share common characteristics, but may not be reflective of the general population (Palys and Atchinson 2014; Krippendorf 2004; Neuendorf 2002). Several purposive sampling strategies exist (e.g., extreme/deviant and typical case, critical case, and



maximum variation case sampling) but only one is relevant to this study: criterion sampling (Palys and Atchinson 2014; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2011). This sampling strategy involves searching for cases that meet a predetermined criterion, for example only including news coverage of OIDV or IPV incidents (Palys and Atchison 2014).

Data were collected in a three-stage process. First, using the criterion sampling strategy, news articles covering incidents of OIDV that satisfied the IACP's definition were included in the analysis. During this stage, the coding protocols were piloted on a sample of 10 OIDV articles and appropriate revisions were made prior to finishing the first stage of data collection. The second stage of data collection involved matching each OIDV case retrieved with a similar case of civilian-perpetrated IPV. Given the complexity of matching cases on more than one variable (Palys and Atchison 2014), cases were matched on three primary variables: gender of the offender, crime committed (e.g., assault, assault with a weapon, stalking, harassment, etc.), and victim-offender relationship. This is justified as female perpetrators often receive more news coverage (Carll 2003), most IPV incidents involve physical harm (Carlyle et al. 2008), and news is dedicated primarily to IPV incidents involving spouses, followed by estranged and dating couples (Carlyle et al. 2008).<sup>17</sup> Only exact matches, indicating the OIDV and IPV cases are matched on all three variables, were included in the analysis. Moreover, publication year was included as a control variable when pairing cases. This was done to standardize results: prior research indicates news coverage of IPV has changed in the last 20 years, resulting in a decrease in victim blaming and excusing the perpetrator (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013; McManus and Dorfman 2003). Finally, when the offender was named, a supplemental search, through *Google News*, was conducted to collect additional articles on the case.

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<sup>17</sup> Recently, however, media attention is being redirected toward violence on college campuses and so dating couples may receive more news coverage than in the past (McManus and Dorfman 2003).

It should be cautioned that purposive sampling strategies may bias the researcher's understanding of the social phenomenon under investigation as selected cases may reaffirm rather than challenge existing expectations (Palys and Atchinson 2014: 115). This danger is not a pertinent issue facing this study. All OIDV cases that satisfied IACP's definition were included in the analysis while efforts were made to match each OIDV case with the most comparable civilian-perpetrated IPV case occurring within the same time period.

### **Sample**

Based on the IACP's definition of OIDV, 132 cases were collected and paired with 132 cases of civilian IPV occurring between 2000 and August 2014, resulting in a sample of 264 cases comprised of 461 news articles.<sup>18</sup> The temporal period was determined to gauge whether news coverage of OIDV and IPV has increased in frequency over the past decade. This is justified as Canada adopted pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies for IPV, which deviates from the historical treatment of IPV as a "private matter" (Department of Justice 2002; Brown 2000).<sup>19</sup> The criminalization of IPV may lead to increased coverage, especially in popular news outlets (e.g., the Toronto Sun) which rely predominantly on police for information on crime (Ericson et al. 1991). Moreover, research reveals changes in IPV policies may have altered framing resulting in an overall reduction in victim-blaming and excusing the perpetrator (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013).

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<sup>18</sup> There were originally 136 OIDV cases yet three were deleted because they could not be paired with a civilian case of IPV on all three variables. Note, one of the cases involved sexual assault with a weapon, criminal harassment, extortion, and possession of child pornography committed by a retired Calgary police officer against his ex-girlfriend. The charges were withdrawn by the Crown after the victim died.

<sup>19</sup> Even though pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies came into effect in the mid-1980's, it was not until 2000 that a coordinated effort was initiated to strengthen the criminal justice response to domestic violence (Department of Justice 2002).

The resulting sample is attributable to practical constraints: only OI DV cases that have received media attention and can be paired with similar IPV cases were analyzed. Moreover, the resulting sample size is manageable for this research since qualitative research designs typically employ a smaller sample size as reading and re-reading data is time-consuming (Braun and Clarke 2006).

### **Data Coding and Analysis**

Recording and coding textual data is a major tenet of content analysis. *Recording* is essentially tracking the analyst's interpretation of what they see, hear, or read while in the course of data analysis while *coding* involves capturing information in content according to predetermined rules (Krippendorff 2004). Data coding depends on whether the analysis is primarily quantitative or qualitative as each differs in ontological and epistemological orientations. For the current study, data were coded and analyzed sequentially, in a stepwise fashion, beginning with quantitative data.

### ***Quantitative Content Analysis***

Quantitative content analysis emerged within the positivist ontological orientation and provided an objective and structured approach to data sampling, collection, analysis and interpretation (Altheide 1987; Krippendorff 2004; Altheide and Schneider 2013). Quantitative content analysts begin with a theory, review literature, and construct hypotheses. Variables of interest to the study are then defined, or conceptualized and operationalized (Palys and Atchinson 2014; Neuendorf 2002; Krippendorff 2004). How a concept is operationalized by the analyst must match how it is defined for the study to be considered internally valid (e.g., if the research topic is on 'sex objects' it must first be defined—attractive, alluring, seductive—and the operationalized variables should indicate what aspects of text would be coded as attractive, alluring, or seductive; (Palys and Atchinson 2014)). A coding protocol and manual are

constructed based on these operationalized variables prior to data collection, or *a priori* (Neuendorf 2002; Krippendorf 2004).

Accordingly, a coding protocol was developed to identify study variables (e.g., demographic information, offence characteristics, source considerations, criminal justice outcomes, and administrative outcomes for OIDV cases) and coding categories were constructed to capture all possible values. These values were defined explicitly (*see Appendix C*). A coding sheet was then developed to record information. Each case had a separate coding sheet where information could be recorded for each variable (*see Appendix B*; Neuman and Robson 2012). This coding sheet only captures manifest or semantic content (e.g., information on concepts or themes that are easily identifiable on the surface level), without delving deeper into subjective interpretations of data (Braun and Clarke 2006). Data from each coding sheet were then entered into SPSS.

***Quantitative Measures and Recoding.*** Each coding sheet contained a number of independent variables, capturing information on media (i.e., type of coverage, word count, source considerations, offender named, etc.), demographic (age and gender of accused and victim, agency characteristics, location, etc.) situational (substance or weapon use, infidelity, victim injury), and court characteristics, as they all directly, or indirectly, impact how an incident of OIDV or IPV is portrayed in the news. With respect to media variables, total word count and number of articles per case were included as variables to gauge the amount of information contained per case. Source considerations are key to understanding what claims are being made regarding OIDV and civilian IPV incidents and also how they are likely to be framed. Whether the offender was named is also important, as this relates to the amount of information provided (i.e., if the offender's name is withheld, a number of other identifying characteristics will likely

be withheld to prevent victim identification) and also whether the offender is sympathized with (Easteal, Holland, and Judd 2015).

Some of these media, demographic, situational, and court variables were recoded into smaller, more manageable categories prior to conducting further analyses. For example, weapon use, originally an eight category variable (i.e., no weapon, hands/fists, knife, agency-issued firearm, personally owned firearm, other body parts, other, and not specified), was collapsed into a three-category variable distinguishing between: no weapon, weapon, and not specified. Similarly, substance use, originally a five-category variable, was collapsed to distinguish between cases where the accused was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol, was under the influence, or this information was unspecified in media coverage. This recoding is justified based on the greater probability of victim injury when the perpetrator is intoxicated (Brecklin 2002; Lee, Ju and Lightfoot 2010; Fals-Stewart et al. 2003;). Moreover, accused's intoxication may be included in news coverage to excuse the perpetrator of responsibility (McManus and Dorfman 2003).

Subsequent to entering data into SPSS, data were analyzed in a stepwise fashion. Frequency tables were created to acquire a visual representation of how the study variables are distributed. Cross-tabulations were subsequently conducted to identify any similarities or differences between news constructions of OIDV compared to civilian-perpetrated cases. Any significant associations were identified using Pearson's chi-square statistic. These associations were then further examined using logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression is used when the dependent variable is dichotomous and isolates the effects of each variable on the dependent variable while holding all other variables constant (Agresti and Finlay 2012). In light of this study's research questions, the perpetrator's occupation became the dependent variable for the multivariate analysis. It was coded to distinguish cases where the perpetrator was a police officer

(coded as 1) and IPV cases where the perpetrator was not a police officer (coded as 0). More specifically, logistic regression was used to predict whether media variables (i.e., framing techniques, amount and type of coverage, source considerations, etc.) differ significantly in media coverage of OIDV versus civilian IPV.

Conducting a quantitative content analysis is advantageous in its ability to standardize unstructured, non-numeric data which can be then analyzed to verify hypothesized relationships (Altheide and Schneider 2013). A major limitation of quantitative content analysis relates to the deductive mode of inquiry (Ericson et al. 1991). Not only is quantitative content analysis restricted analytically to quantifiable information, by working exclusively on the coding sheet, the analyst fails to look beyond his/her predefined categories, resulting in “a rather barren counting of repetition without adequate attention to its significance” (Ericson et al. 1991: 51). This limitation, however, can be resolved by integrating qualitative methods into the analysis. Accordingly, it was justified to conduct quantitative analyses first to identify apparent concepts and patterns, which will be investigated qualitatively in the second phase of data coding and analysis. For example, quantitative analyses identified police as the primary information source in OIDV cases and qualitative analyses expanded this finding by identifying what claims they were making, how they were framing the issue, treatment recommendations, and if they differed from other information sources.

### ***Qualitative Content Analysis***

Qualitative content analytic procedures fit within the general methodological stance of *analytic realism*, a position informed by the interpretive writings of George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, and Alfred Schutz (Altheide and Schneider 2013). Contemporary approaches to qualitative content analysis recognize: that social life is a process of communicating and interpreting definitions ascribed to certain situations, that we belong to the social world we study

and must be reflexive, and that the conception of *process* is important as our social world is constantly under construction (Altheide and Schneider 2013). Accordingly, qualitative content analysis in its entirety is an inductive and reflexive process. The analyst begins by defining the problem to be investigated and becomes familiar with existing literature as well as on the processes involved in studying media content (Altheide and Schneider 2013). Next, a handful of relevant documents (e.g., news articles) are collected and reviewed before selecting the unit of analysis (Altheide and Schneider 2013). As mentioned previously, the unit of analysis for this study is entire documents amalgamated by case.

Based on data extracted from a handful of documents ( $n = 10$ ), the preliminary protocol was revised, and several items/categories were added. Many of these categories tap into latent content by tracking information on media framing techniques, tone/vocabulary, salience, who was quoted or referenced throughout the article, etc. which are all factors influencing how a particular understanding of a phenomenon is constructed and conveyed by the media (*see Appendix D*). Compared to quantitative content analyses where a structured coding frame was developed in advance, the qualitative coding protocol emerged over several drafts through open coding (Berg and Lune 2012). Open coding is unrestricted coding of data; the research questions direct coding of any relevant categories which are subsequently refined, combined, or elaborated upon (Berg and Lune 2012; Altheide and Schneider 2013; Glaser and Laudel 2013). For example, the ‘allegation’ category and ‘limited disclosure’ category emerged from a literal reading of the data. These categories were then interpreted as specific techniques used by claimsmakers to construct OI DV as an alleged problem that is only exacerbated by repressing detailed information surrounding the event. As such, these two categories became subsections to the overarching category: ‘constructions’. Once I felt confident my preliminary coding protocol

accurately captured the content in the ten articles sampled, the remaining 122 OIDV cases were collected and matched with IPV cases.

***Qualitative Data Analysis: NVivo.*** Data were imported into and analyzed with *NVivo*. *NVivo* is a qualitative analysis software program, which allows the analyst to enter, code, and analyze unstructured, non-numeric data (Palys and Atchinson 2014; Braun and Clarke 2006; Krippendorff 2004). *NVivo* uses *nodes* to capture ideas, concepts, or themes present in the data which can be grouped, merged and/or transformed into hierarchies or visual displays (Krippendorff 2004; Palys and Atchinson 2014; Richards 1999; Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011).<sup>20</sup> The majority of qualitative coding occurs through the use of nodes; however, *NVivo* can be used to code static elements of content through classifications (Richards 1999; Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011; Palys and Atchinson 2014). This feature allows the analyst to classify characteristics of either sources or nodes. Source classification involves recording information on static features of the text (e.g., whether the document is a newspaper article, interview, video clip, etc.). Node classifications, in contrast, are used to organize demographic and situational information about the individuals being reported upon (e.g. location of incident, victim-offender relationship, gender/age of accused, etc.).

For this study, source classifications carry some relevance as the news article is classified as either national, provincial or local. Node classifications, on the other hand, are more pertinent to this study. For each case, several static attributes were classified: occupation of the perpetrator (police officer/not a police officer), the gender of accused and victim, geographic region, and victim-offender relationship. These classifications can then be used to compare and contrast

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<sup>20</sup> “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response of meaning within the entire data set” (Braun and Clarke 2006: 82).



news coverage of OIDV and IPV based on the attributes coded (Richards 1999; Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011; Palys and Atchinson 2014).

Unlike quantitative content analyses, the qualitative analyses are not linear—moving from one stage of analysis to the next—but rather are more recursive in nature, moving back and forth between different stages as required (Braun and Clarke 2006). Accordingly, nodes were reviewed half way through data collection “to permit emergence, refinement, or collapsing of additional categories” and appropriate adjustments were made to the protocol before completing the first round of data coding (Altheide and Schneider 2013: 21; *see Appendix E*). These refinements were motivated, in part, by the information contained in memos: standalone documents used to track early ideas, concepts, and themes (Richards 1999; Braun and Clarke 2006; Krippendorf 2004). Memos keep the analyst’s thoughts separate from the data being analyzed but remain linked to the data to assist in the write-up phase of research (QSR International 2015; Krippendorf 2004; Richards 1999). Memos can also take the form of an annotation, where the analyst’s detailed observation is linked to a specific piece of text (QSR International 2015; Palys and Atchinson 2014). For this study, memos were used for writing case summaries to be used later for typical and extreme case comparisons between OIDV and IPV cases, whereas annotations were used to track ideas and detailed observations throughout the research process. These comparisons will be interpreted and discussed with connections made to existing literature on the topic.

One of the greatest advantages of using NVivo to analyze qualitative data pertains to the range of options it provides for analyzing coded material (Richards 1999; Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011; Palys and Atchinson 2014). Data can be analyzed through point and click retrieval methods, word queries and word frequency analysis, and data can also be analyzed through visualizations and models (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011; Palys and Atchinson 2014).

Point and click methods are useful in identifying themes or concepts that can be quoted, summarized, compared, and contrasted throughout the writing process (Palys and Atchinson 2014: 325; Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011). Queries allow the analyst to retrieve all cases where certain words, phrases, or concepts appear; whereas word frequency analyses identify words or concepts that appear most often in data being analyzed (Richards 1999; Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011; Palys and Atchinson 2014). A final advantage pertains to NVivo's ability to produce visual representations of data. Charts, cluster analysis, and tree diagrams provide the opportunity for the analyst to create a visual display of frequently occurring nodes and how they relate (or are unrelated to) other nodes in the study (Richards 1999; Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011; Palys and Atchinson 2014). These features will be useful in comparatively analyzing media constructions of OIDV and IPV incidents.

***Qualitative Measures.*** The final qualitative coding protocol (see *Appendix E-F*) contained 22 categories, many of which had subcategories, containing relevant elements within each. For example, the 'Constructions' category contained six themes—allegation, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, underlying motivations, treatment recommendation, and salience—tapping into each stage of the constructionist framework. These categories will be reviewed in depth in the following chapter. Aligned with the constructions theme, an additional category, 'characterizing the offender' emerged through inductive coding. Within this category, three additional themes were developed: the positive character of offender, the negative character of offender, and sympathy for offender. Positive character was coded for whenever reference was made to prior good character (i.e., offender had never been violent before, a prominent member of the community, reference to past heroic conduct, etc.). Negative character included reference to prior criminal involvement, prior history of violence, lack of insight into dangerous behaviour, etc.

Similarly, the “domestic violence frame” category also contained five frames—antifeminist, police frame, social justice, victim blaming, and excusing the perpetrator. The antifeminist frame was coded for whenever an article was framed in resistance to the battered women’s movement, where female victims were held responsible for the violence while highlighting the culpability of female offenders. The police frame, or “just the facts” involved covering how the case played out and was portrayed typically as a legal situation that is already under control. The social justice frame was coded for when the story was framed thematically, and emphasis placed on socio-political contexts challenging the audience to consider the underlying factors leading to domestic violence. Victim blaming involves media framing the incident as the victim’s fault; for example, if the victim failed to prevent the abuse or leave the relationship sooner, or attempts were made to explain *why* the incident occurred. Finally, excusing the perpetrator involved deflecting responsibility from the accused; for example, the accused was intoxicated, acted in self-defence, the incident was accidental, or from extreme emotion causing the accused to lose control.

### **Considerations**

For a content analyst to make valid inferences from text, the coding scheme must be both reliable and valid (Weber 1990; Krippendorff 2004). Reliability refers to consistency: the material should be coded similarly regardless of who is coding it. Validity, on the other hand, refers to the successful operationalization of variables – they should capture or measure information that they were originally intended to capture. Reliability and validity issues may originate when content in text is collapsed into fewer categories and problems arise from “the ambiguity in word meanings, category definitions, or other coding rules” (Weber 1990), which will be discussed in further detail below.

## ***Reliability***

There are three types of reliability that are imperative to content analyses: stability, reproducibility, and accuracy (Weber 1990; Potter and Levine-Donnerstein 1999). Stability is achieved when a coding scheme is invariant over time and is determined stable when the same content is similarly coded more than once by the same person. Reproducibility, or intercoder reliability, is achieved when multiple persons code a piece of text and produce the same results (Weber 1990; Krippendorff 2004; Bauer and Gaskell 2000). Krippendorff (2004) has cautioned researchers against engaging in practices that make their data seem more reliable than it actually is. One such practice would involve the primary investigator invoking his/her authority over coding disagreements, resulting in forced agreement (Krippendorff 2004). Intercoder reliability, therefore, should be calculated prior to resolving any disagreements (Krippendorff 2004). Finally, accuracy indicates the degree to which the coding scheme aligns to a standard or norm and has been recognized as the strongest form of reliability (Weber 1990). In attempting to assess the last form of reliability, efforts were made to operationalize measures based on what has been consistently found in the literature.

## ***Validity***

Qualitative validation strategies differ from quantitative validation. The former is based on determining the accuracy of results from the “standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account” (Creswell 2009: 191). Validation strategies, therefore, are recognized by terms such as trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell 2009). Several validity strategies are recognized as relevant in qualitative analyses (see Creswell 2009), however only four strategies were applicable to the current research: triangulation; use of rich descriptors to convey findings; clarification of research bias; and presentation of information that is contrary to themes (Creswell 2009). First, triangulation involves mixing different methods or sources of

information to answer the research questions (Creswell 2009; Denzin 2010; Neuendorf 2002). A study's validity is strengthened when themes are established from different data sources or methods (Creswell 2009; Neuendorf 2002). Second, using descriptive information to convey results provides a more realistic and richer explanation of findings that adds validity to the study (Creswell 2009). Third, recognition of biases "creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers" and is aligned with the reflexive nature of qualitative research designs (Creswell 2009: 192). Finally, a discussion of contrary findings are discussed, which contributes to the credibility of a study (Creswell 2009).

### **Limitations Inherent in Content Analysis**

Despite the advantages of conducting content analysis, several limitations inherent in the analytic procedure exist and must be recognized. First, content analyses can only deal with disseminated information and it may be difficult to locate appropriate content, as determined by the research question(s) (Ericson et al. 1991; Berg and Lune 2012; Altheide and Schneider 2013). This limitation was not a pertinent concern facing the current study as 132 OIDV cases were retrieved and paired with 132 similar IPV cases. However, a selection bias still poses a slight limitation to the current study as only certain 'types' of cases are covered in the media, thus affecting the resulting sample and conclusions drawn. This is only a partial problem given constructionists are concerned with what *is* constructed, not what could have been. Second, content analyses are largely ineffective for testing causal relationships, and the analyst must resist any urge to infer that a causal association exists (Berg and Lune 2012). Content analysts can use the method to describe what is present in the text being analyzed, but cannot explain *why* it is present without using additional methods to test their idea (Berg and Lune 2012). The remaining two limitations, however, will be considered throughout data analysis and interpretation.

## **Conclusion**

To summarize, this chapter provided a brief overview of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and the suitability of blending both when conducting a content analysis. As such, this study employs a mixed-methods approach to determine whether media constructions of OIDV and civilian-perpetrated IPV cases differ with a secondary objective of compiling some empirical data on the nature of OIDV in Canada. Results will be interpreted within the contextual constructionist framework to explain why constructions may differ (i.e., discrepancies may be attributed to differences in the assertions made by claimsmakers, market differences and news organization considerations, differing values or motivations held by claimsmakers, etc.) and can also be used to evaluate the claims made regarding the nature of OIDV in Canada by comparing findings to past literature.

The sample was selected by using the criterion sampling strategy, resulting in a total of 264 cases, 132 OIDV and 132 IPV. These cases were first analyzed quantitatively to identify concepts, themes, and patterns that were imported into and analyzed using SPSS. This data was then analyzed qualitatively with NVivo, which is the primary methodology informing this research.

## **CHAPTER 4 – MEDIA CONSTRUCTIONS OF OIDV VS. CIVILIAN PERPETRATED IPV**

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze how OIDV is constructed in the media compared to news coverage of civilian-perpetrated IPV. Findings will be presented sequentially, beginning with results from quantitative analyses comparing OIDV and civilian IPV case coverage on media, demographic, situational, and adjudicative variables. These results highlight important concepts and patterns that are evident in either media constructions of OIDV, civilian IPV, or both. Media variables will then be analyzed using logistic regression to determine if any differ significantly between coverage of OIDV and civilian IPV. Qualitative analyses will expand on these findings by examining *how* these cases are constructed in the media. Accordingly, information will be included on typifications, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations. This chapter will conclude by summarizing the above findings.

### **QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

The primary objective of quantitative content analyses is to present a systematic, objective, and replicable analysis of textual data (Palys and Atchinson 2014; Krippendorf 2004; Riffe, Lacy and Fico 1998). Accordingly, the following subsections explore the presence (and absence) of media, demographic, situational, and court variables in media coverage of *both* OIDV and civilian IPV cases.

#### **Media Variables**

In determining how OIDV and civilian IPV cases are constructed in the media, frequency analyses were initially conducted to acquire a visual representation of the study variables (*see Table 1*). First, media variables will be discussed as they tap into the claimsmaking process (i.e., coverage type, word and article count, source considerations, framing techniques,

etc.). In over half (56%) of cases sampled, media coverage focused primarily on the initial incident with the remaining 44 percent of coverage focused on the trial. In support of the first hypothesis, predicting that coverage of both OIDV and civilian IPV cases will be framed episodically and individualized, 90 percent of cases were framed episodically with the remaining 10 percent framed thematically. Moreover, although the majority of cases did not involve domestic violence framing (73%), seven percent of cases involved victim blaming and 14 percent were framed to excuse the perpetrator. The antifeminist frame appeared in three percent of cases, and the remaining two percent used the social justice frame.

Police were the primary source of information used when reporting on an OIDV or IPV incident in 56 percent of cases (n =149), within these cases the police were referenced or quoted 298 times. Also, police were used as the secondary source in 32 cases and referenced over 50 times when reporting on OIDV or IPV.<sup>21</sup> This provides support for the second hypothesis predicting that cases of OIDV and civilian IPV will be constructed based on simple narratives provided by police. Criminal justice officials (i.e., defence and crown attorneys, the judge) were the primary source in 35 percent of cases, where the remaining nine percent relied primarily on advocates, victims, and offenders. Finally, two quantitative media variables were included in this analysis: number of articles published per case and total word count per case. On average two articles, approximately 519 words in length, were published per case.

### **Demographic Characteristics**

Aside from media variables, six demographic variables were included in the analysis on non-lethal OIDV and IPV. In an attempt to standardize results, cases were matched on two demographic variables: the gender of accused and victim-offender relationship. The accused was

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<sup>21</sup> When more than one source was used, the most common combination of sources was police and criminal justice official.



**Table 1. Media, Demographic, Situational, and Legal Variables Characterizing News Coverage of OIDV and Civilian-Perpetrated IPV Cases (N = 264)**

	n	%		n	%
<b>Media Variables</b>					
Coverage Type	264		Previous History of Violence	260	
Criminal Event	149	56	No	4	2
Trial	115	44	Yes	49	19
<i>Number of Articles Published<sup>a</sup></i>	264	2	Not Specified	207	78
<i>Total Word Count per Case</i>	264	519	Prior Criminal Record	260	
Source of Information	264		No	77	29
Police	149	56	Yes	33	13
Criminal Justice Official	93	35	Charges Pending	15	6
DV Advocate	2	1	Not Specified	135	51
Victim's Perspective	6	2	<b>Situational Variables</b>		
Offender's Perspective	4	1.5	Victim's Injury	131	
Other/Unknown	10	4	No Injury	47	36
Media Frame	264		Injury	84	64
Predominately Episodic	238	90	Weapon Used	138	
Predominately Thematic	26	10	No weapon	113	82
Domestic Violence Frame			Weapon	25	18
None	192	73	Substance Use	262	
Antifeminist	9	3	Not Present in Accused	13	5
Social Justice	6	2	Yes, Present in Accused	46	16
Victim Blame	20	7	Unspecified	206	78
Excusing the Perpetrator	37	14	Suspected/Actual Infidelity	262	
Offender Named	263		No	45	17
Name Withheld	88	33	Yes	15	6
Offender Named	175	66	Unspecified	202	77
<b>Demographic Information</b>			<b>Court Variables</b>		
Offender Gender	262		Primary Offence	262	
Male	238	91	Assault Level 1	176	67
Female	24	9	Criminal Harassment	32	12
<i>Offender Age (years)</i>	203	37	Assault Bodily Harm	24	9
<i>Victim Age (years)</i>	25	32	Assault with a Weapon	14	5
Victim-Offender Relationship	264		Sexual Assault	12	5
Spouse	84	32	Aggravated Assault	2	1
Estranged Spouse	20	8	Uttering threats	2	1
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	22	8	<i>Total Number of Charges</i>	262	3
Ex-Boyfriend/Girlfriend	22	8			
Unspecified	116	44			

<sup>a</sup>: Number of articles published had a range between one and eight articles published per case; total word count ranged from a minimum of 51 words to a maximum of 4,654 words per case.

**Table 1. Media, Demographic, Situational, and Legal Variables Characterizing News Coverage of OIV and Civilian-Perpetrated IPV Cases (N = 264)**

	n	%		n	%
<b>Court Variables Cont'd</b>					
Convicted Original Charge	132		Probation	130	
No	42	32	No	29	22
Yes	88	68	Yes	72	55
Convicted of Lesser Charge	132		Unspecified	29	22
No	30	21	Mandated to Counseling	130	
Yes	67	52	No	35	27
NA	36	28	Yes, DV Counseling	7	5
Sentence Received	132		Yes, Anger management	3	2
Acquitted/Ab. Discharge	29	22	Yes, alcohol related	2	2
Conditional discharge	39	30	Yes, but unspecified	23	18
Suspended Sentence	13	10	Yes, multiple programs	17	13
Intermittent Jail	2	2	Unspecified	43	33
Custodial	42	32	Plea Bargain	130	
NA	2	2	No	17	13
Unknown	4	3	Yes	54	42
<i>Sentence Length (months)</i>	79	11	Unspecified	59	45
<i>Time served pretrial (days)</i>	62	41			
<i>Total Number of Convictions</i>	135	1.7			

male in 91 percent of cases with the remaining nine percent involving females. Originally a seven category variable, victim-offender relationship was recoded into five categories, grouping together legal and common-law spouses (coded 0), estranged common-law and divorced (coded 1), the remaining categories—boyfriend/girlfriend, ex-boyfriend/girlfriend, and unspecified—were left unchanged. This recoding was justified based on work by Brownridge (2008) and James and Daly (2012) who recognized a growing similarity in IPV incidents between married and cohabiting unions. The victim-offender relationship was unspecified in the majority of cases (44%), but of those that were, 32 percent involved an offence against a spouse and the remaining 24 percent was dispersed equally across relationship types.

### **Situational Variables**

Four situational variables were included in the analysis: victim injury, weapon used, substance use, and incident triggered by suspected/actual infidelity. What is noteworthy across all four variables is that the majority of data fall within the unspecified categories. This

information becomes a finding in and of itself; situational factors may have been repressed due to framing techniques, attempts to avoid victim blaming, or because police (primarily) are not providing this information to journalists. Victim's injury was unspecified in 49 percent of cases, weapon usage was unspecified in 46 percent of cases, substance use missing in 78 percent of cases and infidelity was unspecified in 77 percent of cases. After selecting out unspecified cases for victim injury (n = 131) and weapon usage (n = 138), findings indicate victims' suffered injury in 64 percent of cases and the remaining 36 percent reported no injuries. The majority of OIDV and IPV cases did not involve a weapon (82%) with the remaining 18 percent of cases involving the use of a weapon (i.e., wooden chair leg, remote control, firearm, knife, etc.).<sup>22</sup>

### **Court Variables**

Finally, 11 court variables were included in the analysis. In addition to being matched on accused's gender and relationship type, cases were also matched on the primary offence charged. The accused was charged with assault level one in the majority of cases (67%), followed by criminal harassment (12%), assault causing bodily harm (9%), assault with a weapon (5%), sexual assault (5%), aggravated assault (1%), and uttering threats (1%). Since the majority of cases analyzed focused on initial coverage of the incident, 47 percent had not been resolved at the time of this study. When case resolutions were available, 68 percent were convicted as charged and the remaining 32 percent were acquitted of the original charge. Similarly, 52 percent of cases were convicted on a lesser charge (either in substitution of or in addition to the original conviction), 21 percent were acquitted of the lesser charge and the remaining 28 percent were not applicable as the case only involved one charge. Of those that were convicted, 32 percent of cases involved a custodial sentence, 30 percent were discharged conditionally, 22 percent

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<sup>22</sup> The same procedure of selecting out unspecified information was not done with substance use or infidelity because the overwhelming majority of media coverage did not specify whether the accused was under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

received an absolute discharge, and the remaining 15 percent of cases had either a suspended or intermittent custodial sentence, or the sentence was unknown.

### Bivariate Media Analysis

In determining whether media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV differ, cross-tabulations were conducted on each media variable based on whether the accused was a police officer or civilian. The results, displayed in *Table 2*, indicate media coverage of OIDV and

**Table 2. Bivariate Analysis of Media Constructions (IPV = 0 vs. OIDV = 1) in Canadian News Articles, 2000-2014 (N = 264)**

	OIDV %	IPV %	<sup>2</sup>
Media Coverage			14.8***
Initial Incident	68	45	
Trial	32	55	
Media Frame			6.1*
Episodic	86	95	
Thematic	14	5	
Domestic Violence Frame			7.5
None	78	67	
Antifeminist	4	3	
Social Justice	3	2	
Victim Blaming	4	11	
Excusing the Perpetrator	12	16	
Source Used			27.9***
Police	74	41	
Other	26	59	
Additional Sources Used			15.5***
Police	11	3	
Other	30	19	
Not Applicable	58	80	
Offender Named			1.8
Named	71	63	
Name Withheld	29	19	

\* Media coverage of OIDV differs significantly from coverage of civilian IPV at  $p < .05$

\*\* Media coverage of OIDV differs significantly from coverage of civilian IPV at  $p < .01$

\*\*\* Media coverage of OIDV differs significantly from coverage of civilian IPV at  $p < .001$

civilian IPV differ significantly in the type of coverage, framing techniques, and source considerations. Specifically, media coverage of OIDV was more likely to focus on the initial incident ( $p < .001$ ), whereas coverage of civilian IPV focused more on the trial. OIDV cases were slightly more likely to be framed thematically ( $p < .05$ ) and civilian IPV cases more likely

to be framed episodically. OIDV coverage was more likely to have police as the primary (and secondary) source of information ( $p < .001$ ) compared to coverage of civilian IPV, which was more likely to use other sources such as criminal justice officials. Finally, in determining whether media coverage of OIDV and civilian-IPV differ significantly in the number, and length, of news articles published, two independent t-tests were conducted. On average, OIDV coverage had twice as many articles published ( $p < .001$ ), which contained 315 more words ( $p < .001$ ) than coverage of civilian IPV.

### **Multivariate Media Analysis**

The logistic regression results, presented in *Table 3*, isolate the effects of each media variable on the dependent variable, occupation of accused, while holding all other variables in the model constant. First, similar to bivariate results, police were significantly more likely ( $p < .001$ ) to be the primary source of information in media coverage of OIDV relative to coverage of civilian-perpetrated IPV where the primary information source was criminal justice officials (e.g., judge, defence and Crown attorneys). Media coverage of civilian-perpetrated IPV is also more likely to quote or reference the accused than media coverage of OIDV ( $p < .05$ ). On average, OIDV cases contain 1.95 more articles published per case compared to civilian IPV ( $p < .001$ ). Total word count per case was omitted from this analysis as it was multicollinear with number of articles published per case. Accused officers are also more likely to be named in media coverage ( $p < .05$ ) and coverage of OIDV is less likely to be framed to blame the victim ( $p < .01$ ). The  $\chi^2$  test for this model is statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ) implying the combination of variables produce a statistically significant difference between media portrayals of OIDV and civilian perpetrated IPV cases.

**Table 3. Logistic Regression Model of Media Constructions (IPV = 0 vs. OIDV = 1) in Canadian News Articles, 2000-2014 (N = 264)**

<b>Media Variables</b>	<b><i>b</i></b>	<b>Odds</b>
Trial Coverage	.175	1.191
Thematically Framed	.636	1.889
Information Source		
Criminal Justice Official	-2.573***	.076
DV Advocate	-21.030	.000
Victim	-1.492	.225
Offender	-3.938*	.019
Other/Unknown	.586	1.798
[Reference: Police]		
Number of Articles	1.950***	7.026
Domestic Violence Frame		
Antifeminist	-.871	.419
Social Justice	-.223	.800
Victim Blame	-3.474**	.031
Excusing the Perpetrator	-.780	.458
[Reference: None]		
Offender Named	.873*	2.393
Constant	-2.298	
-2 Log Likelihood	221.965	
<sup>2</sup>	142.456***	

\* OIDV characteristics significantly different than civilian IPV category at  $p < .05$

\*\* OIDV characteristics significantly different than civilian IPV category at  $p < .01$

\*\*\* OIDV characteristics significantly different than civilian IPV category at  $p < .001$

## Summary

Quantitative results reveal several differences in media portrayal of OIDV and civilian-perpetrated IPV cases. First, OIDV cases garner significantly more media attention as evidenced by total word count and number of articles per case. Second, media constructions of OIDV and IPV differ in source considerations: OIDV cases were significantly more likely to use police as the primary source of information whereas coverage of civilian IPV was more likely to quote or reference criminal justice officials or the accused. This finding only provides partial evidence for the second hypothesis that police would predominate as information source in both OIDV and

civilian IPV cases. Third, media coverage of civilian IPV is significantly more likely to be framed to subtly blame the victim. Finally, accused officers in OIDV cases are significantly more likely to have been named in media coverage than civilians.

### **QUALITATIVE FINDINGS**

As revealed in quantitative analyses, police are the primary source of information in media coverage of OIDV, which begs the question, what claims are they making and how are they being framed? To reiterate Entman's (1993: 52) position, "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, *in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described* [emphasis added]." Altering the frame in which a social problem is presented alters its reality; making some aspects of a phenomenon more salient while repressing other aspects will dramatically alter perception of its character, causes, and consequences (Edelman 1993). Framing is crucial to the claimsmaking process as claimants construct a set of diagnostic, motivational, and prognostic frames which typify, interpret, evaluate, and provide treatment recommendations for an alleged "problem" (Loseke and Best 2003). The remainder of this chapter, therefore, is dedicated to exploring how media coverage of OIDV and civilian IPV is framed in terms of the character, causes, and consequences of each.

#### **Is OIDV Constructed as a Problem Comparable to Civilian IPV?**

In constructing a social condition as a problem, the backbone of this work involves claimsmakers typifying conditions by outlining the basic "facts," defining terms, identifying who is harmed by the condition and who or what is to blame (Loseke and Best 2003: 77). In doing so, they construct a set of frames—diagnostic, motivational and prognostic—which are discussed and debated within the symbolic arena (Gans 1979; Gamson et al. 1992). Successful

constructions are recognized as legitimate when they receive institutional and public endorsement and come to be accepted as “reality” (Spector and Kitsuse 1977; Blumer 1971). To determine if OIDV is constructed as a problem comparable to civilian IPV, the following sections compare media coverage of OIDV and civilian IPV at each stage of the claimsmaking process.

### **Constructing Diagnostic Frames**

Diagnostic frames involve claims that make assertions about the *type* of problem while providing causal explanations (Loseke and Best 2003). According to Lowney and Best (2009), when claims are made about a new crime, claimants seek to characterize the offender, victim, and nature of the crime itself. In doing so, they may argue the parties involved have distinct motivational, psychological, or behavioural patterns or they can be characterized in terms of demographic variables such as gender, age, race, socioeconomic status, etc. (Lowney and Best 2009). Similarly, in characterizing the nature of the crime, claimsmakers make reference to the timing, location, interaction patterns, and associated consequences. “Claims thus define types of crime in terms of both their actors and the nature of the activity” (Lowney and Best 2009: 31). The following section, therefore, will provide information on how claimsmakers have characterized OIDV incidents and how they compare to characterizations of civilian IPV. The subsequent subsection presents claimsmakers’ causal interpretations underlying both OIDV and IPV, thereby addressing both components within diagnostic frames.

### ***Typification of OIDV vs. IPV***

According to Best (2009), typification involves claimsmakers characterizing the nature of a social problem and can take many forms. Most commonly, it is argued the problem is best understood from a particular orientation (Best 2009). Best (2009) argues that typification involves characterizing a social problem by focusing on some aspects while neglecting others,



thereby promoting certain definitions, causal interpretations, and treatment recommendations. Since police predominate as the primary source of information in reporting on incidences of OIDV ( $p < .001$ ), they are afforded the opportunity to typify the nature of the problem. Consequently, this research demonstrates that OIDV has been constructed as *an off-duty, individualized, and private issue and is framed to downplay the severity of the incident while simultaneously emphasizing its alleged nature*. The remainder of this section will provide evidence to support these claims.

***Individualized as Off-Duty Issue.*** First, incidences of OIDV are constructed as individual occurrences that occurred while the officer was *off-duty* ( $n = 137$  articles), are unrelated to operational duties and are not reflective of officer conduct in the department more generally. For example:

‘She has not been suspended,’ said [an] Inspector of Halton police professional standards bureau. ‘It was an off-duty incident’ (OIDV: 2003-008).

This particular case involved a 20-year-veteran of the Halton police force charged with criminal harassment against her estranged husband. The article from which this excerpt was taken was titled: “Cop faces charge in off-duty incident” further making the off-duty nature salient. In another case involving a Halton veteran officer charged with assault level one, a Sergeant responded to the charge in the following way:

‘Typically, if it's an on-duty matter, he would be subject to suspension. But he has not been suspended and will continue his regular duties... This is an *off-duty matter*. *It's not anything that relates to his function here*’ (OIDV: 2006-005).

The final excerpt was taken from a Coquitlam RCMP news release after one of their Constables was charged with assault against his wife, who was also employed as a police officer:

‘The charges relate to circumstances *not related to police duties* that occurred while [the accused] was *off duty* and there was no risk to the general public’ (OIDV: 2007-001).

As evidenced by the above excerpts, police characterize OIDV as a problem separate from the department by making the off-duty nature of the event salient while reassuring the public of departmental competence.

Providing further support for the first two hypotheses—that coverage of both OIDV and IPV will be framed episodically, individualized, and constructed based on simple narratives provided by police—the majority of OIDV cases are constructed based on simple narratives by police, framed episodically and devoid of information pertaining to prevalence rates, subcultural factors, or accessible shelters. Information is often provided on the accused’s age, rank, and years of employment. Moreover, relative to civilian-perpetrated IPV cases, media coverage of OIDV is limited in the amount of *relevant* information that is disclosed. Media coverage of civilian-perpetrated IPV is also individualized and framed episodically but more detailed information is included on the events leading up to and surrounding the IPV incident. To illustrate, the following is a summary of a typical case of OIDV:

A 40-year-old, 12-year veteran of the Saskatoon police force was charged with assault after police were called to the home and spoke with the couple. The woman was not injured and the accused officer was taken into custody. He was placed on administrative review pending trial outcome. This was not the first time the accused had been in trouble; he was previously acquitted of an on-duty assault charge (OIDV Summary: 2014-007).

This can be contrasted with its matched pair:

A 26-year-old Ontario man is facing an assault charge after a passerby was walking past a home and witnessed a loud argument between the man and a woman at which time the man struck the woman twice in the face. Police were called, and the man was arrested (IPV Summary 2014-007).

Although it appears more information is provided within the OIDV case, it is evident that more details surrounding the assault charge are provided in the civilian IPV case. Instead of providing

details surrounding the OIDV incident, information is provided on the character of the accused officer and his employment history, further individualizing the issue.

When thematic elements appear in media coverage of OIDV ( $n = 53$ ) they are usually in reference to other police officers within the department being charged with a criminal offence. There are exceptions, however, as some OIDV articles ( $n = 7$ ) are devoted entirely to educating readers on the nature of OIDV. Within these articles, information is provided on US prevalence rates, subcultural factors, the blue wall of silence, organizational and occupational stressors, and excerpts taken from victims of OIDV are used to substantiate commonalities between OIDV in Canada and the US. These factors are discussed in further detail in the *Causal Interpretation* section. When media coverage of civilian IPV is framed thematically ( $n = 9$ ), reference is given to how frequent domestic violence occurs, shelter overcrowding, and contact information for victims of abuse.

To summarize, OIDV cases are typified as off-duty occurrences that are unrelated to operational duties more generally. Media coverage of civilian IPV is also individualized, typically covering each incident as a separate entity. Differences exist, however, in the amount of relevant information that is disclosed in these cases. OIDV cases have more articles and greater word count than civilian IPV, yet more information is provided on the circumstances surrounding the civilian IPV event (e.g., more descriptive information on how incident transpired and victim injuries).

***Downplaying Severity of Event.*** Second, there is evidence of media coverage downplaying the severity of OIDV ( $n = 20$ ) which is not evident in civilian IPV cases ( $n = 2$ ). This is accomplished by explaining the nature of the charge without providing further detail on the actual incident. In a press release involving a Hamilton investigator charged with assaulting her husband, the subsequent sentence explained how she was charged with assault level one

which “is the least serious assault under the Criminal Code and could result from minimal physical contact such as a push or slap. It implies the complainant didn't suffer serious injuries” (OIDV: 2003-004). This is not an isolated portrayal as police appear to mitigate the severity of the charges by explaining what constitutes assault level one in OIDV cases ( $n = 10$ ); whereas none of the cases involving civilians included information on varying levels of assault. In addition to the assault charge being downplayed, the severity of victim's injuries is also constructed as more minor relative to civilian IPV cases:

'It's at the low end of the domestic assault continuum - *more of a pushing, shoving thing, without the blows ... Nobody got beaten up*. But there is a very low threshold for enforcement on this type of thing' (OIDV: 2004-008).

[A constable] was charged after an alleged domestic dispute on June 4. A woman had some minor injuries that didn't require hospitalization (OIDV: 2010-001).

'[The victim's injuries] were minor injuries and none of them required hospitalization ... They were minor in the form of swelling and bruising and that sort of thing' (OIDV: 2000-001).

The last case involved a victim, who was a Crown Attorney, who did, in fact, require medical treatment. The Inspector mentioned that alcohol was not involved in the assault and did not provide further details. At trial, however, it was revealed that both the accused officer and victim had been drinking, and the assault was triggered by the victim catching the accused in the bathroom with a female friend. The “minor injuries” were later revealed as 20 closed-fist blows to the head, according to the victim. The judge did not believe her account and the officer was acquitted.

Media coverage of the initial civilian-perpetrated IPV incident, by contrast, are more descriptive and less likely to be downplayed:

The 43-year-old victim suffered a concussion, four stitches over her right eye, bruising and swelling. She was treated at Hanover and District Hospital and

released...Police said the couple, who recently moved to Hanover from the Durham area, were drinking beer, whiskey and coolers on Sunday afternoon. There was a second man in the apartment with them. This man alleged to police he attempted to break up the fight. However, it was a friend of the victim's who phoned police almost an hour after the incident. It was after she received a telephone call from the victim that afternoon (IPV: 2003-002).

*Violence made Salient.* Third, media representations of civilian IPV are also more likely to emphasize the violent nature of the accused. Qualitative analyses revealed that the violent nature of the incident was made salient in 53 civilian IPV articles compared with only 14 OIDV articles. This can be exemplified by contrasting two extreme case summaries, the first describes a civilian-perpetrated IPV case and the second is the case summary for its OIDV matched pair.

- 1) The man was convicted of assault causing bodily harm, three counts of assault and uttering threats against his wife. The assaults occurred over a 13-month period and included punching the victim in the chest, banging her head against the wall, putting her in a headlock (which required a neck brace), twisting her arm, and the final assault involved striking her repeatedly before choking and throwing her to the ground. The judge was appalled at his behaviour; sentenced to six months in custody followed by 12 months of probation (Summary IPV: 2007-001).
- 2) Delta RCMP Constable with two years of experience was charged with assault causing bodily harm, assault with a weapon, uttering threats, and breach of undertaking. The charges arose after his wife made a complaint to the department months after the initial incident. He pled guilty to assault and breach, was given a conditional discharge, and resigned from the police force (Summary OIDV: 2007-001).

Even though the OIDV case generated four articles covering the case from start to finish, compared to its matched pair, which had one article on trial coverage, it is obvious little information was disclosed regarding the OIDV incident. By contrast, the IPV case contained descriptive information on the victim's injuries thereby making the violent nature of the crime salient. Similarly, the following quote describes an OIDV incident:

[The accused officer] choked his wife once in May 2004, and then assaulted and choked her after they returned drunk from a party on July 5, 2004 (OIDV: 2004-001).

Compared to its matched pair:

During the beatings, the victim was punched repeatedly, dragged by her hair, kned to the head, bitten and had a cord wrapped around her neck, the court was told. The assaults left the complainant with a broken nose, extensive bruising, and bite marks that punctured the skin on her left buttock and right forearm (IPV: 2004-001).

**Allegations.** Finally, media coverage of OIDV overwhelmingly characterizes cases as *allegations*. Subsequent to running a text search query in NVivo, variations of the term ‘allege’ appeared in 166 OIDV articles. The same cannot be said for media coverage of civilian-perpetrated IPV cases; “allege” appeared in 38 IPV articles. To illustrate, within one OIDV article, variations of the term *allege* appeared three times:

The Crown has dropped an assault charge against a former city police rookie constable with an *alleged* domestic altercation last December...[The Officer], who had less than one year experience, was charged Dec. 28 following an *alleged* incident involving his wife at their home while he was off-duty... [The Judge] said he hated to think one might lose his job merely as a result of *allegations*, but added, ‘I recognize other factors that come into play,’ and accepted the Crown’s withdrawal. (OIDV: 2003-005).

In a more recent case involving a 12-year-veteran of the Hamilton Police Force charged with uttering a death threat, the incident was characterized as an allegation:

A Police Services Act charge has been dropped after [the officer] was found not guilty in a criminal case involving an *alleged* death threat...Police did not release any information regarding the *alleged* threat except to say [the officer] was off-duty and that it happened in Guelph. Police also declined to explain the relationship between [the officer] and the woman he *allegedly* threatened (OIDV: 2013-015).

In summary, when police are used as the primary source, OIDV is constructed as an off-duty, individualized, and private issue that is framed to downplay the severity of the incident while simultaneously emphasizing its alleged nature. Civilian-perpetrated IPV, in comparison, is also constructed as an individualized issue but is not framed to downplay the severity of the incident; rather, the violence is made salient. The following section will provide information on

the causes and correlates of OIDV, as revealed in media coverage, compared to civilian-perpetrated IPV.

### ***Causal Interpretation***

According to police, OIDV is attributed to individual stressors which everyone may experience, regardless of vocational status (Calgary Police Department 2007; Regina Police Department 2013; Delta Police Department 2007). Again, the emphasis is typically placed on the charge being related to an off-duty, non-work related incident. This led to the development of the first theme identified in this research – *human error* ( $n = 12$  cases). The human error theme uses a discourse that explains the OIDV incident as a product of human imperfection or error in judgement rather than a facet of the police culture, work-related stressors, or authoritarian spillover. The following quotes provide evidence of this:

‘Although this was an off-duty conduct situation, obviously police officers are held to a higher standard but *keeping in mind they are human beings*. These things happen regardless of your vocation’ (OIDV: 2007001-123).

[An Inspector] said the spate of [criminal] incidents involving [Calgary police] officers isn't necessarily a sign of a larger problem involving the service's 1,600 member workforce. ‘Each of these incidents are separate from each other. There's no pattern of behaviour here,’ he said. ‘*These members are human*, just like the community is, and they have the same stressors and we have to look at that as well’ (OIDV: 2007-007).

A Regina police officer will be back on the job this weekend after admitting to professional misconduct stemming from an off-duty assault. ‘There's no reason at all for the Regina public to, I believe, lose confidence in our service,’ Police Chief told reporters. ‘We have a very professional organization - *notwithstanding our people are not perfect*. I believe this is an isolated matter. I have total confidence in our police service,’ (OIDV: 2013-001).

Second, both media coverage of OIDV ( $n = 10$  cases) and civilian IPV cases ( $n = 6$  cases) are characterized as emotionally charged, situational events. The following two excerpts, taken from OIDV cases, are illustrative of this characterization:

[The judge] went on to say that the challenge of figuring out what to do when good people do bad things is most pronounced when he's presented with family dynamics. 'For most of us, the worst people we will meet will be in our own family,' he said. '*Family violence is a sad and steady part of our society...we need to stop acting hysterically when our emotions are involved*' (OIDV:2010-014).

'This is in all respects, a tragic case," [the Judge] said, adding the officer had an exemplary career until then. '*He ended up suffering a complete emotional breakdown*' (OIDV: 2008-004).

Similarly, claimsmakers in civilian IPV cases also tend to attribute the incident to loss of emotional control:

Defence counsel said his client was 'extremely distraught' over the issue of the cheque *during what was 'an emotionally-charged time' for both parties* (IPV: 2005-002).

'*Emotions run high and people become very unpredictable. No two situations ever present the same circumstances and front line members must assess and react quickly to ensure the safety of all parties*' (IPV: 2013-016).

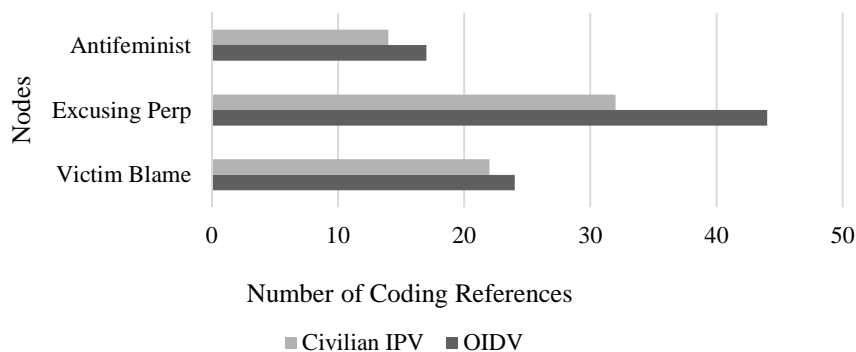
However, in some cases both OIDV and civilian IPV incidents were framed as a result of the victim's conduct or attributed to the accused's diminished mental capacity at the time of the incident. These causal interpretations are discussed further in the next section.

***Domestic Violence Frames.*** There was evidence of victim blaming and excusing the perpetrator in media coverage of both OIDV and civilian-perpetrated IPV. As displayed in *Figure 1*, OIDV cases are slightly more likely to employ victim blaming or excusing the



perpetrator, contrary to what was revealed in quantitative analyses.<sup>23</sup> In both media coverage of civilian IPV and OIDV, victim blaming took the form of framing the incident as resulting from the victim’s level of intoxication and/or suspected/actual infidelity.

**Figure 1. Visual Representation of Domestic Violence and Media Frames Apparent in Media Coverage of OIDV and Civilian IPV**



Media coverage of civilian IPV, however, was more likely to employ victim blaming in cases where the victim failed to prevent the abuse or leave the relationship sooner. For example:

[The] Justice said he couldn't understand why people return to spouses after suffering horrific beatings at their hands. 'It makes me shake my head in wonder why anyone involved in a domestic situation would want [to return] to someone who so seriously abused them,' he said. The judge made the comment after he learned that the spouse of [the offender] had returned to the man after he administered a brutal beating last March (IPV: 2000-003).

Victim blaming in media coverage of OIDV, by contrast, was more likely to frame the incident as a result of the victim’s aggressive tendencies. The following excerpt is illustrative of this:

He added she came after him four times -- three in an aggressive manner, and once when she was fairly calm. She also knocked him to the ground. After the fourth encounter, [the victim] allegedly swore at [the officer], adding she would 'go after his job and charge him with assault' (OIDV: 2000-001).

Although this quote was based on the accused officer’s portrayal of events, media coverage continuously framed the incident using this rhetoric.

<sup>23</sup> This may also be due to NVivo capturing these frames in multiple articles which would be underscored with quantitative analyses as data were analyzed by case.

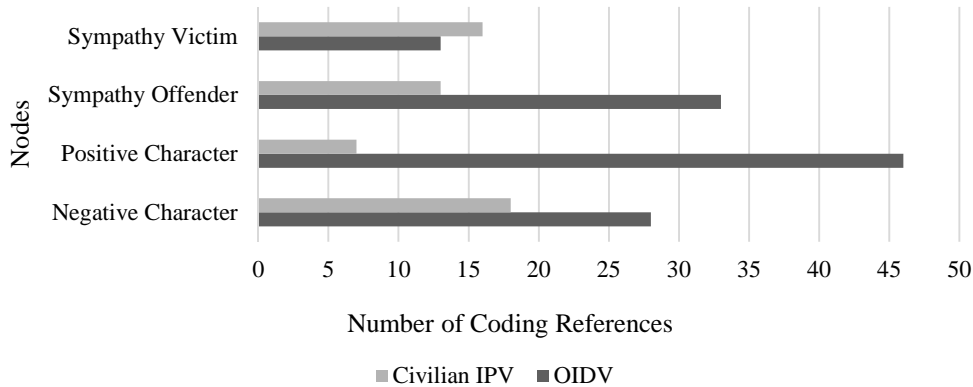
Evidence of excusing the perpetrator also shared some similarities between media coverage of OIDV and civilian IPV. In both cases, reference was made to the accused's level of intoxication, how the incident was out of character, arose from a custody battle, family pressures, victim's suspected/actual infidelity or due to some form of mental illness/diminished mental capacity. By including these details, the incident may be interpreted by the audience in a way that excuses the perpetrator, to an extent. In media coverage of civilian IPV cases, excusing the perpetrator also took the form of having his sexual advances rejected, not being on medication, or due to a power imbalance (i.e., the abused becoming the abuser). Evidence of excusing the perpetrator in media coverage of OIDV, by contrast, was more likely to occur in the form of mitigating emotions (i.e., depression, relationship ending, built up anger/frustration, suicidal tendencies), the impulsivity of the act, or how it was done in self-defence. Reference was also made to financial stressors, the accused having a disadvantaged background, mental illness related to PTSD, and substance-induced mood disorder.

OIDV cases may be more likely to be framed to excuse the perpetrator because the accused officer is significantly more likely to be named in media coverage. This aligned with research by Easteal, Holland, and Judd (2015) who noted that media representations of IPV were less sympathetic toward the victim when the offender was named. This was investigated further with inductive nodes capturing whether media coverage of OIDV and IPV was framed to sympathize with the victim or the accused, and, accordingly, whether the coverage alluded to the offender's positive or negative character. As depicted in *Figure 2*, media coverage of OIDV, relative to civilian IPV, is more likely to provide details of the offenders' character which elicit sympathy for the offender.

As mentioned previously, the antifeminist frame—holding victims of IPV responsible for the abuse while emphasizing the culpability of female perpetrators—appeared in a small

percentage of OIDV and IPV cases (3%); however, when investigated qualitatively, there appear to be distinctions in how this frame is applied in media coverage of OIDV relative to civilian IPV. In cases of OIDV, the antifeminist frame is applied primarily to female victims whereas

**Figure 2. Visual Representation of Victim and Offender Depictions in Media Coverage of OIDV and Civilian IPV**



with civilian-IPV the frame is applied to both female victims and female perpetrators. The following OIDV excerpt provides evidence of this:

[The victim] admitted during the two-day trial that she attacked [the officer] after he failed to apologize for an alleged incident involving her girlfriend. ‘I ran at him with my arms flailing,’ she previously said. There was also evidence she jumped on him three separate times during the encounter. However, [she] was never charged. ‘It’s great he was found not guilty, said [the] president of the Calgary Police Association, which represents rank-and-file officers. ‘However, the big issue we see is fairness and was [the officer] treated fairly? [The victim] admitted assaulting him and she was never charged’ (OIDV: 2000-001).

This excerpt was taken from the same case described earlier involving the Crown Attorney victim. What is interesting about this quote is media coverage was able to vilify the victim despite her credible reputation. The following quotes provide further evidence of the victim being held responsible, in some way, for the OIDV incident:

[The victim] used the blood from a cut on her hand to smear it all over her face, [the officer] said. Rather than being the aggressor in the incidents, he was the victim. [The officer] described how the woman attacked him with a baseball bat on one occasion and with a claw hammer on another. On that occasion, [the officer] said he ‘grabbed her by the arm’ to get the hammer away from her (OIDV: 2004-001)

[The victim] described picking a fight with [the officer], getting angry at him after he turned off the music they'd been listening to. She testified [the officer], who had to get up for work in five hours, came to bed, he spurned her advances, which angered her further. 'I was swinging a lot,' she said, explaining it was she and not [the accused] who lashed out physically... [The officer], wearing jeans and a black, zippered sweater, had a cut over his left eye. 'That's from her,' [his lawyer said], explaining the injury was inflicted by the woman [the officer] is accused of assaulting (OIDV: 2010-002)

The first of the two quotes resulted in a conditional discharge while the latter involved an acquittal. This may be attributed to how the antifeminist frame is used to construct the OIDV incident as the victim's fault. By contrast, media coverage of civilian IPV has applied the antifeminist frame to both female victims and female perpetrators. The following quote is illustrative of the female victim being held responsible for the IPV incident:

[The accused] pleaded guilty to what duty counsel described as 'a mutual assault [where] alcohol was involved and this was a very nasty incident.' He clarified that while the police report said [the] assault was unprovoked, 'it was anything but that.' The woman had hit [the accused] first and both parties were embarrassed. Duty counsel asked for the court to consider a period of probation for sentence. [The] Judge told [the accused] that problems need to be addressed, including any alcohol problems. "If the two of you have got a problem, you better deal with it," he said (IPV: 2009-004).

By mentioning that the assault was provoked by the victim, the audience may interpret the incident as the victim's fault. The next quote provides evidence of the antifeminist frame also being applied to female perpetrators:

On Jan. 29, [the accused] had gone to her husband's residence to get her daughter. An argument broke out and the accused became enraged. The husband locked himself inside the apartment and he told his wife to leave. The Crown said the accused picked up a large piece of wood and attempted to smash down the door to the apartment. She didn't gain entry, but stopped banging after becoming tired. A teacher who lives in the apartment building knocked on the husband's door because she wanted to talk with him. Once the door was opened, the accused rushed her husband and scratched him around the neck causing him to bleed (IPV: 2003-004).

As mentioned previously, when police are *not* the primary source of information, OIDV coverage tends to employ more thematic elements which allude to the risk factors unique to policing.

***Risk Factors Unique to OIDV.*** Although not always obvious, media coverage of risk factors pertain typically to the paramilitary power structure of police departments, work-related stressors, exposure to violence, authoritarian spillover, and solidarity with fellow officers ( $n = 36$  articles). The following quote exemplifies the paramilitary power structure of policing and its association with OIDV:

Policing institutions are, in fact, systems of paramilitary power over. They are socially sanctioned to exercise reasonable control over persons and property in order to protect the public's health and safety. Police officers are necessarily trained in the use of power over. Generally, what makes a good police officer can also make him a dangerous harasser. He knows how to intimidate by presence alone, using his uniform, his stance, his voice. He can use his "command" or "interrogation" voice to intimidate or to threaten more effectively. He has been trained to use his body, if necessary, as a weapon. He knows how to use arm locks and choke holds—policing techniques of last resort—to subdue without leaving marks or bruises. He has a gun (OIDV 2002-005).

To provide an additional example, the following excerpt was taken from a thematically framed article where a domestic abuse researcher at Universite de Montreal was quoted as saying:

The message we give soldiers and police is, 'You are in control. You impose order.' So it's little surprise when that notion spills into the home (OIDV: 2001-003).

This was substantiated by a Montreal city councillor with nine years' experience as a police officer:

[He] said the problems go to the very soul of policing. They can't be addressed without looking at the role of police in society... 'The police are the armed fist of the state. Their role is primarily one of repression. When you give people the right to use violence in this way, it becomes part of their psychology of intervention. You learn the subtleties of violence. If you are frustrated in your personal life and know how to use violence, it becomes easier to use at home' (OIDV: 2001-003).

The paramilitary structure of policing can assist in explaining why OIDV prevalence rates are significantly higher than what has been found in the general population. Moreover, as evidenced

in the above quotations, the paramilitary power structure cultivates an authoritarian mentality among officers and domestic violence occurs, or is likely to occur, when this mentality spills over into the home. This is aligned with the second risk factor identified in prior literature: authoritarian spillover, which will be discussed in further detail below.

*Authoritarian spillover.* An authoritarian mentality has been conceptualized as a set of personality traits centred on domination and submission (Anderson and Lo 2011). Authoritarian spillover occurs when officers are unable to leave this mentality at work and begin to treat their “family like citizens, expecting the last word, doing things book, and being overly critical [which are all] associated with high levels of family strain” (Johnson et al. 2005: 7). Authoritarian spillover, however, is difficult to capture from media coverage alone as journalists often lack detailed knowledge of events. This leads to difficulty in distinguishing between authoritarian spillover and regular men exercising dominance and control. One OIDV case, however, provides clear evidence of authoritarian spillover where an officer was exercising his authority at an inappropriate time. He argued during trial that:

He was acting as a police officer when he used physical force on his date following a night of drinking and dancing at a local bar. After the woman got out of his car and attempted to walk away, [the officer] said, he grabbed her, lifted her onto his shoulder and tried to get her back into the car so he could drive her home. [The officer] alleged his date was drunk and said he was acting as a police officer in trying to protect her from potential danger and from committing a breach of the public peace (2005-003).

As evidenced in the above quote, authoritarian spillover occurred as the officer was exercising his dominance, control, and authority toward his date. This authoritarian mentality is fostered

within the paramilitary police structure and is aligned with prior research on OIDV (Johnson et al. 2005; Blumstein et al. 2012).<sup>24</sup>

*Work-Related Stress and Exposure to Violence.* Prior research has identified a correlation between exposure to on-duty violence and OIDV (Johnson et al. 2005; Anderson and Lo 2011; Oehme et al. 2011). Not all officers are similarly exposed to work-related stressors, as minority and female officers and those assigned to high-crime districts are at a disproportionate risk of experiencing work-related stressors (He et al. 2011). Accordingly, in a handful of cases (*n* = 10 *articles*) the causal interpretation made by claimsmakers is that the OIDV incident was triggered by work-related stress:

The couple had problems in their 15-year marriage related to the stresses and pressures of their jobs, said [the officer's Attorney]. 'It is a very private matter between two people *caused by their work schedules*' (OIDV: 2003-007).

This case involved two married police officers who were planning a family get together for Easter. The husband was called into work, which angered his wife who was already fed up with the long hours he spent at work and threatened to shoot him with her loaded firearm. This evolved into a physical confrontation from which she suffered an injury, and both parties were charged with an offence. In another case involving a Kelowna RCMP staff sergeant convicted of assaulting his estranged wife by hitting her in the head as many as 10 times in front of their two young children was given a conditional discharge:

His trial heard that his actions in May were *likely brought on in part by job-related stress*, financial problems and a dispute over the custody of the two children, now ages eight and 15 (OIDV: 2010-014).

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<sup>24</sup> It is possible that authoritarian spillover is not as prevalent as prior research on OIDV has shown because officers may adhere to other normative orders of the police culture (i.e., safety, morality, respect for due process, etc. (Herbert 1998).

Moreover, broad/general statements are made by police executives alluding to work-related stressors when multiple officers have been charged with a domestic violence related offence in a relatively short period of time:

Situations like this are challenging on so many levels ... Our officers have been working very hard so far in 2014, *and that alone can be stressful*. Of course, the officers are concerned for their colleague, but understand the totality of the situation' (OIDV: 2014-006).

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and exposure to violence have also been recognized as prevailing features in a handful of OIDV cases (*n = 5 cases*) and are included as causal interpretations when media rely on advocates or experts for information. The following quote was provided by the medical director of the psychological trauma program at Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and recognized the effects of PTSD on marital discord:

Among the OPP officers who spoke with the Star, several reported marital discord or breakdown. Spouses are on the front line of mental-health support for partners suffering from PTSD. Usually, they're the first ones to be aware of the problem. For many, it's too much pressure (OIDV: 2012-010).

To provide a specific example, an OPP constable responded to a break and enter call back in 1993. While en route, he encountered the suspect who began to fight with him, delivering blows to his head, shattering his dentures. The officer attempted to call for help but because his teeth were smashed, his calls were inaudible and backup could not be sent. He eventually was forced to shoot the suspect and has been in the grip of PTSD ever since:

The emotional impact of the incident was immediate. 'I was bawling all the time,' [the officer] recalls. 'I was suicidal, depressed and didn't know why I survived.' Four months after the shooting, a psychiatrist diagnosed [him] with PTSD. His nightmares were so bad that he'd wake up screaming, biting and punching anything in reach, including his wife and children. Eventually he ended up sleeping on his own... He isolated himself and zoned out. He wouldn't hear knocks on the door or the phone ringing. Most days he sat in a catatonic state, staring at the television.... And he got angry. Really angry. He yelled at his kids and his spouse. He once throttled [his wife] so hard her jaw nearly broke (OIDV: 2012-010)



Because counselling is not mandated by police departments, oftentimes PTSD symptoms are left untreated, and the stress is displaced onto family members, increasing the likelihood of OIDV occurring. To illustrate:

Officers who show signs of distress do have ample access to psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors, but the woman said treatment needs to be mandated because her estranged husband wouldn't have gone for help without being forced to do so. *For her, it meant the accumulation of stress was dumped on their family, which didn't have the tools to cope* (OIDV: 2010-014)

This particular case involved an RCMP staff sergeant who had hit his estranged wife in the head as many as 10 times in front of the couple's two daughters before pointing a loaded gun to his own head. She provided her interpretation of the issue:

'I think he saw too much...He had too much stress. He was just messed up.' But [the officer's] estranged wife blames the RCMP for not approaching the officer and insisting he seek help for his mental problems. 'We can't force him to . . . go into a treatment centre because he doesn't think there's anything wrong with him,' she told the Kelowna Daily Courier last month. '[The assault] wasn't the first time he's flipped out . . . I've seen him punching himself in the head, crying on the floor...He's cried at work. He's an emotional mess' (OIDV: 2010-014)

The significance of these quotes would be missed with quantitative analyses as only a handful of cases acknowledged risk factors and stressors unique to policing. Aside from individual risk factors, the police brotherhood increases the risk of OIDV occurring. Loyalty to fellow officers and the blue wall of silence may act as enabling features as officers know if they engage in OIDV it is likely to be concealed by fellow officers, which is discussed in next section.

*The Blue Wall of Silence.* According to Skolnick (2002), the blue wall of silence is a normative injunction embedded within the police subculture which capitalizes on the brotherhood and protects the interests of fellow officers who violate criminal law by keeping their behaviour a secret within the department. The blue wall of silence and police solidarity may act as risk factors in cases of OIDV if officers believe they can commit the behaviour without

repercussions or, more commonly, solidarity may act as a deterrent against victims' reporting incidences of OIDV:

Jackie was married to an abusive Quebec police officer whom she described as 'very dangerous' and 'very, very malicious.' She finally worked up the courage to press charges, only to be pressured by her husband's colleagues to drop the complaint. Jackie - who spoke only on condition that her real name not be used - persisted, and eventually scored the kind of victory that is rare among police wives: the officer was convicted of assault. But he was kept on as a cop and continued to respond to domestic-violence calls. The outcome left her angry and feeling even more powerless. 'Since they reintegrated him into his job, what did it give?' she asked. 'I wasn't protected; he was. No matter what is done, they are protected. I don't have any power' (2001-003)

There seems no point in reporting harassment by a police officer. The brotherhood of fellow officers is likely to believe him over her. And a brotherhood it is. (2002-005)

[The victim] was married to the police sergeant and kept evidence of the abuse. She recorded the 10 months of physical assault in a diary and took pictures of her own injuries. The court heard that [the officer] told her no one would believe her story of abuse and that his colleagues at the Greater Sudbury Police Service would side with him...'I would never call 911 because it would get swept under the carpet. [The officer] has told me that many times' (2004-011)

Victims reportedly often feel conflicted about calling 911 because they know the case will likely be handled by colleagues of the alleged abuser, who may even side with the officer (2009-009).

Not only are victims conflicted when it comes to reporting incidences of OIDV, concerns were also made on how responding officers handle the domestic violence complaint. In a somewhat dated case, the wife of a Delta Sergeant called police following a domestic assault in her home where the sergeant attacked both her and her daughter. He was subsequently convicted of one assault charge and acquitted of the other and received a conditional discharge to be served in the community:

Later, the woman complained to the Police Complaints Commission because she said her husband's status as a fellow police officer earned him special treatment in the eyes of the Delta cops (2000-002).

This prompted an internal investigation that concluded:

‘Although there was sufficient reasonable and probable grounds to believe that assaults occurred, the constables allowed Mr. X to remain in the family home, while his wife and daughters were left to fend for themselves’ (2000-002).

The responding officers were reprimanded for their handling of the domestic violence complaint and docked pay. This, however, does not appear as an isolated incident as victims ( $n = 8$  cases) have argued that departmental solidarity compromises a thorough investigation:

‘Once again, in my view, Edmonton Police is protecting its own,’ [the victim], 32, said after the hearing. ‘The guy's Teflon. Nothing sticks to him’ (2002-003).

This statement was made after the victim’s ex-husband pled guilty to two discreditable conduct charges after admitting to forging the victim’s name on a loan document to alleviate his debt. He was given a 10-hour suspension without pay for forgery and no penalty for breaching a no-contact order. The 10-hour suspension can be served any time over a year. He previously pled guilty to assaulting his ex-wife and was given two years’ probation for the assault and was handed a 40-hour suspension without pay at the first disciplinary hearing.

The blue wall of silence and police solidarity are even evident in cases where victims are fellow officers. Within the Toronto Police Service, seven female officers filed complaints regarding domestic abuse perpetrated by fellow officers within the department. These officers said “police investigations into their complaints were bungled and key evidence was lost, that their careers suffered, that they themselves were investigated, that their confidentiality wasn’t upheld and that other officers interfered ‘to protect or assist the abuser’” (OIDV: 2001-003). To quote one of the female officers:

‘I feel betrayed, because I'm part of that brotherhood,’ she said, also speaking on condition that her real name not be used. ‘I do a good job - I'm a good copper. I, too, wear a uniform and I'm very proud. But to know these sons of bitches are still there, that's hard to take. It was all covered up. Nothing was done. I thought he was going to kill me. How can you let him keep his gun and stay on the street?’ (OIDV: 2001-003).

As evidenced in the above sections, how diagnostic frames are constructed differ depending on whether the accused is a police officer or a civilian. Accordingly, media constructions of OIDV provide different typifications and causal interpretations than constructions of IPV. The following section will review motivational frames, which speak to *why* the condition is problematic as determined by claimsmakers.

### **Motivational Frames**

In recognizing the constructed nature of social problems, Spector and Kitsuse (1977: 92-93) argued that “values are the explanations people give in support of their claims, complaints, or demands. Claims are commonly buttressed by espousals of moral positions, assertions of value judgments, and expressions of indignation or outrage.” Motivational frames, therefore, encompass statements expressing *the grounds* for the complaint and are used to justify a course of action by explaining what is wrong with a social condition and also why it is wrong (Spector and Kitsuse 1977: 93). The following section, therefore, will compare claimsmakers’ moral evaluations of OIDV relative to civilian IPV.

### ***Moral Evaluation***

When moral evaluations are made, incidents of OIDV are constructed primarily as out of character, singular incidents in a life well lived. Emphasis is typically placed on extraneous, situational factors that lead the accused officer to behave irrationally. Examples:

‘His crimes were a single, sad, terrible event in a life well lived,’ the judge said, adding the public humiliation of media reports and loss of his job amounted to enough punishment already (OIDV: 2001-001).

A discharge would have kept a criminal record off [the accused’s] otherwise good record. In [the accused’s] favour, [the judge] said the officer was a ‘person of good character’ who felt genuine remorse. He had no history of spousal abuse and an exemplary work record (OIDV: 2005003).

‘He is a good man who, but for his involvement with (the complainant), led not only an unblemished but exemplary life,’ Justice said at the sentencing hearing, noting that [the accused] is attending counselling and has been demoted from sergeant to constable (OIDV: 2013007).

As demonstrated by these excerpts, the majority of moral evaluations made are premised on the accused officers’ prior good character and the incident is constructed as an anomaly in a life well lived. These value judgments were evident across cases occurring years apart ( $n = 19$  cases).

Moral evaluations within media coverage of civilian-perpetrated IPV, by contrast, are premised largely on the discourse that it is *never* okay to engage in violence against an intimate partner ( $n = 11$  cases):

‘How am I going to convince you that this sort of behaviour just isn’t normal?’ [The judge] observed. ‘I can walk you around this town and ask couples how many times they’ve had to call the police. Do you know what the answer is going to be?’ [The offender] observed that ‘in any case where a man becomes involved in a fight with a woman, he is always to blame.’ [This prompted the offender to ask... ‘So what do I do if she comes up and smokes me, and kicks me in the face?’ ‘You walk away,’ [the judge] said. ‘There is absolutely no occasion when it is permitted for a man to hit a woman’ (IPV: 2005-004).

Within this case, the judge insisted the incident was attributable to the accused’s behaviour and this discourse is premised on the value judgment that violence is never acceptable and males are always to blame in cases of IPV perpetrated against their female partner. In other cases the judges said:

He treats instances of domestic violence seriously and he denied the request for a conditional discharge. ‘First of all, it’s never the victim’s fault,’ the judge said. ‘The message I wanted to send to the public is that violence is never acceptable’ (IPV: 2007-012).

‘The ultimate spousal assault is murder,’ the judge said. He later told [the offender] that ‘anyone who does this sort of stuff doesn’t deserve a partner,’ and that [he] should treat his partner with the same kind of respect he would like to be treated with (IPV: 2009-004).

Aside from the discourse that it is never okay to engage in IPV, a second classical constructionist theme emerged regarding *threatened children*. According to Best (1990), children are symbolic of innocence, vulnerability, and the future. Claimsmakers are then able to use this rhetorical hook to frame a social problem as presenting a risk to children. Evidently, moral evaluations are more apparent in cases where children are present:

[The judge] proceeded to give the accused a sentence of nine months in custody for the assault with three consecutive months for the breach. 'Nobody ever thinks of these children... They will copy what you do, and (these assaults) will repeat' (IPV: 2010-002).

Provincial court Judge told [the offender] it was aggravating that he assaulted the woman in front of young children because they can get the message that such behaviour is acceptable and then they repeat it when they are adults. 'And it never stops,' he said (IPV: 2013-007).

The above two excerpts involve the judge making a moral evaluation regarding why IPV is wrong. When IPV occurs in front of children they are likely to learn that violence is an appropriate response to domestic disputes which then continues across generations. Media coverage of OI DV, therefore, is framed to excuse the officers' actions by evaluating the behaviour as an anomaly in a life well lived. Media coverage of IPV, to contrast, is framed to blame the accused for becoming violent with their female partner and is especially wrong when it occurs in front of children.

### **Prognostic Frames**

Prognostic frames provide treatment recommendations to alleviate or eliminate a social problem (Loseke and Best 2003). They are largely informed by value judgments expressed by claimsmakers which are then used to justify the appropriate course of action, or treatment recommendation (Spector and Kitsuse 1977). The following section will, therefore, outline the treatment recommendations offered by claimsmakers in addressing OI DV and IPV. It will conclude with a discussion of departmental solutions unique to OI DV.

### ***Treatment Recommendations***

Treatment recommendations forwarded by a judge are often grounded within his/her moral evaluations regarding the offender's behaviour. Typically, judges construct both OIDV and civilian IPV as a function of individuals making poor choices and the recommended treatment is to make better choices. Given the symbolic function police serve, it may be that officers need little incentive to make better choices in the future. Accordingly, the majority of offenders in OIDV cases do not require severe criminal sanctions to deter them from committing a similar crime in the future:

The judge said the crux of the issue was whether the need to denounce [the officer's] actions and deter others from doing so required he be sent to jail. For a number of reasons, she decided this was not the case. In making her decision, she found the factors mitigating against jail—his guilty plea, acceptance of responsibility, remorse, lack of premeditation, lack of bail breaches and seeking psychological help on his own—outweigh the aggravating factors of terror, violence, and the use of a weapon (OIDV: 2001-001).

A city police officer will avoid a criminal record for assaulting his wife if he abides by conditions of his probation for the next 15 months. [The constable], 33, who admitted earlier in the week to the March 2004 incident that occurred in front of their 18-month-old daughter, was given a conditional discharge... The judge said he was very impressed with the officer, who had taken significant counselling on his own accord prior to pleading guilty. He ordered [the constable] to continue counselling and perform 100 hours of community service (OIDV: 2004-002).

Akin to OIDV cases, treatment recommendations for cases of civilian-perpetrated IPV are embedded within moral evaluations made by the presiding judge. Aligned with moral evaluation that IPV must be denounced and deterred in society, most often the treatment recommendation for denouncing civilian IPV is a custodial sentence followed by a period of probation.

Depending on the severity of the incident, the accused may also have to perform X number of community service hours, abstain from alcohol, pay fines, and are typically prohibited from

possessing weapons. Conditional, suspended, and intermittent jail sentences are given in cases where the accused acted out of character, has a prior good record, or has taken rehabilitative steps prior to sentencing: they are *not* the norm, however. To illustrate:

Superior Court Justice gave [the offender] a month in jail this week after finding him guilty of seven charges including forcible confinement, four assault-related counts and two of uttering threats. [The offender] has also been ordered to participate in treatment programmes for substance abuse. ‘These are serious, terribly heinous types of offences,’ said [the judge]. ‘I’d like to see [the offender] commit these offences on someone who could retaliate. It’s maybe one of those lessons he needs’ (IPV: 2001-003).

This can be contrasted with its matched pair (OIDV: 2001-003) where the accused pled guilty to five of ten charges leveled against him including three counts of assault, one count of administering drugs with the intent of committing a criminal offence and one count of possession of a firearm, against three former girlfriends. He received a suspended sentence. The following treatment recommendations distinguish further between civilian IPV and OIDV cases:

Making no effort to hide his disgust, provincial court Judge ordered a Fredericton man to serve 31 months in federal penitentiary for a pair of violent beatings he gave his common-law spouse (IPV: 2004-001 92).

This quote can be compared with its matched pair, where the accused officer received a conditional discharge:<sup>25</sup>

[The Judge] said the attack was impulsive and out of character for [the accused]. And he didn't think the public had ‘a particular interest in whether he received a conviction or discharge’ (OIDV: 2004-001).

To summarize, moral evaluations often construct the appropriate treatment recommendations which differ according to whether the accused is a police officer or a civilian. In OIDV cases, the

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<sup>25</sup> Within this case, both the Defence Attorney and Crown provided a joint recommendation for a suspended sentence. The Crown filed an appeal on the grounds the judge had made an error in rejecting the recommendation for a suspended sentence. The conditional discharge was upheld.



behaviour is framed as an anomaly and the prior good character of the accused officer is usually noted. Moreover, the recommended treatment is often informal (i.e., it is claimed that severe criminal sanctions are not required to achieve deterrence). Treatment recommendations for civilian IPV are framed in terms of the need to denounce and deter domestic violence in society which is often best achieved through custodial sentences.

### **SUMMARY**

Quantitative analyses reveal significant differences in media constructions of OIDV compared to civilian-perpetrated IPV cases. First, OIDV cases had significantly higher word counts and more articles published per case than civilian IPV cases. Second, OIDV coverage was compiled primarily from police sources whereas criminal justice officials were the prominent information source in civilian IPV coverage. Third, media coverage of civilian IPV was significantly more likely to employ the victim blaming frame than coverage of OIDV. Finally, accused officers in OIDV cases are significantly more likely to have been named in media coverage than civilians.

In compiling the above qualitative findings on typifications, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations, it becomes apparent that each informs the other in constructing OIDV and civilian-perpetrated IPV as social problems. Media coverage of OIDV has characterized the issue as an individualized phenomenon that is unrelated to operational duties and not reflective of officer conduct in the department more generally. This is accomplished by claimsmakers disclosing minimal relevant information thereby prohibiting any patterns or commonalities to be drawn from cases. OIDV has also been characterized as a minor issue as both charges and injuries are downplayed in media coverage. Finally, in comparison to civilian-perpetrated IPV, media coverage of OIDV constructed cases as allegations and officers were portrayed as innocent (until proven guilty). Because OIDV is constructed primarily as an

individualized issue, the associated causes have been attributed to individual stressors which everyone is subject to, regardless of vocational status. In doing so, OIDV was constructed as an aberration in individual conduct. Media coverage of OIDV, therefore, is evaluated as out of character, singular events in a life well lived with emphasis placed typically on extraneous, situational factors which lead the accused officer to behave irrationally. Other causal interpretations allude to the significance of the paramilitary structure of police organizations in perpetuating OIDV. Authoritarian spillover, exposure to violence, development of PTSD, and police solidarity/blue wall of silence were also recognized as risk factors preceding the OIDV event. These evaluations often influence the prescribed treatment recommendation: absolute or conditional discharges.

This can be contrasted with media constructions of civilian-perpetrated IPV. Media coverage of these cases also individualize the issue, but the problem is also typified as somewhat prevalent and violent. When causal interpretations are made they also frame the incident as a result of the accused's actions: he handled his emotions poorly, was under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or possessed jealous or controlling attributes. Moral evaluations are typically premised on the belief that it is *never* okay to engage in violence against an intimate partner, especially when children are present. Because of these constructions, the appropriate treatment recommendation is to incarcerate the accused with the overall objective to deter and denounce future occurrences of IPV.

## **CHAPTER 5 – NATURE OF OIDV IN CANADA**

The aim of this chapter is to present an amalgamation of both quantitative and qualitative findings exclusive to OIDV in an attempt to compile empirical data on the nature of OIDV in Canada. Aligned with the contextual constructionist perspective, this data will be evaluated against what has been found in prior research. This chapter will, therefore, begin by exploring demographics for accused officers, with attention given to gender, age, victim-offender relationship, location, employing agency, rank, and number of years employed. Next, data on situational factors including the presence of alcohol/drugs, weapon usage, and victim injury will be discussed. Bivariate analyses follow, comparing OIDV and civilian-IPV cases on demographic and situational variables to identify any significant differences between the two. The subsequent section explores the criminal justice response including information on the charge laid by police, the total number of charges laid, plea bargaining, conviction, total number of convictions, sentence received, sentence length, mandated counseling, and probation orders. Again, bivariate analyses were conducted to identify whether OIDV and civilian IPV cases are handled differently by the courts. Next, I review organizational responses taken by the police department in response to allegations or convictions of OIDV. The entire chapter will be brought together in the final section where it is argued that a problem of comparable proportions exists in Canada, relative to the US.

### **Descriptive Information Found in Media Coverage of OIDV**

In order to compile some empirical data on OIDV in Canada, it is necessary to explore common demographic characteristics of both accused officers and victims. Accordingly, the following sections present information on officer gender, age, employment characteristics, victim-offender relationship, as well as victim characteristics.

### ***Demographic Characteristics of Accused Officers***

As depicted in *Table 4*, the majority of officers charged with a domestic violence-related offence are male (90%), aged 30 to 39 years old (29%; with an average age of 39 years), and reside in Ontario (59%).<sup>26</sup> Ninety-two percent of cases involved an officer currently employed by a Canadian police department with the remaining six percent involving a former police officer. The majority of accused officers are employed within a municipal police agency (75%), followed by federal (16%), then provincial (6%).<sup>27</sup> Within these agencies, the majority are patrol level officers (i.e., constable; 48%), 14 percent were upper management, eight percent were Mounties, four percent were other (i.e., served on police board, special constable), and the remaining 24 percent were not specified. On average, accused officers had been employed by the police department for 13 years. Subsequent to recoding this variable, it became evident that the majority of cases did not specify the length of employment (32%), but where this information was available, 18 percent involved officers with five or fewer years of experience, 14 percent involved an officer with 11 to 15 years of experience, 14 percent of cases involved officers with over 20 years of experience, and the remaining 11 percent had six to ten years experience.

### ***Demographic Characteristics of Victims of OIDV***

Demographic information was also recorded for OIDV victims. The majority of victims were female (65%) with an average age of 33 years. The victims' age, however, was unspecified in the majority of cases. Only twelve percent of victims were employed as a police officer with

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<sup>26</sup> The accused officer's age is not specified in the majority of cases (31%). The age category of 30-39 years old is the second most common.

<sup>27</sup> These figures are somewhat comparable to the proportion of officers employed at the municipal, provincial, and federal level. According to census data, approximately 53 percent of officers are employed at the municipal level, 34 percent are employed at the provincial level, and nine percent federal. It appears, therefore, that rates of OIDV are alarmingly high at the federal level (Service Canada 2014).

the remaining 82 percent were not employed by a police agency. The majority of cases did not specify the victim-offender relationship, but when specified, 32 percent involved an offence

**Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Demographic and Situational Variables for OIDV Cases Published in Canadian Newspapers, 2000-August 2014 (N = 132)**

	n	%		n	%
<b>Demographic Variables</b>					
Accused Gender			Victim Gender		
Male officer	119	90	Male	12	9
Female officer	12	9	Female	87	65
<i>Accused Age (years)</i>	90	39	Unspecified	34	25
Accused Occupational Status			<i>Victim Age (years)</i>	15	33
Current officer	122	95	Victim Occupation		
Former officer	6	5	Victim is police officer	14	12
Agency Type			Not police officer <sup>a</sup>	116	88
Municipal	100	77	Victim-Offender Relationship		
Provincial	7	5	Spouse	42	31.8
Federal	22	17	Estranged Spouse	10	7.6
Rank			Boyfriend/Girlfriend	11	8
Patrol	63	48	Ex-BF/Ex-GF	12	9
Supervisor/Management	19	14	Unspecified	57	42
Other	5	4	<b>Situational Variables</b>		
Mountie	11	8	Weapon Used		
Not specified	32	24	None	19	14
Province			Firearm <sup>b</sup>	6	5
New Brunswick	1	1	Knife	4	3
Nova Scotia	14	11	Hands/Fist	16	12
Quebec	2	2	Other	5	4
Ontario	78	59	Unspecified	81	61
Manitoba	10	8	Victim Injury		
Saskatchewan	4	3	No Injury	24	18
Alberta	11	8	Minor Injury	16	12
BC	11	8	Serious Injury	9	8
Territories	1	1	Unspecified	82	62
Years of Employment			Accused Substance Use		
0-5	24	19	No	3	2
6-10	14	11	Yes	14	11
11-19	19	14	Unspecified	114	87
More than 20 years	19	14			
Unspecified	42	32			
<i>Years of Employment</i>	83	13			

<sup>a</sup> This category initially had three categories: victim is a police officer, victim is not a police officer, and unspecified. The latter two categories were recoded into one as it was assumed that it would be stated explicitly when the case involved a victim who was also a police officer.

<sup>b</sup> The 'firearm' variable was also recoded as it initially distinguished between agency-issued, personally-owned, and unspecified firearms but was collapsed as only two percent of cases involved an agency-issued firearm.

against a spouse, nine percent involved a former boyfriend or girlfriend, eight percent involved a current boyfriend/girlfriend, and the remaining eight percent of cases involved a former spouse.

Similar to demographic information about victims, within the current study, the majority of situational variables were unspecified in media coverage. Weapon use was unspecified in 61 percent of cases, however when it was specified, 38 percent of cases stated explicitly no weapon was used, 32 percent involved the accused using his/her hands or fists as a weapon, 12 percent involved a firearm (four percent of which were agency-issued), eight percent involved a knife and the remaining ten percent involved an 'other' weapon. Likewise, victim injury was not specified in 61 percent of cases, but when it was, 49 percent of cases had no injuries reported, 33 percent reported minor injuries, and the remaining 18 percent suffered serious injury.

Finally, 86 percent of cases did not specify if the accused officer was under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the incident. Rather, alcohol or drug use was only specified in 17 cases. Twelve percent ( $n = 4$ ) did not involve alcohol, 59 percent ( $n = 10$ ) involved the accused officer being intoxicated, 24 percent involved both the accused and victim being intoxicated ( $n = 4$ ), and the final six percent ( $n = 1$ ) involved cases where only the victim was intoxicated at the time of the offence. Due to the high amount of unspecified information in the substance use variable, results are inconclusive on whether alcohol/drug has a substantial impact on OIDV in Canada.

### **Bivariate Analyses Comparing Media Coverage of OIDV and Civilian Perpetrated IPV**

To avoid repetition with information contained in the previous chapter, demographic, situational, and court variables for both media coverage of OIDV and civilian IPV will now be reviewed comparatively. Bivariate analyses, as displayed in *Table 5*, were conducted to generate some empirical data on OIDV in Canada while simultaneously advancing what is already known

**Table 5. Characteristics of News Coverage for OIDV (n = 132) and Civilian-Perpetrated IPV cases (n = 132)**

	OIDV%	IPV %	<sup>2</sup>		OIDV %	IPV %	<sup>2</sup>
<b>Demographic Variables</b>				<b>Situational Variables</b>			
Offender Gender				Victim's Injury			5.8*
Male	45	45	0	No Injury	49	28	
Female	5	5		Injury	51	72	
Offender Age (years)	40	35**		Weapon Used			4.0*
Victim Age (years)	33	29		No weapon	73	87	
Relationship			0	Weapon	27	13	
Spouse	16	16		Acc. Substance Use			.42
Estranged Spouse	4	4		Not Present	18	26	
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	4	4		Yes	82	74	
Ex-Bf/Girlfriend	4	4		Susp./Actual Infidelity			1.47
Not Specified	22	22		No	7	10	
History of Violence			.02	Yes	3	3	
No	7	8		Not Specified	40	37	
Yes	93	92					
Prior Criminal Record			69.5				
No	25	4					
Yes	1	12					
Charges Pending	3	3					
Not Specified	21	31					

\*\* OIDV characteristics significantly different than civilian IPV category at  $p < .01$

\*\*\* OIDV characteristics significantly different than civilian IPV category at  $p < .001$

about civilian IPV. Results from cross-tabulations revealed some significant differences between OIDV and IPV case characteristics and will be discussed in further detail below.

### ***Demographic and Situational Characteristics***

Bivariate analyses, displayed in *Table 5*, reveal that accuseds in OIDV cases are older on average than civilian accuseds ( $p < .01$ ), but do not differ significantly on other demographic characteristics. Where coverage of OIDV and civilian IPV differs significantly pertains to the situational variables: OIDV coverage is less likely to report victim injuries ( $p < .05$ ) but more likely to report that a weapon was used during the offence ( $p < .05$ ) than coverage of civilian

IPV.<sup>28</sup>

In summary, after examining media coverage of OIDV in Canada, some tentative conclusions can be drawn regarding its nature. Demographic variables reveal that OIDV is most often perpetrated by a male patrol officer, with more than five years' experience in a municipal police agency. It is most often perpetrated against a spouse, resulting in no, or minor, injuries. Due to the amount of unspecified information, it is difficult to draw conclusions on the accused's intoxication or situational factors leading up to the incident. Qualitative findings presented in the previous chapter, however, substantiate prior research on the risk factors (i.e., authoritarian spillover, violence exposure, adherence to subcultural forces, and the blue wall of silence) associated with OIDV (Johnson et al. 2005; Anderson and Lo 2011; Blumstein et al. 2013). These findings provide support for the second set of hypotheses which predicted that the nature of OIDV in Canada would be comparable to what has been found in US research. More specifically, it was hypothesized that the police subculture, organizational and occupational stressors, and substance abuse, would all play a prominent role in explaining OIDV. Substance use, however, was often missing in media coverage of OIDV; thus conclusions could not be drawn regarding its association with OIDV. It was further hypothesized that officers accused or convicted of an OIDV related offence would be treated leniently throughout all phases of the criminal justice process compared to civilians. The following section will, therefore, review how

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<sup>28</sup> Bivariate analyses were initially conducted with unspecified information included in the analysis which produced mixed results. With unspecified information, perpetrators of OIDV were less likely to have a history of violence ( $p < .01$ ) and less likely to have a criminal record ( $p < .001$ ) than civilian perpetrators. Civilians were also more likely to have been under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the offence ( $p < .05$ ) than officers accused of OIDV. These associations disappeared once unspecified information was omitted from the analysis; thus, it appears that OIDV coverage is more likely to omit these details than civilian IPV coverage.



the criminal justice system has responded to OIDV with reference given to charging, prosecution, and sentencing practices.

### **Adjudicative Response**

Not only does the accused's status as a police officer affect the victim's decision to report incidences of OIDV, but as a police officer, they can circumvent the justice system:

The relationship the officer has with those in the judicial system, including other officers, prosecutors and lawyers, works to intimidate victims into not reporting abuse. It also undermines their confidence that anything will be done if they do report it, said Wetendorf (OIDV 2004-011).

Diane Wetendorf is a Chicago-based expert who works with victims of OIDV and provided expert testimony in a Canadian case involving a Sergeant of the Sudbury Police Force. Even though her expertise is based on US cases, the above statement is also applicable to OIDV in Canada. Within this particular case, the victim was intimidated by her husband into not reporting recurring incidents of abuse, so she began to keep a diary and photographs of her injuries. This evidence secured a conviction and a nine-month custodial sentence. Although this study is largely inadequate in capturing victim intimidation, as all cases included in the analysis were publicly reported incidences of OIDV, it can provide evidence of lenient treatment by the courts. The purpose of the current section, therefore, is to provide additional information on adjudicative responses exclusive to OIDV cases to determine if officers are, in fact, treated leniently throughout the criminal justice process relative to civilians charged with the same offence.

With respect to criminal justice variables, as depicted in *Table 6*, the majority of officers were charged with assault level one (67%), and, on average, had three charges related to the incident. At the time of this study, 60 cases had been resolved. Of the cases that were resolved, 38 percent involved an acquittal or absolute discharge through plea bargaining. Thirty-eight percent of officers received a conditional discharge, ten percent were given a suspended

sentence, seven percent a custodial sentence, and the remaining nine percent were either unknown or not applicable. When the sentence length was specified (n = 28), the average sentence length was 15 months, typically served in the community.<sup>29</sup> This may be due to the prevalence of plea bargaining: 31 percent of officers had entered into a peace bond or plea

**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Court Variables for OIDV Cases Published in Canadian Newspapers, 2000-mid 2014 (N = 132)**

	n	%		n	%
Primary Offence			<i>Sentence Length (months)</i>	28	15
Assault Level 1	88	66.7	<i>Time Served (days)</i>	24	17
Criminal Harassment	16	12.1	Plea Bargain		
Assault Causing Bodily Harm	12	9.1	Yes	26	20
Assault with a Weapon	7	5.3	No	8	6
Sexual Assault	6	4.5	Not at this stage	70	53
Aggravated Assault	1	.8	Unspecified	24	18
Uttering Threats	1	.8	Probation		
<i>Total Number of Charges</i>	131	3	No	22	37
<i>Total Number of Convictions</i>	60	1.6	Yes	28	48
Sentence Received			Unspecified	8	14
Acquittal/Absolute Discharge	23	38	Counseling Mandated		
Conditional Discharge	24	38	No	35	26
Suspended Sentence	6	10	Yes	56	41
Custodial Sentence	3	7	Unspecified	46	34
Unknown	1	2			
NA	4	7			

bargain. Finally, placing the officer on probation or mandating him/her to counseling appears to be the most common criminal justice response to OIDV: 55 percent of cases involved the officer a probation order and 41 percent of officers were ordered to complete counseling.

In determining whether officers are treated more leniently by the courts than citizens, bivariate analyses were conducted (*see Table 7*). Bivariate analyses reveal significant differences

<sup>29</sup> Three officers received a custodial sentence. The first was for 12 months in addition to 120 days served in pretrial custody for assault level 1 and uttering threats. He was a former officer. The second involved a sergeant convicted of three counts of assault who was sentenced to nine months. The final officer was charged with six offences, the most serious two were assault with a weapon and sexual assault. He pled guilty to assault level one and sentenced to time served (43 days). He was fired from the department.

between OIDV and IPV cases on a number of court variables. First, it appears that civilian IPV cases are more likely to be convicted as charged ( $p < .001$ ) and also more likely to be convicted of a lesser charge ( $p < .05$ ). Accordingly, civilian IPV cases have significantly more total convictions, on average, than OIDV cases. Significance was also attained for sentencing variables. OIDV and IPV cases differ significantly in the sentence received: OIDV cases are significantly more likely to result in either an acquittal or conditional discharge whereas civilian cases are more likely to have custodial sentences ( $p < .001$ ). Probation and mandated counseling orders also differ significantly according to whether the accused is a police officer ( $p < .001$  and

**Table 7. Court Characteristics of News Coverage for OIDV (n = 132) and Civilian-Perpetrated IPV cases (n = 132)**

	OIDV	IPV	<sup>2</sup>		OIDV	IPV	<sup>2</sup>
<b>Court Variables</b>							
Convicted Original Charge			35.5***	Probation			18.5***
No	13	4		No	16	5	
Yes	10	25		Yes	21	34	
Not at this stage yet	27	21		NA	1	0	
Convicted Lesser Charge			11.1*	Unspecified	6	17	
No	7	4		Mandated to Counseling			17.1**
Yes	9	17		No	17	9	
Not at this stage yet	17	15		Yes, DV Counseling	2	3	
Plea Bargain				Yes, Anger management	2	0	
No	6	8		Yes, alcohol related	1	2	
Yes	15	26		Yes, but unspecified	12	7	
Not at this stage	14	26		Yes, multiple programs	2	10	
Unspecified	8	22		Unspecified	12	21	
<i>Total Number Convictions</i>	1	2***					
<i>Sentence Length (months)</i>	83	49					
<i>Time served pretrial (days)</i>	17	57*					

\* OIDV characteristics significantly different than civilian IPV category at  $p < .05$

\*\* OIDV characteristics significantly different than civilian IPV category at  $p < .01$

\*\*\* OIDV characteristics significantly different than civilian IPV category at  $p < .001$

$p < .01$  respectively). Finally, the accuseds in OIDV cases spent significantly less time in pretrial custody ( $p < .05$ ) relative to civilian accuseds. The above findings provide support for hypothesis (f), where it was expected that officers accused of OIDV will be treated more leniently by the courts compared to civilians accused of IPV.

These figures support the final hypothesis and validate the assertion that victims of OIDV have regarding the lenient treatment of officers by the courts. If the majority of officers are either acquitted or given a conditional discharge for the assault, victims may be even more reluctant to forward a complaint against their intimate partner.

### Organizational Response

Shifting attention to organizational responses, the most common response was to immediately suspend the officer pending trial outcome (43%) or reassign him/her to administrative duties (22%; *see Table 8*). The majority of officers were suspended from duty with pay (32%), followed by administrative reassignment (22%), which was typical for officers either awaiting their trial outcome or for those convicted of a charge and discharged conditionally. Officers return to patrol-level duties upon completion of conditions stipulated by

**Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Departmental Variables for OIDV Cases Published in Canadian Newspapers, 2000 – Aug. 2014 (N = 132)**

	n	%		n	%
Officer Suspended			Outcome of Police Tribunal		
Not Suspended	33	26	Informal Resolution	1	1
Yes, With Pay	42	32	Formal Resolution	11	9
Yes, Without Pay	6	5	Charges Withdrawn	5	4
Yes, Unknown if paid	8	6	NA	16	12
NA	6	5	Unspecified	96	74
Unspecified	35	27	Resolution		
Officer Reassigned			Docked Pay	4	3
No	51	39	Dismissal	5	4
Yes	28	22	Demotion	1	1
NA	7	5	Suspension	2	2
Unspecified	44	34	NA	20	16
Officer Charged Under PSA			Unspecified	97	75
No	2	2	Officer Resigned		
Yes	23	18	No	30	23
NA	15	12	Yes, before resolution	6	5
Unspecified	90	70	Yes, after resolution	6	5
			NA	5	4
			Unspecified	83	64

the judge or parole officer. It should be kept in mind, however, that organizational responses are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and some officers accused or convicted of OIDV continue with their regular duties from initial coverage to trial resolution. In other cases, however, officers were charged under the *Police Service Act* (n = 18). When media covered the police tribunal disciplinary hearings, the most common recommendations were either to suspend the officer for a number of days without pay, followed by demoting his/her current rank, and a fraction of recommendations included terminating the officer. Termination typically involves cases where the offender has a prior history of domestic violence or is relatively new to the department:

In his executive summary released Wednesday, [Victoria Police Chief] said he believes he had no option but to fire [the officer]. He said he had some very serious concerns about [the officer's] ability to carry out his duties as a police officer, particularly investigating domestic violence and assaults, in light of the convictions. [His] case was troubling because the assaults involved separate domestic violence victims and occurred a significant period of time apart. He also noted that the provincial court judge did not grant conditional or absolute discharges (OIDV: 2000-004).

Finally, when departmental solutions were not individualized but instead focused on revising or improving existing domestic violence policies, emphasis was placed on improving departmental response or updating departmental policies to terminate officers subject to weapon prohibitions. The President of the Niagara Regional Police Association, however, says departmental solutions often miss one area that requires attention:

[He] said police officers need an employee assistance program specifically for officers and civilian members of the service. Like services in Montreal and Toronto, the NRP would ideally have a psychologist on staff to deal with stress and other issues. 'We have a very unique profession with very unique problems,' [he] said, adding marital break-up and suicide rates are high in policing (2004-006).

Based on a review of departmental solutions, it becomes apparent that each department operates

on a case-by-case basis, and the treatment recommendations for disciplining officers are reflective of this.

## SUMMARY

In answering the research question: what is revealed in media coverage about the nature of OIDV in Canada, various tentative conclusions can be drawn. First, the majority of accused officers were male, aged 30-39 years old, currently employed by a municipal police agency as a constable for an average of 13 years. When victim information was specified, the majority were female, with an average age of 33 years, and not employed as a police officer.<sup>30</sup> The victim-offender relationship was often unspecified, but when it was, OIDV was typically perpetrated against a spouse (either legal or common-law). Second, the majority of situational variables (i.e., victim injury, weapon use, alcohol presence, etc.) were unspecified but of those that were, media coverage indicated the majority of OIDV incidences did not involve the use of a weapon or victim injuries. This observation is congruent with bivariate results indicating victim injury is less likely to be reported in OIDV cases compared to civilian-IPV, but is inconsistent with the finding that media coverage is more likely to report weapon usage in OIDV cases.

Third, turning to adjudicative responses, several conclusions can be drawn on how the courts have responded to OIDV. Officers are most commonly charged with assault level one, receive a conditional discharge, with an average sentence length of 15 months, typically served in the community. Bivariate analyses comparing the criminal justice response between OIDV and civilian IPV provide support for the final hypothesis predicting more lenient treatment of

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<sup>30</sup> Demographic information on accused officers (e.g., gender, age, rank, years employed, etc.) and adjudicative responses are perceived to be “factual” and thus constitute preliminary empirical data.

officers, relative to civilians, by the courts. Civilian cases were more likely to be convicted as charged and also more likely to be convicted of a lesser charge and receive a custodial sentence. Officers convicted of OIDV, by contrast, were more likely to be acquitted or discharged conditionally. Finally, the most common response taken by the employing police department was to suspend the officer (with pay) pending trial outcome. When officers were charged under the *PSA*, the most common solutions were to suspend the officer for X number of days without pay, demotion, or termination.

## **CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The primary aim of this study was to compare and contrast media constructions of OIDV and civilian-perpetrated IPV and provide plausible explanations for the observed differences. Based on the results attained from a content analysis of 461 newspaper articles, two conclusions can be drawn. First, media constructions of OIDV differ significantly from constructions of civilian IPV and second, the nature of OIDV in Canada shares several commonalities with what has been found in prior US research.

### **Media Constructions of OIDV vs. Civilian IPV**

In compiling quantitative and qualitative findings, it becomes evident that media portrayals of OIDV and civilian IPV share some similarities, yet differ significantly in many aspects. The majority of media portrayals of OIDV and civilian IPV cases are framed episodically and individualized as a problem confined to the parties involved. These findings are aligned with prior research indicating both media representations of IPV and police violence are framed episodically and individualized (Carlyle et al. 2008; Sellers et al. 2014; Fairbairn and Dawson 2013; Lawrence 2000; Hirschfield and Simon 2010).

Also similar to what has been found in prior research (Fairbairn and Dawson 2013; Bullock and Cubert 2002; McManus and Dorfman 2003), both coverage of OIDV and civilian IPV continue to display some evidence of framing the incident in ways that blame the victim or excuse the perpetrator. In coverage of both OIDV and civilian IPV, victim blaming occurred by attributing the incident to the victim's level of intoxication or her suspected/actual infidelity. Excusing the perpetrator involved referring to the accused's level of intoxication, how the incident was out of character, arose from a custody battle, family pressures, victim's suspected/actual infidelity or due to some form of mental illness/diminished mental capacity.



Finally, both media portrayals of OIDV and civilian IPV were similar in the amount of unspecified information contained in the coverage. For example, information on victim age, substance use, weapon use, and victim injury were missing in the majority of cases.

### **Differences in Media Constructions of OIDV and Civilian IPV**

Media constructions of OIDV individualize the issue as an off-duty problem and characterize it as a rare, out of character event, triggered by extraneous situational factors or work-related stressors. These characterizations are based largely on information provided by police, who have an underlying (and sometimes obvious) motivation to construct the issue as confined to a few bad apples to maintain organizational integrity in the face of public scrutiny (Lersch and Mieczkowski 2005; Gottschalk et al. 2012). This may also explain the limited amount of relevant information that is disclosed in OIDV coverage, relative to civilian IPV, and may also assist in explaining why the nature of the charge(s) and severity of victim injuries are downplayed. Accused officers are also more likely to be named in media coverage, and coverage of OIDV is less likely to be framed to blame the victim. This is contrary to what was expected based on prior research on media representations of police violence where officers' names are withheld to prevent journalists from delving deeper into the background or character of the accused (Hirschfield and Simon 2010). This finding, however, is aligned with research by Easteal et al. (2015) who noted that media representations of IPV were less sympathetic toward the victim when the offender was named and an excuse was provided for his behaviour next to his name. Consequentially, media coverage of OIDV, relative to civilian IPV, is more likely to provide details of the offenders' positive character, and is more likely to sympathize with the offender rather than with the victim. Due to these characterizations, OIDV is often evaluated as

an anomaly in a life well lived and the most utilized treatment recommendation is to acquit or discharge the officer on the condition he/she abides by the probation/counseling orders.

Civilian IPV is also individualized, but it is not characterized as a rarity but rather more of a recurring problem in society. It is further characterized as a *violent* issue that may either be the result of situational factors or the inability of the accused to handle his/her emotions. This finding is aligned with Loseke's (1992) assertion that claimsmakers "construct the core of wife abuse to contain *extreme physical violence* [emphasis in original]." Some claimsmakers also alluded to the learned nature of IPV by making reference to children witnessing and repeating the behaviour in their adult relationships. As a result of these characterizations, IPV is often evaluated as unacceptable and never an appropriate response to resolving domestic quarrels. Consequently, the most frequent treatment recommendation is to administer a custodial sentence to deter and denounce IPV. This is somewhat contrary to what has been reported in prior research as IPV has been treated more leniently by the courts than non-intimate violence, and when custodial sentences were administered they were shorter on average (Dinovitzer and Dawson 2007; Bond and Jeffries 2014). This contradiction, however, may be attributable to the types of IPV cases that were reported in the media and selected for this analysis. It may be that more serious IPV cases are reported in the media, which would result in a custodial sentence regardless of victim-offender relationship.

### **Why do Constructions Differ?**

Some plausible explanations exist as to why constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV differ. First, differing constructions are likely due to the use of different claimsmakers in OIDV and civilian IPV cases. OIDV cases rely primarily on police for information on the event whereas civilian IPV cases are more likely to have a court official as the information source.

Source considerations impact how an issue is constructed based on which information is provided and which is repressed. Police, as claimsmakers, are likely to adopt a different orientation or typification of the problem than criminal justice officials would. This assists in explaining why police officers were constructed as worthy of sympathy rather than condemnation (Loseke 1993). Criminal justice officials, on the other hand, often construct victims as sympathy-worthy and perpetrators of IPV as condemnation-worthy. Accordingly, differing constructions may be a result of interpreting perpetrators' actions in different moral universes: OIDV is viewed as less immoral than civilian IPV because of characterizations applied to victims and offenders.

Second, source considerations can also assist in explaining why less information was included in OIDV cases compared to civilian perpetrated IPV. Police are known to provide "just the facts" of the case and offer simple narratives to journalist inquiries (Bullock and Cubert 2002). Defence and Crown Attorneys, on the other hand, may disclose more detailed information in support of his/her position in the case. Relatedly, police are motivated to uphold the departmental mandate and retain public confidence in their day-to-day operations and thus may provide a biased representation of OIDV events. This feeds into the widely held cultural belief in the moral and ethical nature of policing and can assist in explaining the neutral tone journalists adopt when reporting on OIDV. Finally, the asymmetrical relationship police share with journalists impacts how journalists frame the issue. Journalists are inclined to report sensational crime stories in their local community. Police have long been recognized as a legitimate source for acquiring information about crime. Journalists must be careful not to compromise this relationship by reporting on instances of police deviance in a negative light. Instead, the event is reported in a neutral tone, using language provided by the police, and journalists are careful not

to frame the story to insinuate guilt on the accused officer (i.e., overuse of the terms allegation, accusation, etc.).

### **The Nature of OIDV in Canada**

A secondary aim of this study was to compile empirical data on the nature of OIDV in Canada and evaluate the accuracy of claims made against extant literature. Tenets of the contextual constructionist framework will be borrowed and applied to make this comparison.

#### **Demographic and Agency Characteristics of Accused Officers**

Findings from the current study indicate that media representations of OIDV is most frequently perpetrated by a select demographic—middle-aged males, with an average age of 39 years, employed at the municipal level as constables, for more than five years, against their current spouse. The majority of offences occurred while off-duty and against an intimate partner who was not a police officer. These results are aligned with what has been found in prior research. Specifically, Erwin et al. (2005) analyzed 106 OIDV reports extracted from an Internal Affairs division within one large urban police department from 1994 to 1998. They found that the majority of officers accused of OIDV were male, with an average age of 34 years, and nine years' experience as a patrol officer (Erwin et al. 2005). Furthermore, their results indicate that OIDV reports were often filed by the officer's wife, followed by an ex-wife or former girlfriend (Erwin et al. 2005). More recently, Stinson and Liederbach (2013) conducted a content analysis of published newspapers where OIDV officer, agency, and victim characteristics were explored. They found that OIDV is most often perpetrated by a male officer, who function as patrol level officers, aged 36 to 40 years, with less than five years of experience (Stinson and Liederbach 2013). Similar to Erwin et al.'s (2005) findings, Stinson and Liederbach (2013) noted how OIDV

was most commonly perpetrated against a spouse, followed by current boyfriend/girlfriend, and then estranged partners.

### **Situational Characteristics Identified in Media Coverage**

Media coverage of OIDV typically provided minimal information regarding situational circumstances preceding the event and seldom alluded to risk factors unique to policing. For example, the majority of cases had unspecified information pertaining to substance and weapon use, victim injury, or any other relevant factors that would provide a contextual background. When this information was included, however, the majority of cases did not involve injury or a weapon other than the accused's hands/fists and only a fraction involved a firearm. This too is comparable to what has been found in Stinson and Liederbach's (2013) content analysis.

When risk factors were mentioned, they appeared in articles framed thematically that often relied on outside sources (not police) for gathering information on OIDV. Within these articles, attention was devoted typically to explaining why the paramilitary power structure, authoritarian spillover, violence exposure, PTSD, and the blue wall of silence, act as risk factors for OIDV. Although risk factors were not referenced, explicitly or implicitly, in the majority of OIDV articles, when they did appear, the information contained was comparable to US research. Oehme et al. (2012) administered online surveys to 853 officers and found 17 percent of officers reported symptoms of PTSD. Results from their multivariate analyses revealed officers displaying PTSD symptomology were four times more likely to report using physical violence against their intimate partner or family member (Oehme et al. 2012). Similarly, Gershon and her colleagues (2009: 275) administered detailed questionnaires to 1,072 officers employed in one large police department. They found that "exposure to critical incidents, workplace discrimination, lack of cooperation among coworkers, and job dissatisfaction correlated

significantly with perceived work stress. Work stress was significantly associated with adverse outcomes, including depression and intimate partner abuse.” Finally, Johnson et al. (2005) argued that the effect of violence exposure on domestic violence is mediated by external burnout and an authoritarian mentality that spills over into family life, resulting in OIDV. Within this study, external burnout was difficult to capture from media coverage alone; however, there was evidence of violence exposure and authoritarian spillover triggering the OIDV incident. Finally, police solidarity and the corresponding blue wall may enable OIDV knowing any allegations of assault would likely be dismissed while simultaneously deterring victims from reporting incidences of OIDV.

### **Adjudicative and Institutional Responses to OIDV**

Turning to adjudicative and organizational responses to OIDV, the majority of officers had, on average, three charges related to the incident and assault level one was the most serious offence charged in the majority of cases. This finding is supported by prior national research indicating that assault level one is the most common charge laid in cases of IPV (Statistics Canada 2015), which is aligned with prior research on OIDV more specifically (Erwin et al. 2005; Stinson and Liederbach 2013). When case resolutions were covered in the media, often the officer was acquitted or received an absolute or conditional discharge, preventing him/her from having a criminal conviction on his/her record. These findings share some similarities with what has been found in past research: police are likely to plead guilty to avoid an assault conviction which would lead to termination under the Lautenberg Amendment (Lonsway 2006). Stinson and Liederbach (2013: 618) note how “in numerous instances, officers received professional courtesies of very favourable plea bargains where they readily agreed to plead guilty to *any* offence that did not trigger the firearm prohibition of the Lautenberg Amendment.”

Lastly, employing police departments have taken the necessary steps in some cases to deter and denounce OIDV (i.e., terminating the officer, demoting his/her rank, encouraging a resignation, etc.). The most common response was to immediately suspend the officer pending trial outcome, followed by reassignment to administrative positions. This parallels Erwin et al.'s (2005) observation that the majority of accused officers in their sample (64%) were immediately suspended from duty. Within the current study, aside from the initial action taken, often information was not provided on *Police Service Act* charges and dispositions which may underscore departmental efforts in responding to this issue. To illustrate, only four percent ( $n = 5$ ) of convicted officers were terminated from the department and 10 percent resigned from the department, equally distributed among officers who resigned prior to the criminal justice resolution and those who resigned subsequent to the proceedings. This can be compared with Stinson and Liederbach's (2013) analysis where they noted one-third of US officers had been terminated or resigned from the department. This discrepancy may indicate differential organizational responses to handling OIDV based on country. They may, however, also be due to the limited amount of media coverage of police disciplinary hearings and/or attributable to police confidentiality when handling internal affairs. In comparing current findings to past research, it appears many findings are *warranted assertions* about the nature of OIDV in Canada.

### **Original Contributions**

Along with being the first study to provide empirical data on OIDV in Canada, this work provides a number of original contributions to academic literature on media representations of police and intimate partner violence and OIDV. First, due to the public's reliance on media outlets for information about current events, it is important to analyze how constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV differ in the media. This study was the first to examine media

constructions of off-duty police violence further contributing to this body of literature. Second, it was also the first to analyze comparatively two types of offenders committing IPV thereby expanding research on media representations of IPV. Third, findings produced within this study further validate the generalizability of past research on OIDV. For example, risk factors such as the role of work-related stressors, police subculture, and authoritarian spillover are now generalizable beyond US policing, although this too should be interpreted with caution due to the method used to gather and analyze data (discussed in further detail below). Finally, this research is unique in that it is the first to apply the constructionist framework in analyzing and interpreting media coverage of OIDV.

In addition to contributing to existing literature, an additional strength of this research is related primarily to adopting a mixed methods content analysis. In doing so, I was able to capitalize on both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in providing the most comprehensive answers to my research questions.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Despite the many strengths and contributions of the current study, some limitations exist and should be kept in mind while interpreting results. First, data is limited to OIDV cases that have received media attention, and so underreporting may continue to be an issue. It is also plausible that OIDV cases that garner media coverage may differ from incidences that were not reported to the department or handled internally, reducing the generalizability of this study. Relatedly, the results in this study were deduced from information published in media coverage and are thus limited to what has been reported and disseminated. Because of the amount of unspecified information contained in this coverage and reduced sample size, it is difficult to draw any concrete conclusions regarding the nature of OIDV in Canada. These limitations could



be addressed by conducting further Canadian research on OIDV using different research techniques (e.g., surveying police departments, conducting interviews with stakeholders, surveying or interviewing families of police officers, etc.). This would tap into prevalence rates of OIDV as information would likely be revealed on violent incidents occurring behind closed doors that were not reported to the police.

Second, results pertaining to civilian-IPV may not be representative of the entire population as cases were selected based on predetermined criteria. This, however, may not be a pertinent limitation as civilian IPV cases were selected because of the research question; they were used as a comparative control group. Third, the majority of media coverage for OIDV cases focused on the initial event, and it was not always possible to find follow-up coverage on the criminal case disposition. This can impact results pertaining to adjudicative and organizational responses taken to address OIDV in Canada. Again, this may be addressed by conducting interviews with stakeholders in police departments to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of how police departments in Canada have addressed and responded to OIDV cases.

Finally, some may argue that low word counts are a limitation to content analysis because not enough information can be drawn from news articles with less than 100 words. However, this is not always the case (i.e., quality over quantity) and is somewhat addressed by taking a case-based approach to data collection and analysis. From a constructionist perspective, however, this critique is irrelevant; what matters is what is presented. Further research could address this limitation by conducting a mixed-methods analysis of media coverage supplemented with follow-up surveys or interviews with police officers and/or stakeholders to validate or question what was revealed in the news.

## **Future Directions and Policy Implications**

Not only is this study the first to borrow and apply tenets of the constructionist framework to media coverage of OIDV, it also provides a foundation for future research on OIDV in Canada. Further research analyzing discourse in media coverage of OIDV would garner a more comprehensive understanding of how OIDV is constructed by claimsmakers. The preliminary findings of this study reveal that police predominate as the primary source of information when reporting on OIDV so it would be interesting to learn whether this trend continues. Additionally, since it was recognized that a problem of comparable proportions exists in Canada, relative to the US, future research should be designed to permit valid conclusions regarding the prevalence and severity of OIDV in Canada. This would likely lead to more departmental action in the form of training programs, counseling services, and/or the development/improvement of OIDV policies.

Based on this research, it can be inferred, with caution, that OIDV is a problem facing many police departments nationwide. How an issue is constructed by claimsmakers has practical implications as “the words we use [and] the typifications we construct, are very real in their consequences” (Loseke and Best 2003: 253). OIDV has been constructed as a problem in Canadian media that requires some form of remedy. Unfortunately, OIDV departmental policies, or publically-accessible versions, are non-existent in large police departments (i.e., Toronto, OPP, RCMP, Calgary, Vancouver, Ottawa, etc.). Undoubtedly, measures have been by some departments to handle OIDV and civilian domestic violence calls similarly, but more progress is required. In addressing the Legislative Assembly, Worden (2015) was able to highlight the inadequacies of departmental response to OIDV cases in one large Ontario police department. She, too, recognized a change is required in the police culture as OIDV is “not an individual

aberration of an incidental nature that can be readily combatted with the momentary embarrassment that comes from media disclosure or the temporary slap-on-the-wrist, [and] suspended-with-pay measures” (Worden 2015). Instead, departmental policies designed to address OIDV should recognize that the behaviour is cultivated within the department and further fuelled by exposure to critical incidents, alcohol, authoritarian spillover, and job burnout, which is not acknowledged within the IACP model policies (1999; 2003). Moreover, IACP’s model policy is just that – it is a template or a suggested policy for departments. The first step in addressing OIDV in Canada should be to make an OIDV policy *mandatory* for all departments to implement and enforce.

To this end, departmental policies on OIDV should not only touch upon prevention, intervention, and response protocols but should also incorporate severe sanctions (i.e., demotion or termination) for fellow officers who interfere with investigations. This may reduce police solidarity at times when the brotherhood causes more harm than good and would simultaneously increase victims’ confidence that reporting an incident of IPV would be taken seriously and handled appropriately. Additional measures should also be taken in an attempt to alter philosophies endorsed by the male-dominated police culture including hiring and retaining more women or advancing more women to supervisory or management positions within the department. It is imperative that future policies address underlying causes of OIDV, to enforce the zero-tolerance stance, and to develop or improve employee assistance programs, making it mandatory for officers to seek psychological help after working X number of years on the job or subsequent to experiencing an emotionally traumatic event.

## **Conclusion**

OIDV is an understudied problem in many North American police departments. Researchers, OIDV victims, and domestic violence advocates alike have pled with government and police agencies to recognize OIDV as a problem that requires social, departmental, and governmental response. Prior to completion of the current study, no research was available on how the nature of OIDV was constructed in the media. Current results reveal that media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV are similar in that they were both constructed as individualized issues often arising from emotionally-charged, situational events. Many differences do exist, however, as media constructions of OIDV and civilian IPV differ on a number of demographic characteristics, situational variables, and adjudicative responses. It has also been illustrated that OIDV in Canada is a problem of comparable proportions to what has been found in the United States, in terms of risk factors, characteristics, and the overall nature of OIDV. It is essential to conduct additional research on OIDV in Canada to substantiate current findings and encourage policymakers to take the issue seriously and develop potential remedies. Research acts as a catalyst for change and provides the backbone to policy initiatives and is thus vital in addressing and responding to OIDV in Canada.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**QUANTITATIVE CODEBOOK – SECTION I**

**Media Portrayal**

**OIDV:**

- 0 – no
- 1 – yes

**Year of initial incident (YEAR):**

**Type of coverage (COVTYP):**

- 0 – criminal event
- 1 – trial
- 2 - multiple articles – both event & trial covered
- 3 – other

**Number of articles published per case (ARTNO):**

**Total word count for all articles (TOTWRDS):**

**Source used for information (SOURCE):**

- 0 – Police
- 1 – Criminal Justice Official (Lawyer, Judges, Prosecutors, etc.)
- 2 – Domestic Violence Advocate
- 3 – Victim’s perspective
- 4 – Other
- 5 - Unknown

**Media Frame (FRAME):**

- 0 – Episodic
- 1 – Thematic
- 2 – Other

**Domestic violence frame (DVFRAM):**

- 0 – None
- 1 – antifeminist frame
- 2 – the social justice frame
- 3 – the victim empowerment frame
- 4 – victim blame
- 5 – excusing the perpetrator

**Name of offender withheld (OFFNAME):**

- 0 – Name withheld
- 1 – offender named

## **Background Information**

### **Region (REGION):**

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 0 – Nfld & Labrador | 6 – Manitoba     |
| 1 – New Brunswick   | 7 – Saskatchewan |
| 2 – Nova Scotia     | 8 – Alberta      |
| 3 – PEI             | 9 – BC           |
| 4 – Quebec          | 10 – Territories |
| 5 – Ontario         |                  |

### **Population density (if unknown just write City name)(POPDEN):**

- 0 - Rural (> 1000 people)
- 1 - Urban (Small: 1000 to 29,999 people)
- 2 - Urban (Medium: 30,000 to 99,999 people)
- 3 - Urban (Large: <100,000 ppl)
- 88 – Location not specified

## **Perpetrator**

### **Gender (OGEN):**

- 0 – Male
- 1 – Female

### **Age (OAGE):**

- 888 - not specified

## **Victim**

### **Gender (VGEN):**

- 0 – Male
- 1 – Female

### **Age (VAGE):**

- 888 – not specified

## **Victim-Offender Relationship**

### **Intimate Partner (VOR):**

- 0 - Spouse
- 1- Common-Law
- 2- Ex-Spouse
- 3 - Current Boyfriend/Girlfriend
- 4 - Former Boyfriend/Girlfriend
- 77 – Other
- 88 – Not specified

**Previous History of Violence (PREVV):**

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes
- 88 – Not specified

**Domestic violence triggered by suspected/actual infidelity (INFID):**

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes
- 88 – Not specified

**The Offence**

**Status of the offence in the criminal justice process (OSTATUS):**

- 0 - Arrested
- 1 - Charged
- 2 – Convicted
- 3 – acquitted
- 4 – charges withdrawn

**Victim’s Injuries (INJURY):**

- 0 – No injury
- 1 - Minor Injuries (*bruises, black eyes, cuts, scratches, swelling and/or undetermined injuries requiring less than two days of hospitalization*)
- 2- Serious Injuries (*knife and gunshot wounds, broken bones, loss of teeth, internal injuries, loss of consciousness, completed rape and/or any injury that required two or more days of hospitalization*)
- 88 - Not Specified

**The Primary Offence (PRIMOFF):**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 0 – Assault causing bodily harm        | 9 – Assault level 2                               |
| 1 – Assault w/ a weapon                | 10 – Restraining order/protection order violation |
| 2 – Aggravated Assault                 | 11 – Uttering threats                             |
| 3 – Sexual assault causing bodily harm | 12 – Other  |
| 4 – Sexual assault w/ a weapon         | 13 – Forcible Confinement                         |
| 6 – Intimidation                       | 14 – Sexual Assault                               |
| 7 – Criminal Harassment                |   |
| 8 – Assault level 1                    |   |

**The Secondary Offence (SECOFF):**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 0 – Assault causing bodily harm        | 9 – Assault level 2                               |
| 1 – Assault w/ a weapon                | 10 – Restraining order/protection order violation |
| 2 – Aggravated Assault                 | 11 – Uttering threats                             |
| 3 – Sexual assault causing bodily harm | 12 – Other  |
| 4 – Sexual assault w/ a weapon         | 13 – Forcible Confinement                         |
| 6 – Intimidation                       | 14 – Sexual Assault                               |
| 7 – Criminal Harassment                |   |
| 8 – Assault level 1                    |   |

**Weapon (WEAP):**

- 0 – No weapon
- 1 - Personally Owned Firearm
- 2 - Agency-Issued Firearm
- 3 - Knife
- 4 - Hands/Fist
- 5 - Other Body Parts
- 6 - Other
- 88 - Not Specified

**Total number of charges (TOTCHARGE)**

**Risk Factors Identified in Article**

**Alcohol Present (SUBUSE):**

- 0 - No
- 1 - Yes, Both Parties Intoxicated
- 2 - Yes, Perpetrator Intoxicated
- 3 - Yes, Victim Intoxicated
- 88 – Not specified

**History of Alcohol Abuse (ALCHIST):**

- 0 - No
- 1 - Yes, Both Parties
- 2 - Yes, Perpetrator
- 3 - Yes, Victim
- 88 – Not specified

**Criminal Case Dispositions**

**Convicted of the Original Criminal Charge (CONVO):**

- 0 – No
- 1 - Yes
- 2 – Not at the stage of CJ yet

**Convicted of a Lesser Criminal Charge (CONVL):**

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes
- 2 – Not at that stage
- 77 - NA

**If Yes, specify the lesser charge received (LESSCHAR):**

**Plea Bargain (PLEAB):**

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes
- 77 – NA



**Sentence Length (in months) (SENLGTH):**

888 – less than one month

777 – NA

**Time served during pre-trial custody in days (TIMSERVE):**

0 – No time served

888 – Not specified

**QUANTITATIVE CODEBOOK – SECTION II  
FOR OI DV ONLY**

**Employing Agency (EMPL):**

- 0 - Municipal police dept.
- 1 - OPP (Provincial)
- 2 - RCMP (Federal)
- 88 – Not specified

**Number of years employed by police agency (YREEMPL): \_\_\_\_\_**

- 77 – less than 1 year

**Rank (RANK):**

- |                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 0 - Cadet            | 7- Detective               |
| 1 - Police Constable | 8 - Deputy Chief of Police |
| 2- Sergeant          | 9 - Chief of Police        |
| 3- Staff Sergeant    | 10 - Other Ranks           |
| 4 - Inspector        | 11- Retired                |
| 5- Staff Inspector   | 88 - Not Specified         |
| 6- Superintendent    |                            |

**Victim works for police agency (VICPOL):**

- 0 - Does not work within the police agency
- 1- Works within police agency

**Risk Factors Identified in Article**

**Violence Exposure (VIOEX):**

- 0 – No
- 1 - Yes – signs of PTSD
- 88 - Not Specified

**Organizational Stressors (ORGSTR):**

- 0 - Evidence of job burnout
- 1 - Working Long Hours
- 2 - Job Dissatisfaction
- 3 - Lack of admin. support
- 4 - Unfair workload
- 88 - Not specified

**Sentence (SENTENCE):**

- 0 – None, absolute discharge
- 1 – Conditional discharge
- 2 – Jail
- 3 – Other

**Evidence of Police Culture/Normative Orders (POLCULT):**

- 0 – None
- 1 - Strong bonds with Fellow Officers
- 2 – Authoritarian Spillover
- 3 – Evidence of Isolation
- 4 - Cynical Attitude
- 88 – not specified

**Official Administrative Response**

**Officer suspended pending criminal investigation (SUSP):**

- 0 – not suspended
- 1 - Yes, with pay
- 2 - Yes, without pay
- 88 – Not specified

**Officer reassigned to administrative position upon receiving a criminal charge (ADMINP):**

- 0 - No
- 1 – Yes
- 88 – Not specified

**Officer mandated to counselling (COUNSEL):**

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes, DV counselling
- 2 – Yes, anger management
- 3 – Yes, alcohol program
- 88 – not specified

**Officer resigned (RESIGN):**

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes
- 88 – Not specified

**Officer terminated (FIRED):**

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes
- 88 – Not specified

**Officer was demoted after criminal conviction (DEMOT):**

- 0 – No
- 1 – Yes
- 88- Not Specified

**APPENDIX B**  
**QUANTITATIVE CODING SHEET – SECTION I**

CASE #: \_\_\_\_\_ OIDV: \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE1: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE2: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEDIA PORTRAYAL**

COVTYP: \_\_\_\_\_ ARTNO: \_\_\_\_\_ TOTWRDS: \_\_\_\_\_ SOURCE: \_\_\_\_\_

NUMCITE: \_\_\_\_\_ SOURCE2: \_\_\_\_\_ NUMCITE2: \_\_\_\_\_ FRAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DVFRAM: \_\_\_\_\_ DVFRAM2: \_\_\_\_\_ OFFNAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**BACKGROUND INFO**

REGION: \_\_\_\_\_ POPDEN: \_\_\_\_\_

***PERPETRATOR***

OGEN: \_\_\_\_\_ OAGE: \_\_\_\_\_ CRIMREC: \_\_\_\_\_

***VICTIM***

VGEN: \_\_\_\_\_ VAGE: \_\_\_\_\_

***VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP***

VOR: \_\_\_\_\_ PREV: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE OFFENCE**

OSTATUS: \_\_\_\_\_ INJURY: \_\_\_\_\_ CHARGE1: \_\_\_\_\_ CHCOUNT: \_\_\_\_\_

CHARGE2: \_\_\_\_\_ CHCOUNT2: \_\_\_\_\_ CHARGE3: \_\_\_\_\_ CHCOUNT3: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTCHARGE: \_\_\_\_\_ WEAP: \_\_\_\_\_

SUBUSE: \_\_\_\_\_ ALCHIST: \_\_\_\_\_ INFID: \_\_\_\_\_ STRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

**CRIMINAL CASE DISPOSITIONS**

CONVO: \_\_\_\_\_ CONVL: \_\_\_\_\_ LESSCHAR: \_\_\_\_\_ PLEAB: \_\_\_\_\_

SENTENCE: \_\_\_\_\_ SENLGTH (in months): \_\_\_\_\_ TIMESERVE: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTCONVIC: \_\_\_\_\_ COUNSEL: \_\_\_\_\_ PROB: \_\_\_\_\_

*SECTION II – OI DV ONLY*

**BACKGROUND INFO**

EMPL: \_\_\_\_\_ YREMP: \_\_\_\_\_ OCCSTATUS: \_\_\_\_\_ RANK: \_\_\_\_\_

VICPOL: \_\_\_\_\_

**RISK FACTORS IDENTIFIED**

VIOEX: \_\_\_\_\_ ORGSTR: \_\_\_\_\_ POLCULT: \_\_\_\_\_

POLCULT2: \_\_\_\_\_

**ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE**

SUSP: \_\_\_\_\_ ADMINP: \_\_\_\_\_ RESIGN: \_\_\_\_\_ FIRED: \_\_\_\_\_

DEMOT: \_\_\_\_\_

**POLICE SERVICES ACT**

POLACT: \_\_\_\_\_ PACHAR: \_\_\_\_\_ OUTCOME: \_\_\_\_\_ PTSENT: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C**  
**Operationalized Quantitative Variables**

#	Code	Explanation
1	Episodic	Coded when the incident is framed as an individualized problem unique to only a few individuals.
2	Thematic	Coded when reference made to social determinants of DV. Also considered thematic when domestic violence advocates are used as sources, if statistical information is provided on DV, or if any reference made to the availability/locations of women's shelters. OIVD – subculture, burnout, exposure to violence, & broad info on the issue.
3	Violence Exposure	Coded for when there's evidence of PTSD – officer suffering from irritability, sleep problems, depression, & anxiety (Oehme, et al. 2012).
4	Cynical Attitude	Used whenever evidence appears that the officer is mistrusting or suspicious of others.
5	Isolation	Coded for when information arises on the victim being socially isolated from non-police officers.
6	Solidarity	Used if evidence arises that other officers tried to cover up the accused officer's behaviour/offence.
7	Job Burnout	Coded for if officer appears to be losing interest in the job (i.e., missed days). Also captured by detachment from loved ones and emotional hardening.
8	Authoritarian Spillover	Coded for when family members are treated like citizens (the officer exercises their authority and control over family). Other examples include expecting the last word, doing things by the book, and being overly critical (Johnson et al., 2005).

**APPENDIX D**  
**PRELIMINARY QUALITATIVE CODING PROTOCOL**

1. Publication Title: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Market Differences (circle one):      Popular          Mixed          Quality

3. Gender of Reporter:              Male              Female          Anonymous

4. **Media Frame(s)** (any aspects made more salient – explain):

- Causal Interpretation/claim made (explain):
  
- Treatment recommendation/solution (explain):

**DV Frames: (antifeminist, social justice, victim empowerment frame, victim-blaming and excusing the perpetrator):**

5. Persons Referenced/Mentioned:

6. Organizations referenced/mentioned:

7. Persons Directly quoted:

8. Underlying values/motivations of claims-makers? (explain):

9. Tone/Language Used

- a. Positive (in favour of offender)
- b. Negative (critical of offender)
- c. Neutral

10. Summary:

**APPENDIX E**  
**FINAL QUALITATIVE PROTOCOL**

**CONSTRUCTIONISM – NEWS MAKING**

1. Publication Title: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender of Reporter:            Male            Female            Anonymous
3. Market Differences:            Local (Popular)            Provincial            Federal (Quality)
4. Saliency
  - Violence
  - Allegation
  - Gender of accused and/or victim
  - Occupational status of accused and/or victim
  - Location of Incident
5. Causal Interpretation/claim made (explain):
6. Treatment recommendation/solution (explain):
7. Underlying/obvious motivations of claims-makers? (explain):

**FRAMING & SOURCE CONSIDERATIONS**

8. News Frames: (Episodic vs. Thematic)
9. DV Frames:
  - Antifeminist frame
  - Social justice frame
  - Victim empowerment frame
  - Victim-blaming
    - o Infidelity of victim
    - o Victim using substances
  - Excusing the perpetrator
    - o Infidelity of victim
    - o Offender using substances
  - The police frame
  - The abnormality frame
10. Persons Referenced/Mentioned:
  - Criminal Justice Official
  - IPV advocate
  - Offender
  - Victim
  - Police
  - Doctor
  - Expert



11. Organizations referenced/mentioned (same categories as above):
12. Persons Directly quoted (same categories as above):
13. Primary claim-maker (who is cited the most throughout the case):
14. Tone/Language Used
  - a. Positive (in favour of offender)
  - b. Negative (critical of offender)
  - c. Neutral
15. Character of Offender
  - a. Positive
  - b. Negative
16. Sympathy
  - a. For Offender
  - b. For Victim
17. Explanation of Charge
18. Explanation of Offence
19. Downplaying of offence?
20. Description of Injuries:
21. Police Subculture:
  - a. Authoritarian
  - b. Exposure to violence (PTSD)
  - c. Isolation
  - d. Organizational Stressors
  - e. Stress
  - f. Police Solidarity – Strong bonds
22. Summary:

**APPENDIX F**  
**Operationalized Qualitative Variables**

#	Code	Explanation
<b>Constructions (Parent Node)</b>		
1	Market Differences: Local, Provincial, or National	Each news article is coded as either local, provincial, or national based on the publishing news organization. Local news organizations are more 'popular' in nature whereas National news organizations tend to be more 'quality'.
2	Saliency	Coded when a piece of info is made more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. Saliency is increased through repetition, placement, and/or associating a piece of information with cultural beliefs (Entman, 1993). Within this node, several child nodes were developed to capture gender, location, occupation, and violence.
3	Causal Interpretation	Coded when information is provided on the causes/forces creating the problem. An example being when an explanation is provided for the IPV offence (i.e., wife came home late, argument arose & husband assaulted her)
4	Moral Evaluation	Coded when the problem is judged in terms of whether it is good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, normal or abnormal, efficient or inefficient (Ericson et al. 1989: 5)
5	Recommended Treatment	Coded when a solution or treatment is offered to rectify or improve the current situation. The treatment or solution can pertain to the victim or perpetrator depending on who is responsible for implementing the solution. For example, domestic violence advocates may propose increasing the number of shelters or resources available to battered women or police may seek to alter their domestic violence policy to prevent future cases of IPV.
6	Underlying/Obvious Motivations	Coded for when the underlying motivation of the claims-maker is made salient. For example, police departments may have an underlying motivation to individualize the IPV incident to protect the integrity of the department. The underlying motivation of IPV advocates would be to raise awareness, provide resources, etc. Note: not all motivations are underlying – some are made very obvious by IPV advocates and police.

## **Domestic Violence Frames (Parent)**

- |    |                                |  |
|----|--------------------------------|--|
| 6  | Antifeminist Frame             | Coded when the article is framed in resistance to the battered women movement. The issue is reframed to remove gender– instead of focusing on male perpetrated violence, human violence is the primary concern. Female victims are held responsible for the violence: they are not ‘innocent bystanders’ but partake in the ‘dance’ of abuse. This frame critiques society’s tolerance for female perpetrated violence and blames domestic violence advocates for the problem of domestic violence (Berns, 2004).    |
| 6  | Social Justice Frame           | Coded when the story is framed thematically (see quantitative operationalized variables). Emphasis is placed on socio-political contexts challenging the audience to consider structural forces fostering violence   |
| 7  | Victim<br>Empowerment<br>Frame | Coded when article is framed to place responsibility on the victim to solve their ‘private problem’ while also sympathizing with her   |
| 8  | The Police Frame               | Coded when information is provided on how the case played out without speculating on the nature of the relationship between those involved. The incident is portrayed as a legal situation that is already under control.  |
| 9  | Abnormality Frame              | Coded when the individuals involved are characterized as different from the norm (either culturally, ethnically, or economically). Also coded when the perpetrator is constructed as abnormal and deviant, and the behaviour displayed radiates only from a certain type of individual.  |
| 11 | Victim-Blaming                 | Coded for when the incident is framed as the victim’s fault for failing to prevent the abuse or leave the relationship sooner. Also occurs when trying to explain why IPV occurs – violence occurred b/c of victim’s suspected/actual infidelity, victim was drinking, victim precipitated or was equally involved in violence, etc. Only coded for when an insinuation is made by the reporter that the victim is to blame; merely fact-stating that the victim was drinking is not enough to code as victim-blame. |

- 12 Excusing the Perpetrator Coded for when responsibility is deflected from the accused. Examples include mentioning the accused was intoxicated, acting out of character or in self-defence, the violence was due to a custody battle, the abuse was accidental, or extreme emotion caused the perpetrator to lose control. Similar to victim blaming, this is only coded for when the reporter makes a value judgment regarding the perpetrators actions. This can occur by using certain adjectives or making it salient that the perpetrator should not be held fully accountable for their behaviour.
- 13 Language Language is coded as positive when the incident is framed in a positive light – “any language that praises or humanizes the subjects by associating them with positive roles or laudable personal qualities” (Hirschfield & Simon, 163). For example, when reporting on OI DV, any reference made to previous heroic acts made by the accused officer would be coded as positive language.
- Language is coded as negative when the article is framed critically. This would involve mentioning any past criminal involvement, previous disciplinary actions taken by police board, or simply accentuating the culpability of the accused for the event.
- 14 Tone Coded when personal values of journalists penetrate into how the incident is described. This is evidenced when powerful adjectives and nouns are used in replacement of neutral terms that would similarly describe the event (Gans, 1979).
-

**APPENDIX G – DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLE CODING**

	<b>Coding</b>		<b>Coding</b>
<b>Media Variables</b>		<b>Situational Variables</b>	
Case Type		Infidelity	
Civilian IPV	0	No	0
OIDV	1	Yes	1
Coverage Type		Not Specified	88
Focus on Initial Incident	0	Stressors	
Focus on Trial	1	None	0
Framing		Unemployment	1
Primarily Episodic	0	Presence of Children	2
Primarily Thematic	1	Financial Stress	3
Source		Jealousy	4
Police	0	Other	5
Not Police	1	Not Specified	88
Domestic Violence Frame		Alcohol/Substance Use	
None	0	None	0
Antifeminist	1	Present in both Vic & Acc	1
Social Justice	2	Present in Accused Only	2
Victim Empowerment	3	Present in Victim Only	3
Victim Blame	4	Not Specified	88
Excusing the Perpetrator	5	History of Substance/Alcohol Use	
Police Frame	6	None	0
Abnormality Frame	7	Yes, both Victim & Accused	1
Offender Named		Yes, Accused Only	2
No	0	Yes, Victim Only	3
Yes	1	Not Specified	88
<b>Demographic Variables</b>		<b>Offence Characteristics</b>	
Gender of Accused		Injury	
Male	0	No Injury	0
Female	1	Injury	1
Gender of Victim		Not Specified	88
Male	0	Weapon Use	
Female	1	No Weapon	0
Victim-Offender Relationship		Personally Owned Firearm	1
Spouse	0	Agency-Issued Firearm	2
Common-Law	1	Firearm, Not Specified	3
Estranged/Legally Divorced	2	Knife	4
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	3	Hands/Fist	5
Estranged Boyfriend/Girlfriend	4	Other	6
Other	5	Not Specified	88
Previous Violence			
None	0		
Yes	1		

**Legal Variables**

Status of Offence		Plea Bargain	
Arrested	0	No	0
Charged	1	Yes	1
Convicted	2	Unknown	88
Acquitted	3	Sentence	
Charges Withdrawn	4	No Jail for Conviction	0
Charges Stayed	5	Jail	1
Not criminally charged	6	Unknown/Other	88
Warrant	7	Probation Ordered	
N/A	77	No	0
Most Serious Offence Charged		Yes	1
Assault Causing Bodily Harm	0	N/A	77
Assault with a Weapon	1	Not Specified	88
Aggravated Assault	2	Counselling Ordered	
Sexual Assault with a Weapon	3	No	0
Sexual Assault	4	Yes, DV Counselling	1
Forcible Confinement	5	Yes, Anger Management	2
Criminal Harassment	6	Yes, Alcohol Program	3
Uttering Threats	7	Yes, but not specified	4
Breach of Restraining/Probation Order	8		
Not Criminally Charged	9		
Conviction			
Convicted of Original Charge	0		
Convicted of Lesser Charge	1		
Unknown/Not at this stage	88		

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## APPENDIX G – DESCRIPTION OF OIDV VARIABLE CODING

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Employing Agency		Officer Reassigned to Admin Position	
Municipal Police Dept.	0	No	0
OPP	1	Yes, before criminal proceedings	1
RCMP	2	Yes, after criminal proceedings	2
Other	3	NA	77
Occupational State		Not Specified	88
Current Police Officer	0	Officer Resigned	
Former/Retired Police Officer	1	No	0
Not Specified	88	Yes, Before Criminal Process	1
Function		Yes, After Criminal Proceedings	2
Patrol/Street Level	0	Officer Fired	
Supervisory	1	No	0
Managerial	2	Yes	1
Victim Works for Police Agency		NA	77
No	0	Not Specified	88
Yes	1	Officer Demoted	
Not Specified	88	No	0
Exposure to Violence on Job		Yes	1
Yes, signs of PTSD	0	NA	77
Not Specified	88	Not Specified	88
Organizational/Occupational Stressors		Officer Charged under Police Act	
None	0	No	0
Evidence of job burnout	1	Yes	1
Working long hours	2	NA	77
Not specified	88	Not specified	88
Evidence of Culture/Normative Orders		Outcome of Police Act Hearing	
None	0	Informal Resolution	0
Authoritarian Spillover	1	Formal Resolution	1
Strong bonds w/ fellow officers	2	Charges Withdrawn	2
Not specified	88	NA	77
Officer Suspended Pending Investigation			
No	0		
Yes, with pay	1		
Yes, without pay	2		
Yes, unknown if paid	3		
NA	77		
Not Specified	88		

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