

Group Preparation and Group - Work:
For Men Who Behave Abusively Towards Their Female Partners

By

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Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
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ABSTRACT

This practicum report describes the processes through which a preparation group session was developed and implemented, illustrates how two PAST (Partner Abuse Short Term) programs were facilitated and introduces the advantages of follow-up interviews. This report seeks to explore the impacts of a preparation group on charged and convicted adult male domestic violence offenders who have been mandated by the courts to attend, participate in and complete domestic violence programming (the PAST program) as a condition of their probation order. In order to properly institute and understand these educational interventions the report draws upon the corresponding literature involving cognitive behavioral therapy, pro-feminist applications, processes of group work, motivational interviewing, stages of change/Transtheoretical Model, and the "What Works" principles.

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CHAPTER ONE - OBJECTIVES

Objectives of the Practicum

In order to attain an overall understanding and practice knowledge of the group-work process the student worked to acquire skills and knowledge about the different aspects of group interaction and to succeed in the following objectives:

1) Developing and implementing a preparation group (prep-group) for the Partner Abuse Short-Term (PAST) program.

In the 2002 evaluation of the PAST program developed by Bacon and Bracken an orientation group was recommended for “those referred to the (PAST) groups in order to enhance their readiness and receptivity to the program information” (p.138). The aim then was for the student to encompass the ideas and knowledge of probation officers, past and present group facilitators, PAST group members, and the corresponding research in the area, to arrive at a single session prep-group program.

2) Co-facilitating the PAST program for mandated domestic violence offenders.

This first stage program is a structured educational group that utilizes a blend of pro-feminist and cognitive behavioral intervention techniques. The goals of the integration of the two approaches are for all forms of abuse to terminate and to replace power and control dynamics with respect, trust and equality. This group program is 24 hours in length and aims to enable group participants to learn about abusive behaviors, learn new healthy behaviors, and provide a setting where relationships can be formed with others who share similar patterns of behavior.

The student's aims within this objective were to co-facilitate 2 PAST programs; learn from the co-facilitator's past experience, innovative techniques and his insights in the

domestic violence arena; receive feedback from the co-facilitator on her role as a facilitator; model to the group members a relationship of equality with the co-facilitator; and to utilize a client-centered approach which focuses on client trust and rapport.

3) Providing individual (in person) follow-up to those members of the PAST program who were involved in the prep-group.

The aim here was for the individual group participants to have some one on one time with the group facilitators post-group to debrief the group experience, to review their individual plans for nonviolence (to ensure understanding and in case of changes in circumstances), to address any lingering questions and concerns, to ensure maintenance of change and to refer certain offenders to additional community services if necessary or desired. According to Bacon & Bracken (2002), this follow-up with offenders presently only occurs “if there is sufficient time left on the probation order and (if) caseload size permits such intensive work by the probation officer” (p.142). It was the hope of the student that such follow-up would reduce the burden on probation officers and ultimately ensure that all group members received at least some individual follow-up contact after the termination of the program.

2) To evaluate my work as a practitioner.

Evaluating the practice would allow the student, and the practicum committee to assess whether the expected educational benefits (listed below) were achieved.

Expected Educational Benefits to the Student (Learning Goals)

The practicum placement was designed for the purpose of assisting the student in meeting a variety of learning goals. The student's specific learning goals that she set out for herself prior to undertaking the interventions were as follows:

- 1) To increase her knowledge of the key clinical issues in intervention with domestic violence offenders.
- 2) To develop a preparation (orientation) program that properly addresses the offenders criminogenic needs.
- 3) To obtain group facilitation skills.
- 4) To enhance her understanding of the application of the pro-feminist approach in a practice setting.
- 5) To enhance her understanding of the application of cognitive behavioral techniques in a practice setting.
- 6) To learn how to integrate cognitive behavioral techniques and pro-feminist practices in a group setting.
- 7) To learn how to join with and work collaboratively with mandated clients thereby increasing their motivation for change.
- 8) To increase her knowledge of the stages of group process.
- 9) To learn how to evaluate her own practice.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining the Problem

The rate of domestic violence offenses is remarkably high in North America. According to the Department of Justice statistics (2001), 25% of all crime is wife assault and 95% of domestic violence victims are women. Furthermore, according to Vita Service Statistics (2000), one in four Canadian women suffers some form of abuse by her partner. Frighteningly, over 90,000 women and children between the years of 1997 and 1998 were admitted into battered women's shelters across Canada (National Clearing House, 1999). In a comparison study between male and female victims of domestic violence it was determined through Statistics Canada's 2000 Social Survey on Victimization that women are much more likely than men to report severe forms of violence, repeated victimizations, negative emotional consequences from the abuse and increased fear that their lives were in danger. This enhanced fear must be based on some reality since women are "three times more likely than men to be injured by spousal violence and five times more likely to require medical attention" (Statistics Canada, 2000, p.5). In addition 1,485 females were killed by their husbands in Canada between 1978 and 1997 (National Clearing House, 1999). Nevertheless, despite these enormous statistics there remains the fact that "nearly one quarter of women who have experienced wife assault never [tell] anyone about the abuse" (National Clearing House, 1999, p.1).

This social problem became more visible in Manitoba due to the "Zero Tolerance Policy" against domestic violence. This policy mandates police officers to lay charges where there are both reasonable and probable grounds to believe an offense has been committed. Domestic calls have therefore become a first priority for police and the

difficult responsibility for the victim to lay charges has been removed. According to Ursel (2001), "police do not get to exercise discretion in their response to a domestic call based on their judgment of the callers legitimacy or the deserving nature of the victim...they are simply mandated to respond" (p.19). Consequently, predisposed prejudices have been removed, the role of the police in domestic calls has said to be clarified and the number of domestic related charges has significantly increased. According to Ursel (1997), this social policy was developed in 1993 to ultimately remove discretion from police officers and to transfer it into the hands of the Family Violence Court. Prior to the onset of this official policy, from 1983 to 1993, police had been directed by the Attorney General of Manitoba to charge regardless of the relationship between the victim and the accused if there were reasonable and probable grounds that an offence had been committed (Ursel, 2001). However it was found in the Pedlar Report that police discretion was still being relied upon and that the police response to domestic calls was inconsistent (Pedlar & Minuch, 1991). The current shape of the zero tolerance policy is based chiefly on the various recommendations made in the Pedlar Report.

According to Bacon & Bracken (2002), "Winnipeg has the highest rate of arrest for domestic violence in Canada at 690 arrests per 100,000 population" (p.5) and it is these cases that "compromise approximately 55% of all probation cases in Winnipeg" (p.5). These and the above mentioned statistics point to the pervasiveness of domestic violence offenses and to the absolute necessity for work to be done here in Winnipeg with male batterers in order to reduce the strain on probation officers in the domestic violence arena and to prevent further abuse by these offenders.

Rationale for Social Work Intervention

Domestic abuse is a serious problem for offenders and has extremely damaging effects on the offenders themselves, their victims, witnesses, families, communities and society at large. Effective treatment requires a multitude of services that can focus on any, or all, of the above-mentioned populations. Because domestic violence is no longer a private matter and has been defined as a significant social problem, because no community is immune to domestic violence and finally because the field of social work is dedicated to helping people “with individualized personal issues and with very broad problems that affect whole communities” (Kirst- Ashman & Hull, 1999, p.2), the need for social work intervention strategies, in the case of domestic violence, is easily rationalized. Some of the more intrinsic goals that social work has set for itself include: strengthening individuals, groups and communities potentials; assisting individuals and groups in the resolution or minimization of problems; enhancing social functioning through activities that focus on their social relationships; preventing social problems; improving problem-solving, coping and developmental skills; linking people with resources, services and opportunities; and finally the ultimate purpose of social work is working with the client within the context of their environment (Compton & Galaway, 1989). These goals of social work fit perfectly within the arena of domestic abuse. Having social workers working on such goals in the area of domestic abuse with offenders, victims, family members, communities and society at large is both extremely relevant and necessary. Within this population the clients must be serviced within the contexts of their environment. The goals of strengthening potentials, resolving problems, enhancing social functioning, preventing social problems, improving skills, and the

provision of resources must all be addressed to begin to resolve the great social problem of domestic abuse.

Social work interventions within this area may seek change at the micro, mezzo and macro levels of influence. Individual counseling is considered an intervention at the micro level of influence, while group-work, couples counseling and family therapy are considered interventions at the mezzo level of influence. Finally advocacy for policy change, or for broader social change in the area of domestic violence, is ultimately considered a macro level intervention. The intervention used in the practicum placement allows the social work student to work with domestic violence offenders in the context of the group setting (the mezzo level) while still maintaining a consideration of the larger community and societal context within which it transpires.

This practicum report primarily focuses on group work with male domestic violence offenders. Group work is a very common approach used in the field of social work and has been emphasized and defined in a similar fashion since the late fifties. According to Konopka (1972), social group work is a method of social work that assists individuals to enhance their social functioning and their ability to cope more effectively with their personal, group or community problems through purposeful group experiences. One must keep in mind that this avenue of change should only be one of many options for social work community interventions addressing violence against women.

Introduction to the Group Work Literature

The following review of the literature provides an extensive overview of group intervention practices and related issues with men who behave abusively to their female partners. The review will begin with a description of the major theories that explain the

causes of men's abusive behaviors towards women. The benefits and limitations of the group intervention process will be explored and the variability of group programs will be analyzed in terms of: group structure, duration, membership and facilitation; how success is defined; and the theoretical approaches they assume. The rationale for using both feminist and cognitive behavioral approaches with this population is outlined and emphasized through the use of empirical support. As well, the common concerns of partner contact and program dropout are discussed. Lastly, the student will explore the literature on working with and motivating mandated clients, the application of the Transtheoretical Model of change as well as the research done on preparation/orientation groups. Throughout the paper, the theoretical and empirical evidence will provide a strong rationale for the need for group-work for men who are abusive towards their female partners.

Theoretical Perspectives

A review of the key theoretical perspectives that explain the causes of men's abusive behaviors towards their female partners is necessary as it is these theories and explanations that guide counselors, group facilitators, probation officers and overall program content and style. The theoretical perspectives that will be discussed have both strengths and weaknesses that contribute to our current knowledge base and to our current practices with this population group.

Individual Pathology

This theoretical orientation may include psychoanalytic theories, characterological theories, psychodynamic theories and biological theories of male domestic violence offenders. The focus of these traditional early perspectives is on biological and

psychological traits within the individual offender that lead to or contribute to abusive behaviors. The common personality traits that are highlighted as problematic from this perspective include: lack of impulse control, psychiatric problems, immature personalities, personality disorders, skills deficits (Brownlee, Ginter & Tranter, 1998; Health Canada, 2000; Strodeur & Stille, 1989), fear of intimacy, fear of abandonment; low frustration tolerance, dependency and depression (Adams, 1988; Bryant, 1994; Strodeur & Stille, 1989). According to Dwyer et al; (1995), "these analyses do prove useful in identifying risk factors associated with violence" (p.190). Schwartz & Waldo (1999) pointed to the fact that "abuse has been linked to personality disturbances, emotional problems, self-esteem, self-concept and being a victim of violence"(p.198) therefore showing some empirical support for this perspective.

Interventions linked to this theoretical orientation include individual psychotherapy (concentrates on the individual's psychological problems from which the violence and abusive behavior are believed to be rooted), insight therapy ("seeks to help the abusive man become more aware of how he has been affected by past experiences" (Adams, 1988, p.4)) and the use of social skills programs (enhances skill development and interpersonal communication).

This theoretical perspective has been criticized for taking responsibility for the abusive behavior away from the perpetrator by implying that their abusive behavior is out of their control. The focus away from the actual abuse and the implication that the abuse is a symptom of individual pathology reinforces the abuser's defenses and denial, reduces personal responsibility and removes the termination of the abusive behavior as the primary area of concern (Bryant, 1994). This perspective has additionally been criticized

because it fails to address the societal context in which men abuse women, the utility of controlling behaviors and the fact that the abuse is “deliberate in terms of its location, target and severity” (Stordeur & Stille, 1989, p. 25). Importantly, one study has noted, “the majority of batterers are not suffering from a severe form of mental illness” (Bryant, 1994, p. 236). Moreover a recent study by Gondolf (1999a) found that their multisite sample was less pathological than previous research has shown batter program participants to be. Although the theoretical orientation can provide insight into potential risk factors and to potential areas of work with such clients, this perspective can not be our guiding theory of the causes of men’s abuse against women, for the women’s safety is not the primary concern within this orientation and due to the fact that the offenders personal responsibility is reduced.

Family Systems Theories

Proponents of family systems theory suggest that violence and other abusive behaviors are a function (symptom) of maladaptive family dynamics and dysfunctional relationships. According to Bryant (1994), “these theorists believe the violence is caused by both partners and the pathology lies in the relationship itself rather than in either individual” (p.236). Within this orientation abusive behavior is maintained by the dynamics and structure of the entire family system as it is believed to be serving a functional role in maintaining relationships and an overall homeostasis within the family unit (Stordeur & Stille, 1989).

This theoretical perspective tends to utilize family or couple’s therapy as the primary means of intervention with families experiencing problems with domestic abuse. Therapy focuses on the actions of both partners and teaches this family unit alternative

ways of interacting and communicating in order to alter existing pathological relationship dynamics. According to Adams (1988), “the goal of therapy is for each partner to identify and change how he/she contributes to the circular problem” (p.8). When implemented in its traditional form the family systems perspective has received an abundance of criticisms. Firstly, the sheer nature of this form of therapy (having the partners together) can obscure honesty and diminish the severity of abusive behaviors due to intimidation and fear of further abuse. Equalizing responsibility, blaming the victim, absolving the abuser of his behavior, neglecting social context and the issues of patriarchy, and ignoring power differences between men and women are examples of criticisms that result from this perspective. Finally, viewing the cause of violence as systemic of the relationship places responsibility on the victim thereby impelling her to change her own behavior and reinforcing the notion that the victim is responsible for her partner’s feelings and actions (Health Canada, 2000).

Proponents of this orientation maintain that family systems theory can be altered to negate the above criticisms and can be used appropriately in the area of domestic violence if certain precautions are followed (Health Canada, 2000). An example of the proper use of family systems theory with couples that have experienced violence is the Couples Project at Elizabeth Hill Counseling Center in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Within this program, the victim’s safety is the primary concern and thus couple’s work is considered to be a “second stage treatment program that is only appropriate for couples when violence has stopped” (Hiebert-Murphy & Trute, 1998). Exhaustive screening and assessment is done to ensure readiness for such therapy. Examples of vital questions to be asked prior to treatment include: is the victim safe, has the abuser accepted

responsibility, is he committed to non-violence, does the victim wish to remain in the relationship and, finally is the victim willing to commit to a safety plan (Hiebert-Murphy & Trute, 1998). Although this theoretical perspective can be useful in terms of second stage treatment, it is imperative that this orientation not be utilized as first stage treatment as the safety of victims must first be assured and the abusers personal responsibility for his actions must be acknowledged.

Social Learning Perspective (Cognitive Behavioral Theory)

Social learning perspective views violence, aggression and abusive behaviors as being learned behaviors. These maladaptive behaviors are seen as learned responses to violence in his family of origin, to violence in our culture and to stress. In support of this perspective is the fact that a number of studies have found that men who are violent with their partners “have a high incidence of witnessing or experiencing violence as children” (Strodeur & Stille, 1989). This perspective also holds that abusive behavior is reinforced because of its functional nature within the relationship.

According to proponents of this theoretical perspective the key treatment for these men is re-educating and re-training them; for if the abusive behavior is learned it can be unlearned. Interventions from this orientation tend to employ psychoeducational groups that are cognitive behavioral in orientation. The focus within these groups tends to be on skill development, identifying maladaptive thinking patterns, replacing antisocial behavior with healthy alternatives and removing reinforcers of negative behavior (Brownlee et al., 1998).

Utilization of purely cognitive behavioral techniques in group programs has received a number of criticisms from pro-feminist groups. The common focus on skills

deficits, anger management and impulse control in cognitive behavioral groups, fails to take into account the batterers' ability to control his anger or impulses in other contexts (their violence and anger is situation specific, they choose who and when to abuse) (Holmes, 1990). This focus also fails to take into account that women tend to be the exclusive targets of men's abuse, that premeditated violence and abuse do occur and that there is acceptance and reinforcement of violence and abuse by society. Another criticism of pure cognitive behavioral approaches is the view that participants can learn its techniques without undergoing real fundamental change. According to Holmes (1990), "teaching abusive men how to relax and communicate more effectively without challenging the underlying misogyny provides abusive men with more subtle and effective tactics for control" (p.13). Finally, this orientation has been criticized for failing to address the functional nature of abusive behavior in maintaining power and control over women by individual men and by men as a class (Health Canada, 200).

Sociocultural Theories (Feminist Theories)

Sociocultural theories (feminist theories) view the development and maintenance of domestic violence as stemming from society's cultural and political context. The existing patriarchal society teaches, legitimizes and reinforces men's abusive behaviors towards their partners. According to Dutton (1996), "the maintenance of patriarchy and patriarchal institutions is the main contributor to wife assault (p.127). Societal attitudes towards violence, the unequal distribution of power between the sexes, and patriarchal norms are the focal points of this orientation. Violence and abusive behavior are seen as means of maintaining power and control over women. According to Strodeur & Stille

(1989), “wife assault is thought to be sanctioned by the society and maintained by political, social and economic factors within our society” (p.31).

Proponents of this perspective believe that priority in treatment should be given to a feminist understanding of domestic violence and feminist concerns (Mullender, 1996). Interventions from this orientation tend to employ “group consciousness raising and psychoeducational approaches to encourage men to understand their socialization process and overcome it” (Brownlee et al., 1998, p.87). The feminist perspective believes that by adopting the social learning perspective and by challenging the offenders' attitudes and belief systems, violent and abusive behavior can be unlearned. This theoretical perspective favors group-work as the primary means of intervention with domestic violence offenders. Group-work is seen as a technique that alters domestic violence into a public matter rather than a private one.

Feminist approaches have received some criticism. Firstly, there seems to be little research done on purely feminist approaches, as the majority seems to be integrated with cognitive behavioral interventions. This lack of research limits the ability to determine which approach is the foundation of change. Dutton (1996) has pointed out the problematic tendency of feminists to define men by their gender rather than considering individual differences, learned characteristics and the interacting influences of varying systems. A further criticism is formed in a question that asks: if a patriarchal society produces subordination of women and thus battering, why aren't more men abusive? The feminist approach can be additionally viewed as placing more responsibility on poor socialization and society than on the abusive men themselves. Finally, gender-based

theories have been criticized for intrinsically ignoring violence perpetrated by females and violence in same-sex relationships (Letellier, 1996).

The focus of the remainder of this literature review is on group-work with male domestic abusers. Consequently the literature will focus entirely on the cognitive behavioral and feminist perspectives of group work as it these two theoretical perspectives that constitute the bulk of group-work approaches with men who behave abusively to their partners.

Group-Work

Groups for male domestic violence offenders were set in motion in the late 1970's in the United States and in the early 1980's in Canada (Delgaty, 1983) and since have become the most widely agreed upon means of help oriented services for these men. The onset of programs and the much-needed focus on domestic violence issues were a product of grass roots movements from women's advocates and shelters as well as from concerned local men's groups (Gondolf, 1987). Upon realizing that women often return to batterers when leaving the shelters, the notion that work had to be done with the batterers themselves to prevent further abuse became clear.

The renowned preference for group-work with male domestic violence offenders stems from the countless accounts from researchers and practitioners who have found group-work to be the most valuable and effective intervention for men who use abusive behavior in relationships (Poynter, 1989; Sakai, 1991; Bryant, 1994; Bennett & Williams, 2001).

Benefits of the Group

The environment of the group has many advantages that contribute to the success of this modality. Group dynamics and group cohesion create an environment where the men become motivated and committed to the achievement of the group goals and objectives. The context of the group setting provides increased peer feedback thus providing the men with the opportunity to challenge and confront each other's maladaptive cognitions, behaviors and attitudes. "Challenges from other group members themselves have a unique and powerful credibility [in that] those being challenged seem more likely to listen if their group members reinforce the message" (Dixon, 2000, p.12). Group members learn from the positive alternatives to violence that the other men have utilized, and together they can practice and role-play new perspectives and behaviors. The group can also act as a support system for these men. This system of support can enhance sharing, the expression of feelings, validation of changing attitudes, and interpersonal skills (Sakai, 1991). The group also decreases the men's dependence on their partners and it creates an environment that is conducive to learning and practicing nontraditional sex roles (Grusznski & Bankovics, 1990; Bennett & Williams, 2000). Finally, the nature of group-work reduces isolation, resistance, and shame and breaks down the private nature of domestic violence, contributing to an atmosphere where growth and change are possible. By reducing shame, the men become more willing to acknowledge their behaviors and thus have increased courage to alter them (Bryant, 1994).

Limitations of Group Work

With these strengths said, the criticisms and limitations of group-work must also be mentioned. Groups may not be appropriate or effective for specific types of batterers.

For example men with severe personality disorders and severe substance abuse problems should not be involved in the group process. In addition, groups may be inappropriate for those men unable or unmotivated to get involved in the group process. Since a large percentage of the men involved in such groups are mandated to be there this point poses a significant problem. The literature on working with, and challenging, involuntary and resistant clients will thus later be reviewed. Involvement in groups may give women false and unrealistic impressions and expectations of their partner's progression and thus contribute to their further abuse (Holmes, 1990). Dropout is a significant problem in group programs and will thus be discussed in further detail later. Lastly, group programs tend to operate on a "one size fits all philosophy" (Buttell, 2001, p.94). This "philosophy" both ignores the need to look at culturally competent models of intervention and the necessity to match a batterer's specific needs and styles of learning with particular styles and modes of treatment. Consequently, it is important to keep in mind that groups for partner abusers should only be one of many options available for community intervention against violence against women (Edleson, 1995).

Although there are many commonalities and much overlap in the various group programs for partner abusers, they do vary in terms of: group structure, duration and membership; facilitation; how they define success; and theoretical approach.

Group Structure

The structure of domestic violence groups for men falls on a continuum. The continuum ranges from highly structured psychoeducational groups, to structured psychoeducational groups that are combined with process/ therapeutic aspects, to unstructured process -psychodynamic groups, and finally to self-help groups. Most

programs tend to fall closest to the structured psychoeducational groups that integrate process and treatment dimensions. In these structured psychoeducational groups, agendas and manuals are developed and followed and the facilitators are responsible for the group's goals and the means by which the group members interact. According to Toseland & Rivas (2001), a series of studies found structured psychoeducational groups to be a significant means of help for many clients and these structured groups were found to be more effective than groups with less structure. Through structured education, group participants can learn new relevant information, practice new skills and gain knowledge of alternate behaviors and attitudes. The process aspect of the group provides the abusers with the opportunity to internalize and integrate new knowledge, examine their own use of violence and apply it to their own behavior and actions. According to Finn (1985) and Gondolf (1987), some unstructured time is additionally necessary to allow for the expression of feelings, to break down denial and minimization and to create opportunities for peer confrontation and constructive feedback.

Although less prevalent, the use of process psychodynamic groups with men who abuse their partners has been seen as effective with this population and has been gaining popularity in the past few years. According to Browne, Saunders & Staecker (1997), "the process-psychodynamic model assumes that men who batter need to grieve their childhood pains and losses in a safe environment" (p.267). Process oriented groups encourage the expression of emotions, the exploration of childhood experiences, the separation of shame from each man's identity and they provide the flexibility for each of the men's distinctive needs to be met (Browne et al., 1997). According to Saunders (1996), when comparing feminist cognitive behavioral groups with process-

psychodynamic treatment groups for men who batter, the process groups retained a larger percentage of the batterers in treatment, they were more successful with the batterers with dependent personality disorders and finally no differences were found between the two group methods in terms of recidivism. Therefore, although less prevalent, the psychodynamic process group does show promise.

Another less prevalent group structure is the self-help group. This group structure primarily tends to be utilized while waiting for a structured group to commence or once a structured group has terminated. These groups are typically open-ended and run by trained former abusers who are closely supervised by facilitators. According to Eisikovits & Edleson (1989) "the self-help approach is seen as increasing both motivation (through greater member control over group processes) and opportunities to break social isolation (through mutual support)" (p.394). Unfortunately the effectiveness of these self-help groups has rarely been discussed in the literature (Eisikovits & Edleson, 1989). An example of a self-help group is the Alumni group that is run through the Men's Resource Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This group is an open-ended group specifically for men who have either completed the first stage EVOLVE group (a group for men who have behaved abusively towards their partners) or other similar process groups run out of the Men's Resource Centre. This group provides an arena for the participants to provide each other with long-term support and has two male co-facilitators who help guide the process.

The preference for structured, skill-based groups falls in line with the "What Works" literature of effective practice (McGuire & Priestley, 1995). The "What Works" literature resulted as a reaction to the infamous Martinson report and other less discussed

researchers that concluded that nothing works in terms of offender rehabilitation. The “What Works” literature is made up of numerous meta-analyses revealing that positive outcomes, most notably reduced recidivism, have occurred as a result of certain types of rehabilitative interventions. According to Vennard & Hedderman (2000), the greatest reductions in recidivism are seen “where programs are constructed and delivered in accordance with principles of “What Works” (p.115) and thus appropriate programs are those that are guided by the principles of effective practice. The “What Works” literature emphasizes the importance of utilizing structured, skill-based techniques. These structured psychoeducational groups, then meet the “What Works” standard of effective practice.

Group Duration

Duration of programming is another area of variability. Programs range anywhere from ten to thirty-six sessions and much discussion focuses on the length a program needs to be, to be most effective (Edleson, 1995). Two studies have attempted to examine the link between program duration and treatment effectiveness. A study by Edleson & Syers (1990), compared the outcome of an educational approach, a self-help approach and a combined approach at two different intensities (12 sessions and 32 sessions). At a six-month follow-up, the educational group participants were found to most consistently have reduced post-group violence and were significantly less likely to use terroristic threats regardless of the duration of the program. Also regardless of duration the self-help groups were the least successful in ending violence and terroristic threats. In all group structures the shorter intensity groups were viewed as equally effective or even slightly more effective, than the longer-term groups in decreasing

violence and terroristic threats at a six-month follow-up period. Edleson & Syers (1991), confirmed that the “the benefits of the 32-session, more intense formats were not significantly greater than those of the 12-session, less intense treatments” (p.240) in their 18 month follow up study.

In contrast to this, a study by Gondolf (1999b), comparing four batterer intervention systems, found the longest and most comprehensive program to have significantly lower severe and repeated re-assault rates, thus favoring a longer duration and intensity. In addition, Gondolf (2000), in a study that examined how batterer program participants avoid reassault, found that the men in the longer programs (9 months and 5 1/2 month groups in comparison with two groups that were 3 months in duration) changed to a greater extent. Gondolf (2000) stated that “batterer programs...may need to be longer and perhaps more therapeutic to affect underlying resistance” (p.1216).

A growing trend in the United States and more recently in Canada has been the development of standards/guidelines for batterer intervention programs. The purpose of these standards is to attempt to regulate and to bring more treatment uniformity to batterer programs to ensure the safety of abuse victims (Dankwort & Austin, 1999a). According to a review and analysis of the standards for batterer programs in the United States, the minimum duration of intervention ranged from 12 weeks to 52 weeks while “most standards suggested a minimum of 24 to 26 weeks... without however providing a rationale for their length” (Austin & Dankwort, 1999b). Without this rationale and without more empirical support as to which program length is the most effective, the

group program duration verdict still seems to be out. However, with this said, the consensus does seem to favor programs that are at least 12 sessions in length.

Group Membership

Groups for men who abuse their partners also vary in terms of group membership. Group membership can be open versus closed and can be voluntary and/or court mandated. In closed groups, participants begin and end at the same specified time. The structure of the closed membership can help the abusers feel an increased sense of cohesion and trust. Closed membership may reduce intimidation as all the members are new and thus no subgroups have formed. Finally, this structure provides a specific endpoint where members can work towards their goals. In open groups, members are at varying stages in their progression because new members join an already commenced group program. Some of the benefits of open membership groups are that the senior members can help teach new participants what they themselves have already learned and they can both challenge and support the new members in their learning. In addition, the senior members can act as models of accountability, responsibility, and openness in the expression of emotions (Caplan & Thomas, 1995). Moreover, by viewing the new members, the senior members can see the progress that they themselves have already made. According to Bennet & Williams (2001), the majority of batterer programs are in fact closed groups.

A lot of discussion stems around voluntary versus court mandated (non-voluntary) group participants. While court-mandated participants attend programs as a directive of probation or as a diversion from prosecution, voluntary participants tend to be motivated by their partner's threats to leave (Bennet & Williams, 2001) and their fears

of losing their families. The program site, its mandate and who it is financed by are key determinants of who is referred to the program. Although some agencies only accept non-mandated batterers, the majority seems to incorporate both voluntary and court mandated participants.

There seems to be mixed findings in regard to which group of participants are more successful in these programs and which participants are more likely to complete the programs. According to Russell & Jory (1997), "voluntary participation in an intervention program for violent and abusive men may be a necessary prerequisite for achieving lasting behavior change" (p.134). In terms of group completion, a study by Gondolf and Foster (1991) that concentrates on pre-program attrition in batterer programs found that those referred by informal sources (friends, relatives, partner, shelters, etc...) were more likely to attend over 12 counseling sessions than those referred by formal sources (courts, probation, psychologists, professional counselors etc...). According to DeMaris (1989), "those in treatment voluntarily, rather than by institutional referral, have been found to be more likely to complete treatment program (p.143). In contrast to the above findings that support voluntary participation in groups, other findings support mandated participation. A recent study by Gondolf (1997a) found that at a 15-month follow-up period, voluntary offenders had an increased likelihood to re-offend compared to court ordered batterers. Furthermore, in a study by Daly, Power & Gondolf (2001), the non-court ordered batterers were found to attend significantly fewer sessions. Clearly more research in this area is necessary as it can have implications for future work with batterers depending on their referral source. Perhaps the group that is least successful in the programs could receive extra attention aimed at enhancing their success in group.

More importantly perhaps, if in fact court-mandated participants are more successful, the need for increased mandating to programs and overall greater criminal justice involvement in all cases of domestic violence seems essential.

Group Facilitation

The gender of the facilitator also varies between programs. According to Eisikovitz & Edleson (1989), male facilitators lead the majority of groups for batterers. More recently, with the encouragement and pressure from women's advocates and pro-feminists, the move towards male-female co-facilitator teams has gained much support. These teams model equal power dynamics, non-abusive male-female relationships and provide the men with an assertive female role model (Bennet & Williams, 2001). Due to the popular feminist belief that sexism, patriarchy and oppression play a significant role in domestic violence, the use of male-female co-facilitator teams seems necessary to properly address these issues.

Regardless of gender, the common roles of facilitators include maintaining safety within the group setting, modeling tolerance and appropriate relational behavior (Caplan & Thomas, 1995), facilitating a healthy group process, deterring violence and abuse as a means of resolution of conflicts, confronting resistance and negative stereotypes, generating group discussions that challenge maladaptive cognitions and action patterns, providing an atmosphere that is supportive of change and critical thinking and finally ensuring the deterrence of negative male bonding (Bryant, 1994).

How Success is Defined

Group programs also vary in terms of how they define success and thus there has been no agreement as to what can be defined as a program that works. While some

programs view success as the reduction of physical violence or the termination of physical violence, others are more stringent and view success as the termination of both physical violence and psychological abuse or improved marital satisfaction. According to Edleson (1995), the majority of studies look at the degree to which violence has ceased and a much smaller minority seem to measure the degree to which the program also ends threats and other aspects of psychological abuse. An abundance of controversy exists around this subject matter. Pro-feminist critics of present day programs insist that for success to be determined one must look beyond the cessation of violence and threats and look at the cessation of other manipulative behaviors that sustain men's power and control over women (Edleson, 1995). From a practical standpoint it seems peculiar to deem a program successful if the women are still living in an environment of fear. The reason for this limited focus on the cessation of emotional and psychological abuse may have to do with the fact that these forms of abusive behavior are extremely difficult to measure in concrete terms.

In addition to this discrepancy, the individual reporting the reduction or termination of abuse between studies also differs. Batterer self-reports, arrest records and partner contacts, are all varying methods of obtaining results and with each method utilized, different results will likely be obtained. These various approaches further complicate the ability to define success. In essence, the way success is defined will determine the extent to which these programs are deemed effective.

Theoretical Approaches

The most often cited approaches utilized in groups with partner abusers include feminist, cognitive behavioral and the integration of the two (Sakai, 1991; Gondolf,

1997b; Schwartz, & Waldo, 1999; Bennett & Williams, 2001). Explanations, themes, techniques, benefits, limitations and the empirical support of each approach within the realm of the group setting will be discussed and will be followed by exploring how these two approaches can be integrated to become a richer intervention methodology.

Feminist Group Interventions

As mentioned earlier in the theoretical perspectives section of this literature review, the feminist orientation views domestic violence as a sociopolitical problem that maintains men's power and control and keeps women in subordinate roles (Adams, 1989). Inequality, patriarchal norms and society's legitimization of abuse are all central to this orientation. Groups run from this orientation tend to rely on education, skill training and confrontation (Lee, Greene, & Rheinscheld, 1999). Feminist approaches are influenced by social learning theory and view abuse and violence as learned and reinforced by society. Consequently, groups aim to re-educate their members. By utilizing educational groups combined with open discussion, an environment that re-teaches equality and non-traditional gender socialization and challenges men's control over women can be achieved. From a feminist analysis, themes such as gender role socialization, socio-cultural values on women battering (Eisikovitz & Edleson, 1989), sexist expectations and attitudes, consciousness raising, negotiation and fairness, responsibility and accountability, and the various effects of abusive behavior are all emphasized (Adams, 1989). In addition, denial, justification, minimization and stereotypes are all confronted and challenged and an expansion of the definition of abuse is taught so physical abuse doesn't get replaced with other forms of abuse (psychological, economic and isolation). According to Holmes (1990), "an examination of the beliefs

underlying sexist and violent behaviors and the introduction of alternate beliefs, actions and behaviors” (p.14), are central to the group intervention process.

Common feminist techniques utilized in these groups for batterers consist of control logs (records of abusive and controlling behaviors that are utilized to help the batterers develop an awareness of their abusive behaviors), action plans (which look at changes to be made and steps to getting there), role-plays (where batterers act out non-controlling alternatives to abusive incidents) and safety planning (a plan utilized to minimize risk of abuse) (Grusznki & Bankovics, 1990).

Empirical support for feminist approaches

An example of a program utilizing a pro-feminist approach is the Duluth model run out of Minnesota. This program is psychoeducational in nature and is designed to help the batterers change from using behaviors from the programs “power and control wheel” to using behaviors on their “equality wheel”. A study that was done on this pro-feminist program found “significant reductions in physical and psychological abuse occurring during the first 3 months of the program” (Pence & Paymar, 1993) and at a one- year follow-up period the battered women continued to report lower rates of abuse.

Lundy, Davis, Holmes and Urquhart (1996), evaluated a 24 week New Directions Program that assumes a feminist orientation. The results of this study are based on the Abusive and Controlling Behavior Inventory (ACBI), which focuses on emotional, sexual and physical abuse (Lundy et al., 1996). The revised version of this scale was administered to the men and interested women partners (an honorarium was provided for the women partners who participated) on entry to the program, at the termination of group and at a 6-month follow-up of the group. “The ACBI responses of men and their

partners indicated a reduction in abuse at the end of the program, and these changes were maintained six months later” (Lundy et al., 1996, p.168). With this said, it seems imperative to point out the fact that in all cases the women partner’s reports of abusive behavior were greater than that of the men. Therefore, these reports confirm the well known view that men tend to underreport their abusive behaviors. The findings of this study also illustrate a correlation between the amount of abuse at intake with a man’s completion of the program. The partners of the men who did not complete the group program reported greater abuse on the ACBI at pretreatment, post treatment and at follow-up, than did the partners of the men who did continue with the program until termination (Lundy et al., 1996). A limitation of these findings is that the utilization of a revised version of the ACBI scale decreases the reliability and validity of this measure.

The majority of feminist approaches tend to be integrated with cognitive behavioral techniques in the practice setting, and thus further support for its empirical effectiveness will be discussed later.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a model that consists of both cognitive and behavioral techniques. The goal of using cognitive techniques is to reveal and replace negative, irrational thought and behavior patterns with accurate, healthy and productive patterns. The goal of using behavioral techniques is to replace maladaptive behaviors with new, learned, adaptive behaviors (Reiner, 2001). Behavioral techniques are also used to alter maladaptive emotions and cognitions. A major focus of CBT is on the “individual’s” interpretation of events and how she/he acts in response to these interpretations. (Kendal & Panichelli-Mindel, 1995). “Cognitive- behavioral therapy

(CBT) uses performance-based and cognitive interventions to provide changes in thinking, feeling and behavior” (Kendal & Panichelli-Mindel, 1995, p. 107).

There are various approaches to and applications of CBT. Some of these include: Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, developed by Ellis; Cognitive Therapy, developed by Beck; and, Cognitive Behavior Modification, developed by Meichenbaum (Corey, 2001). These approaches are all versions of CBT that have core fundamental attributes that distinguish them as cognitive behavioral therapies. These fundamental attributes include “(1) a collaborative relationship between client and therapist, (2) the premise that psychological distress is largely a function of disturbances in cognitive processes, (3) a focus on changing cognitions to produce desired changes in affect and behavior, and (4) a generally time limited and educational treatment focusing on specific and structured target populations” (Corey, 2001, p.297). Here, it is stressed that the worker and client must work together to recognize cognitive and behavioral patterns that cause problematic functioning. In CBT it is assumed that cognitions affect behaviors and that these cognitions can be altered, resulting in behavioral change.

CBT is considered to be an active and structured therapeutic approach. It is active in the sense that the practitioner takes on the role of an educator, coach or consultant. This role allows the practitioner to assist clients through difficulties and to provide them with both feedback and reinforcement. According to Foreyt & Rathjen (1978), the therapist’s job is to take the role of an educator “ who assesses maladaptive cognitive processes and subsequently arranges learning experiences which alter cognition and in turn, the behavioral-affect patterns with which they correlate” (p.13). CBT is structured in the

sense that its application is systematic, focused, includes prepared activities and assignments, and it attempts to stick to a set out plan.

CBT has received much attention in recent years. At the outset, cognitive behavioral therapies were primarily used with patients suffering from depression, however, since then, the number of populations receiving cognitive behavioral therapies have significantly grown. According to Enright (1997) “this expansion is based on the premise that cognitive and behavioral factors are relevant to all human experience”. This expansion of CBT to other populations has produced an abundance of significant results.

The Application of Cognitive Behavioral Group Interventions

Cognitive behavioral approaches play a major role in group interventions with men who abuse their partners. This approach assumes that batterers have been unsuccessful in obtaining specific cognitive skills or have been taught unsuitable ways of behaving. The goal of using cognitive techniques with partner abusers is to reveal and replace negative, irrational thought and behavior patterns with accurate, healthy and productive patterns. Moreover the goal of using behavioral techniques is to replace maladaptive behaviors with new, learned, adaptive behaviors (Reiner, 2001). As with the pro-feminist approach, cognitive behavioral treatment is based on social learning theory and thus aims to re-educate and re-train these men. Consequently, cognitive behavioral programs tend to be in the form of structured psychoeducational groups that for the most part include some group discussion time. According to Vennard & Hedderman (2000), cognitive behavioral programs “are increasingly seen as offering the best chance of success in reducing reoffending since they address a broad range of needs and problems”(p.105). This preference for cognitive behavioral programs is also assumed by the “What Works”

principle of effective practice that claims that cognitive behavioral programs offer the most promising results in terms of offender rehabilitation (McGuire & Priestly, 1995).

The common themes covered in these cognitive behavioral group programs consist of educating the batterers about the cycle of violence, time-outs, internal and external cues that precede abusive behavior (physical, situational, self-statements and emotional), anger control, assertiveness training, stress reduction (relaxation training), poor impulse control, alternatives to current behavior and conflict resolution skills (Baum et al; 1987; Eisikovitz & Edleson, 1989, Grusznki & Bankovics, 1990). Restructuring and confronting thought patterns including denial, minimization and justification; differentiating between self-defeating statements and self- enhancing statements; and changing negative self-talk (negative self-talk often distorts the batterers perception of their partner's actions and behaviors and thus often precedes abusive behavior), are all examples of cognitive techniques utilized in these men's groups (Saunders, 1989). Modeling appropriate behaviors and attitudes (so the batterers can see first hand different ways they can handle specific situations), behavioral rehearsal (role-playing that allows the batterers to rehearse and practice a previously experienced or expected difficult situation), reinforcement (encourages the maintenance and improvement of skills) and homework exercises (timeouts, anger diaries, individualized relaxation methods, and exercise programs) are all common behavioral techniques utilized in group for domestic abuse (Baum et al; 1987; Eisikovitz & Edleson, 1989, Grusznki & Bankovics, 1990)..

The advantage of cognitive behavioral approaches is that there is a vast amount of empirical research showing that: it is effective with batterer groups; its techniques are concrete and skills based and thus are easy to utilize; it is based on the assumption that

abusive behavior is learned and thus is optimistic that it can be unlearned (batterers can learn to make non-abusive choices); and finally, it shows promise for treating risk factors of abusive behavior (jealousy, self-esteem) (Saunders, 1989).

Empirical support for cognitive behavioral therapy

Saunders & Hanusa (1986) evaluated a pure cognitive-behavioral group treatment approach for the treatment of partner abusers. The study utilized a pre-test / post-test design to evaluate this 20-session group program. The post-test results revealed that the measures of anger, depression, attitudes about women and jealousy displayed significant changes in the right direction after the group treatment approach and thus indicate that cognitive behavioral treatment secures promise for this population group (Saunders & Hanusa, 1986). According to Saunders and Hanusa (1986) “even though changes in abusive behavior were not directly measured, the variables used in this study have been shown to correlate with the presence or frequency of women abuse” (p. 368). In addition, follow-up contacts did reveal a significant decrease in the frequency of violence compared with pre-test measures. 68% of the female partners who remained in contact with their male partners reported that it was in fact the group program that led to the decreases in violence.

Faulkner, Stoltenberg, Cogen, Nolder and Shooter (1992), evaluated two studies utilizing cognitive-behavioral treatment programs for male spouse abusers. “Both programs resulted in significant reductions in both indirect and direct threats of violence and direct and severe violence towards spouses” (Faulkner et al., 1992). The first study highlighted the areas of anger management, communication, assertiveness, problem solving, jealousy, and family of origin history. The results from this study indicated

decreased guilt, increased group conformity and altered attitudes towards love (Faulkner et al., 1992). The second study (which was performed a year after study one, in response to the information provided in study one) highlighted the same issues as the first study, but increased the focus on skill development and decreased the focus on the pure transmission of information. The results from this second study indicated greater reductions in violence and threats of violence compared with the first study. However with this said, the pre-treatment frequencies of these behaviors for clients from this study were less extreme. In addition, the maintenance of these decreased direct threats of violence at a one-year follow-up were not sustained.

Palmer, Brown, & Barrera (1992), evaluated the long-term effects of a ten-week group treatment program for abusive men. Although this psychoeducational group treatment program is not labeled as being from a specific theoretical orientation, it becomes apparent from the topics covered (cues to anger arousal, consequences of violence, responsibility, coping with conflict and anger, self-talk, relaxation techniques, modeling values and reinforcing self-esteem), that this program is based in the cognitive behavioral orientation. This group program was made up of court-mandated clients and a no-treatment control group was utilized as a basis of comparison. The offenders “were assigned to treatment if a new group was to commence within three weeks; otherwise they became part of the control group (Palmer et al., 1992, p. 278). The results indicated a 70% completion rate and a 10% recidivism rate compared to a 31% recidivism rate for those abusers in the control non-treatment group. The recidivism rates were based on police records accumulated at the follow-up period, 12-24 months post-treatment. According to Palmer et al., (1992), the lower recidivism rates for the men who were

mandated to treatment suggests that “a short term treatment program following conviction for wife abuse can reduce abusive behavior in men over the long run” (p.281). This study also noted an interesting finding, that the rates of recidivism were lower for those abusers who initially displayed greater depression (based on the Basic Personality Inventory- BPI). The researchers theorized that these clients at entry to the program were past denial and had begun taking responsibility for their abusive behavior. The authors suggested that this finding could be helpful in understanding and predicting different reactions to treatment (Palmer et al., 1992). A major limitation to this study is the fact that police reports are only a conservative measure of recidivism as much abusive behavior goes unreported.

An Integration of Feminist and Cognitive Behavioral Interventions

The majority of group programs for partner abusers utilize and favor the combination and integration of cognitive behavioral approaches with pro-feminist approaches (Saunders 1996; Gondolf, 1999b, Schwartz & Waldo, 1999; Bennet & Williams, 2001). These programs are typically labeled feminist cognitive behavioral approaches or gender-based cognitive behavioral approaches. The two approaches have some very similar aspects in their application and thus allow them to be easily integrated. In terms of similarities both approaches are based on social learning theory, they both work to re-educate and re-train batterers and they both utilize behavioral techniques to augment the learning process. Furthermore, both approaches typically utilize structured psychoeducational groups while permitting time for group process to develop. By combining the two, the strengths of one approach can supplement the weakness of the other and thus a stronger model can evolve. According to Gerlock (1997), “ programs

using pro-feminist analyses that socially situate the role of gender will have greater success when implementing cognitive behavioral approaches” (p.491). The goal of the integration is to terminate all forms of abuse and to replace power and control dynamics with respect, trust and equality.

Empirical support for group work that integrates feminist and cognitive behavioral approaches

Countless research studies have been done to determine the efficacy of groups for men who abuse their partners. Reviews indicate the termination of physical violence in 60% to 80% of program completers and a significantly less impressive reduction in threats and verbal abuse”(Gondolf, 1997b). Numerous studies have found the integration of feminist and cognitive behavioral approaches to be effective treatments for male partner abusers.

A study by Poynter (1989), utilized a pre-test/post-test design to evaluate a twelve-week group program for male perpetrators of domestic violence. This program utilized both feminist and cognitive behavioral approaches and was evaluated through both self-reports and partner reports. The post-test results showed that the frequency of physical and nonphysical abuse was significantly lower, the amount of conflictual interaction within the family (as reported by the conflict sub-scale: on the family environment scale) was significantly lower, the level of expression of feelings (as reported by the expressiveness sub-scale: on the family environment scale) had significantly increased and the group was also viewed as successful in getting the batterers to re-assess and challenge sex-role expectations and their attitudes towards women (Poynter, 1989). In terms of limitations, this study had no control or comparison

group, had no follow-up period, issues of power and control were not addressed at the post-test stage and it did not look at the reduction of fear in the women partners.

Petrik, Gildersleeve-High, McEllistrem & Subotnik (1994), evaluated the effectiveness of a six-month group program that utilized a pro-feminist orientation (based on Pence and Paymar's power and control wheel, 1992) and cognitive-behavioral techniques. This group program was 24 sessions in length and emphasized shame reduction, abusive behavior as a means of establishing and maintaining power, the use of control logs and action plans and group support for change. The results of this study are based on the Abusive Behavior Inventory (ABI), which focuses on both physical and psychological abuse (Petrik et al., 1994) and was administered to the abusers and their partners prior to group, post group, and at both 6 month and two-year follow-up periods. The ratings on the ABI at post-group indicated that "the abusers who completed this six month program and (whose partners) cooperated in the follow-up research had lower ratings of abuse after treatment, and at six month and two year follow-ups, than before the intervention as rated by both the abusers and their female partners" (Petrik et al., 1999, p.314). Interestingly, no reduction in abusiveness was indicated at post-group for abusers whose partners did not cooperate in the follow-up measures. In fact, the women who did not participate in the follow-up measures rated their partners at post-group as significantly more abusive than the women partners who did participate in the follow-up measures (Petrik et al., 1994). It was suggested by the authors of this study that this relation between greater abuse and lesser cooperation of female partners in follow-up ratings is linked with the women's heightened fear due to the continued abuse imposed on them.

Saunders (1996) utilized random assignment to compare a highly structured feminist cognitive behavioral group with a process psychodynamic group (looked at uncovering childhood trauma and mutual support and abuse in current relationships). The results revealed no significant differences in recidivism, levels of fear experienced by partners, and conflict resolution methods between the two types of treatment (a brief intervention was done at intake [4-6 sessions] with all the batterers and it is a possibility that this intervention could have contributed to the lack of differences between the two groups). What was interesting about the study was that those that scored higher on the hypomanic scale (restless, impulsive, irritable), those having antisocial traits, and those with substance abuse potential all had lower recidivism in the feminist cognitive behavioral group and higher recidivism in the process psychodynamic group. Saunders (1996) believed that these batterers may have needed the structure, skills training, relaxation training and/or the cognitive restructuring of the feminist cognitive behavioral group. Those with dependent personality traits had lower recidivism in the process psychodynamic groups and had higher recidivism in the feminist cognitive behavioral group. Saunders (1996) believed that these batterers probably experienced childhood rejection and at some point developed anxious attachments. Therefore, because the process psychodynamic group looks at childhood traumas and supports its members through these issues it is probably more beneficial to these batterers. This study points to the importance of identifying the particular needs of the batterer and matching them to a suitable mode of treatment. This idea falls in line with the "What Works" literature's responsivity principle that states that "programs work best when there is a systematic

matching between styles of workers and styles of clients” (McGuire & Priestly, 1995, p.15)

Russell and Jory (1997), compared six group programs for batterers (that all utilized feminist and cognitive behavioral techniques) with a comparison group of non-abusive men. This study revealed that “attending the [group] programs resulted in the abusive behavior of the men decreasing to levels similar to those of the men identified as non-abusive” and thus these programs were deemed effective in addressing both physical and psychological abuse. In contrast to most other studies, this study found significantly much larger reductions in psychological abuse than physical abuse. Russell and Jory (1997) attributed this finding to the fact that the batterers, according to a physical subscale of abuse, were found not to be highly abusive at the pre-program stage. Thirty-eight percent of the group participants had just previously attended support groups and thus may have not been physically abusive at the time of entering the program, allowing them more time to work on the psychological aspects of abuse. The self-esteem of the treatment group participants did not differ significantly pre or post treatment from the non-treatment comparison group. Consequently, self-esteem was not deemed to be a significant element in abusive behavior. Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh and Lewis (1996), compared the effectiveness of re-education group programs against traditional penalties (fines, probation and prison) for mandated offenders convicted of violent charges. The results of both criminal justice “sanctions” indicated decreased violence post intervention. However, the men who participated in the re-education programs were found to be more successful at reducing their abusive behaviors. According to a review of this program by Goldman & DuMont (2001), it was found at a 12-month follow-up of

this study that “33% of the men participating in the program had committed violent acts against their partners vs 75% of the men otherwise sanctioned” (p.299). In addition, the women whose partners participated in the re-education group program in comparison with those whose partners who received more traditional penalties reported to be happier, more relaxed, and less anxious then prior to treatment. Moreover, the majority reported decreased experiences of controlling behaviors by their male partners (threats of violence and attempts to restrict) and a increased sense of responsibility was reported to be assumed by their partners (Dobash et al., 1996)

This brief look at efficacy studies with group programs for partner abusers has pointed to the fact that success has been found with this form of intervention (group work) for some batterers and that there is promise for future work in this area.

Regardless of the theoretical approach, group programs and evaluations of these programs must deal with the common concerns of partner contact and program dropout.

Partner Contact

Partner contact plays a significant role in most groups for men who abuse their partners. Partner contact ensures that women are contacted and notified that their partner is responsible for his behavior. According to Adams (1989), Saunders (1996), and Mullender (1996), it is the program’s responsibility to ensure that a safety plan is in place; to provide the women with a realistic understanding of the program and its possible effects; to provide her with resources and referrals for various supports and services (emergency, counseling, groups and legal services); to respect her confidentiality; and finally to notify her if her partner drops out or if there is a safety concern.

A study by Daly, Power, and Gondolf (2001), examined whether women's ratings could be accurate predictors of their partner's attendance in group programs. The majority of women (83%) predicted that their partners would complete the three-month program. Almost half (49%) were wrong. This finding "provides empirical evidence for the idea that women are generally optimistic about men's participation in batterer program services" (Daly et al; 2001, p. 986) and therefore emphasizes the importance of discussing with the partners a realistic picture of their partners' chances of program completion so the women do not have unrealistic expectations of their partners' successful completion.

Partner contact is also utilized to attain partner reports of continuing abuse or the elimination of abusive behaviors. Abusers have been found to report significantly smaller amounts and decreased severities of violence and abuse than their female partners (Baum et al; 1987; Edleson & Gruznski, 1988; Daly et al; 2001). Due to social desirability factors, defensiveness, minimization and the potential that men are unaware of their abusive behavior and its effects on the victim, partner contact is usually deemed as necessary for accurate findings of effectiveness (Poynter, 1989). However, it is important not to make women feel responsible for monitoring their partner's behavior or for helping him through the program. Although partner contact is relevant to ensure a valid assessment of abusiveness, it is important to keep in mind that the female partner's assessment may not be totally accurate either. The partner's fear of retaliation and that her confidentiality won't be kept (Holmes, 1990), shame, minimization and her lack of awareness that psychological abuse, isolation and financial abuse are in fact all forms of abuse can inhibit her reports of continued abuse. A further limitation of partner contact is

the inability to locate them for follow-up interviews. Saunders (1996), stresses the importance of getting friends' and families' phone numbers at the initial interview, paying women incentives, providing shorter questionnaires and assuring confidentiality as means of retaining these women's reports at the follow-up period.

Dropout

Dropout is a significant limitation affecting domestic violence programs. High rates of dropout reveal that these programs are ineffective for large numbers of partner abusers and this problem needs addressing. "The majority of batterer programs experience 40% to 60% dropout within 3 months... and as few as 10% of men referred may actually complete it " (Gondolf, 1997b, p. 89). The effects of dropout are multiple. Often dropouts are not included in program outcome analyses and therefore accuracy is limited and program success is exaggerated. Furthermore, the range of benefits of the program cannot be fully achieved by these participants and they are at greater risk than completers for increased abuse (Daly et al., 2001). Studies have attempted to determine the distinction between those who drop out of group programs and those who continue until termination. Past studies have found program dropouts to be less educated, unemployed, single, childless and younger (Daly et al., 2001; Saunders & Hanusa, 1986). Additional studies have found that those who have lower incomes, arrest records, substance abuse problems, antisocial/ narcissistic traits, and those that have committed more domestic violence acts are more likely to be program dropouts (DeMaris, 1989; Gondolf, 1997a). Gruszinski and Carillo (1988), performed an empirical investigation to discover who completes batterer's groups. Of their many significant findings, three of these findings seem essential to mention. The men who completed the 32-session group

program reported fewer indirect threats of violence, witnessed abuse more often in their family of origin and were less likely to be victims of child abuse (Gruszinski & Carillo, 1988). The researchers theorize that non-completers dropout prior to successfully learning the “additional skills and attitudes that help them to eliminate threats or controlling behavior” (p. 148) and thus implicate that treatment groups must highlight the issues of indirect threats early in the group. In addition, the researchers hypothesize that while abusers who witness abuse as children are motivated to seek treatment to reduce the discrepancy between their abusive behavior and the abuse they witnessed, the men who had been victims of direct child abuse may be more reluctant to accept responsibility and tend to utilize more defense mechanisms to justify their own abusive behavior (Gruszinski & Carrillo, 1988) and hence are more likely to drop out.

Dehart, Kennerly, Burke and Follingstad (1999) contradict some of the above findings in their study of the predictors of attrition in a batterers treatment program by discovering that attrition was “unrelated to demographic, attitudinal and personality variables” (p.19). Instead they found that the program characteristics of “mileage traveled and monitored attendance” (p.30) were predictors of completion. Those participants who traveled longer distances to get to the group setting (reveals increased motivation) and those participants whose attendance was monitored were more likely to remain in the program. A recent study by Daly et al; (2001) found some additional results that contradicted past research in that it did not link program dropout with past criminal record, exposure to violence, intensity of past violent acts and psychiatric symptoms.

Although the distinction between completers and non-completers is not quite clear, progress has been made. More knowledge of these distinctions might help design

or adopt programs that will increase the likelihood that those partner abusers at high risk of dropout will remain in the program or would help match such abusers more appropriately to certain services. Potential program ideas to reduce dropout include: administering risk- needs assessments (to match risk-level with treatment intensity); dual diagnosis programs (for those batterers who also have severe substance abuse problems); pretreatment motivational programs (the implementation of such programs will be further explored later in this literature review); providing high risk abusers with increased services, resources, and mentors; administering consequences for dropout; adjusting treatment programs to meet the needs of its participants (adapting reading materials, discussing social circumstances etc...); reducing waiting time between inquiry and group treatment ; and, increasing the involvement of probation officers for court ordered offenders to help work with obstacles and negative attitudes that limit program involvement (Daley et al., 2001; Gondolf, 1997b; Gondolf & Foster, 1991; Saunders & Hanusa, 1986). Ideally through an “increased completion rate, the violence can be reduced and batterers may more likely change their abusive behavior” (Grusznski & Carillo, 1988; Gondolf, 1997b).

Working with Involuntary Clients

Within the literature the involuntary client has often been described as “resistant”, “hard to reach” and “unmotivated”(Behroozi, 1992a). Working with such a population significantly alters the counseling environment for both the practitioner and the client. Because the involuntary client does not define his own presenting problem; does not control the goals of the intervention; and does not make the willful choice to participate within the group setting, the level of trust he places in the practitioner, and the counseling

environment itself, is lessened (Amundson & Borgen, 2000). The reluctance with which this population is characterized is viewed as stemming from three alternate sources. The first of these sources is the men's perceptions that they have been coerced into change; the second is the men's perceptions that the compulsory changes are irrelevant to meeting their own needs; and the third is the men's cynicism about social work intervention (group-work) and the possibility of change (Behroozi, 1992b). To deal with the involuntary client's reluctance, each of the above sources of reluctance must be addressed. To help eliminate the men's perception of coercion, their feelings and frustrations should be identified and accepted, their reluctance should be explored in terms of its positive and negative aspects and some opportunities for choice making should be made available. Behroozi (1992a) warns practitioners about premature confrontation as it can detour client trust and honesty and thus client reluctance should initially be recognized and accepted rather than confronted. The men's perceptions that the need for change is irrelevant is addressed by starting where the client is; that is, understanding their perceptions of the problem, identifying their needs, respectfully and gently confronting the men and discovering some mutual goals (Behroozi, 1992b). Finally, to deal with the men's cynicism about group-work and the possibility of change, the need for group-work should be thoroughly explained, the role of the facilitator should be differentiated from that of the referral source (probation officer), opportunities for success should be provided and the group experience should be time-limited (Behroozi, 1992b). Group-work tends to be the most accepted form of intervention with involuntary clients. According to Behroozi (1992b), "group experience can reduce involuntary clients' denial, facilitate their acceptance of the existence of their problems, increase their

need for change, and facilitate their development of more acceptable ways of dealing with their problems” (p. 34).

The increased involvement of social workers with involuntary clients has created concern in the ethical world for which social work strives. Self-determination is a significant ethical principal in social work and it is this principle that is challenged by the very nature of the involuntary client’s involvement in the intervention process. “In social work, it is generally accepted that clients’ voluntary participation is essential to successful practice outcomes” (Behroozi, 1992a, p.225). In order to attain long-term gains a desire to be helped seems to be necessary. In terms of group work, numerous studies indicate that mandatory participation in groups has proven to be ineffective and additionally, to have negative consequences for some of its participants (Behroozi, 1992a). The reluctant involuntary client is perceived as viewing entry into a group program as punishment; as an attack on his self-worth; and as a threat to his masculinity and existing worldview (Caplan & Thomas, 1995). The question then becomes what can the practitioner do to reduce reluctance, increase motivation and to ultimately transform the “involuntary” client into a motivated “voluntary” consumer of services? The literature highlights the need for group facilitators to create a safe and trusting environment; to anticipate resistance; to orient the group members to the group process (will be discussed in the subsequent section); to fully inform group members of the nature, goals and procedures of the group experience; to discuss the roles and expectations of members and practitioners; to allow the involuntary client to vent his frustrations; to provide clear limits on confidentiality; and to inform group members about the consequences of noncompliance and the benefits of active participation (Amundson and

Borgen, 2000; Corey & Corey, 1992). Providing group members with a clear structure has additionally been emphasized as an important facet in working with involuntary clients. According to Caplan and Thomas (1995), structure clarifies boundaries, reduces reactance and provides safe parameters for group-work.

Motivational Interviewing

Client motivation is suggested to be a paramount issue in working with involuntary clients. Miller (1985) is a leading researcher in the area of enhancing client motivation for change and has for the most part concentrated his work in this area on involuntary clients with respect to alcoholism treatment. Miller's work in the area of motivation has evolved into a client-centered counseling style that assists clients in exploring and resolving ambivalence and which works to break down initial resistance (Middendorp & De Lima, 2003). This approach to working with clients has been labeled motivational interviewing (Miller and Rollnick, 1991). While the mass of the information being provided here is being pulled from the literature on client motivation in the area of alcohol problems, the pretense, theories, practice techniques, and the general approach used in this model can all be applied and viewed as relevant and applicable to wider audiences, and more specifically to work with male domestic violence offenders. According to Kennerley (1999) "there seems to be ample justification for adapting this model for use with those referred to domestic violence intervention programs" (p.25). Some too may argue that the use of power and control is a form of an addictive behavior and thus this approach can be even more appropriately applied. The strategies used to enhance motivation within the motivational interviewing approach can assist clients to break down the walls of defense, engage in practices that expedite change and can assist

clients in moving from an early stage of change (pre-contemplation) to a later stage of change (action / maintenance). The stages of change will be further explored in the following section.

The fundamental role of the counselor in the context of this approach is to apply the five general principles of motivational interviewing. These principles include: 1) expressing empathy 2) developing discrepancy 3) avoiding argumentation 4) rolling with resistance 5) supporting self-efficacy (Miller 1995).

The expression of empathy requires time allotted for the client to vent his frustrations, an environment where the client feels safe and accepted, the use of reflective listening by the counselor so that the client feels both heard and understood and most importantly the use of a client centered approach. According to Miller (1995), "One of the strongest predictors of therapist success in motivating and treating... clients is empathy" (p.95). The development of discrepancy (the second principle of motivational interviewing) requires the counselor to assist the client in seeing the disparity between their current negative behavior and important personal goals that they wish to achieve. This discrepancy illustrates how their current behavior is in fact threatening both their personal values and objectives. Such discrepancies can be made clear through the exploration of the pros and cons of changing, through the development of personal goals and through an evaluation of what is really important to the client. The avoidance of arguments is key to the motivational interviewing process. Arguing enhances client resistance and creates barriers between the counselor and the client. Confrontation, however, can be utilized within this approach, although, it should be delayed until the client is comfortable within the setting and when some trust has been developed. In

addition, the confrontation method should be soft and gently persuasive (Miller & Rollnick, 1991). In line with this principle is the concept of rolling with resistance. According to Miller (1995), rolling with and exploring resistance assists and supports the client in progressing through it and assists them in resolving their ambivalence, while opposing resistance tends to embed it and make it far more difficult to surpass. The counselor can "take the clients position and supplement it with additional information that may lead the client to develop a new perception of his behavior " (Kennerley, 1999, p.24). The final principle of motivational interviewing guides the counselor to support the client's self-efficacy. To get the unmotivated client on board they need to believe that the change is feasible. This can be accomplished by providing optimism that change is possible, by focusing on client strengths and by inquiring about other changes the client has made in his life and determining with the client how he thinks he has succeeded in those changes.

Although the above-mentioned five principles are the foundation of the motivational interviewing approach other strategies for enhancing client motivation have been identified and put to practice. Emphasizing the client's personal responsibility and allowing the choice to change to be the client's both work to enhance motivation. According to Miller (1995), " a strong and consistent finding in research on motivation is that people are most likely to undertake and persist in action when they perceive that they have personally chosen to do so" (p. 94). The perception of being forced into change enhances defenses, opposition and resistance while the perception of choice seems to contribute to the reduction of both client resistance and dropout. Consistent with this theory is the emphasis on the provision of alternatives (a range of options) for strategies

for change from which the client has the opportunity to choose. This allows the client to be an active member of his own change process. Other important roles of counselors in working to motivate clients is reducing barriers for change (removing practical obstacles), highlighting the possible consequences of his current behavior (jail /breach), and goal setting to assist the clients in determining their own personal goals for change. According to Miller (1995) the "research clearly points to the importance of goal setting in motivation to change" (p. 102) as it is the disparity between the client's goals and his current behavior that enhances the desire for change. Calling, writing letters and the provision of calendars to the clients prior to the onset of the intervention (group) has also been seen as effective means of using motivation as it demonstrates persistence, caring and it can begin the process of removing barriers/obstacles for change (fear, nervousness, hesitation etc...). According to Miller (1995), a study that concentrated its efforts on the effectiveness of the pre-group phone call found that the "group receiving a single personal telephone call during the week after initial consultation returned for treatment 44% of the time, as compared with 8% of those receiving no call (p.101).

Several studies have pointed to the effectiveness of the motivational approach with clients with problems with alcohol. A study by Brown & Miller (1993) compared the difference between clients who received the application of motivational interviewing techniques in the form of the Drinker's Check-Up (DCU) prior to treatment with clients who went straight into treatment. The group therapists that were unaware of this discrepancy, reported that the clients who had received some of the motivational interviewing techniques prior to the onset of group to be "more motivated and involved during treatment" (Miller, 1995, p.103). In addition these same clients showed improved

results 3 months post group. Lincourt, Kuettel and Bombardier (2002), designed a group intervention that was based on the principles of motivational interviewing for those substance abuse clients who could not identify treatment goals. Compared to clients who did not receive the motivational group, "those who attended the motivation group were significantly less likely to meet criteria for substance abuse dependence, they attended a higher proportion of their treatment sessions, and they were more likely to have completed treatment" (p.381). Although such studies and others have resulted in positive results the use of the motivational interviewing approach for domestic abuse offenders is few and far between. One study by Kennerley (1999) was found to have compared the use of a pre-therapy motivational group with an extra session of a psychoeducational group for domestic violence offenders. Although the results from this study were not substantial it did find that the pre-therapy motivational group enhanced client readiness to change and it was suggested that "clients who participated in the motivational group session reported higher levels of satisfaction than clients in the control group" (Kennerley, 1999, p. 71). Overall when looking at the changes the clients made between pre-test and post-test, modest support was found for the motivational group for the domestic violence offenders.

Transtheoretical Model

When working with the involuntary client it is essential that the counselor is familiar with the Transtheoretical model, more commonly known as the Stages of Change. This model of change was introduced by Prochaska and DiClemente and emphasizes the gradual process of making behavioral changes through a sequence of five stages (Miller, 1995). Corresponding to each of the five stages of change are unique

techniques that may assist the client through the progression of that specific stage.

According to Velicer, Prochaska, Fava, Norman & Redding (1998) this theoretical model has been the basis for developing effective interventions to promote health behavior change and has been previously applied to a wide variety of problem behaviors. Some of these behaviors include smoking cessation, exercise, alcohol abuse, weight control, drug abuse, medical compliance, and stress management just to name a few (Velicer, et al., 1998). Although this model has been primarily used for the enhancement of health behavior changes, the processes, goals and techniques can all be applied and viewed as relevant and applicable to work with male domestic violence offenders. This model can assist the domestic abuse counselor in assessing where the offender is at, in terms of his process of change and what corresponding strategies and interventions are appropriate for his current needs.

The first stage of change is precontemplation. Individuals in this stage are not even considering change; they usually don't believe they have a problem or do not want to make changes. These clients may not think that change is possible or desirable and thus tend to only go for treatment if pressured or mandated by others (Middendorp & DeLima, 2003). It is these clients that are often labeled as resistant. "In general, these individuals tend to be defensive about their high-risk behavior and do not want to read, talk or think about it. They evaluate the disadvantages of changing the behavior as greater than the advantages" (Riebe, 1997, p. 61). Effective processes in working with clients in this stage of change include both consciousness raising and social liberation. The goal of consciousness raising is to increase the individuals' information about the problem area and its corresponding effect on them, while the goal of social liberation is to

enhance the individuals' options for behaviors other than the problem one (Middendorp & DeLima, 2003). Ultimately the task here is to increase the client's knowledge of the risk and potential consequences of his current behavior and to replace it with new alternative behaviors.

The second stage of change is contemplation. Individuals in this stage of change can be characterized by ambivalence. These clients can identify some reasons to change and are thinking about changing yet they are not yet committed to the change process and still maintain their reasons to stay the same (Prochaska & Diclemente, 1984). The effective processes of consciousness raising and social liberation mentioned above should be maintained within this stage while at the same time a concentrated effort should be placed on the clients' emotional arousal and self-reevaluation. The goal of emotional arousal is to enhance the individuals experience and expression of feelings regarding their problems, while the goal of self-reevaluation is to assist the client in revising their view of themselves without the problem (Middendorp & DeLima, 2003). The ultimate task here in working with clients in this stage of change is to assist them in resolving their ambivalence by providing information about the problem behavior; evoking reasons to change and emphasizing the risks of not changing; enhancing the clients' emotional involvement and arousal in the change process; and finally by assisting the client in envisioning themselves without the problem.

Individuals who are ready for action and seriously plan to make changes in the immediate future are in the preparation stage of change. This stage is also known as the planning stage as individuals have begun to plan the means by which they will accomplish the desired change, goals have been set and small steps towards change have

perhaps already been taken (Miller, 1995). According to Kennerley (1999) clients in this stage have moved beyond the indecision of the contemplation stage while not solidifying the desired behavior changes. Within this stage, rather than focusing on the problem behavior, a transition can be made to focusing on possible solutions. The intervention within this stage focuses on determining between alternative change strategies and assisting the client in choosing the most relevant and appropriate course of action (Miller, 1995). The change strategy should fit with the client's own personal needs. The effective processes of social liberation, emotional arousal and self-reevaluation mentioned above should all be maintained within this stage while at the same time an emphasis should be placed on the clients' commitment to a particular change strategy and their own belief that change is in fact possible.

Those individuals who have actively started changing their behavior based on the plan developed in the previous stage of change have progressed into the action stage of change. "The client's focus has shifted from intention to action" (Kennerley, 1999, p.23). This stage of change is otherwise recognized as the treatment phase and it is within this phase that the client is pursuing a specific strategy for change. According to Miller (1995), it takes 3-6 months for this stage to be complete. The client within this stage may need assistance and support in carrying out the set out strategies for change by being reminded of the need to substitute problem behaviors with positive alternatives (countering), to reward themselves for their hard work, to avoid stimuli and situations that evoke problem behaviors (environment control) and to seek help and support from their other supports (helping relationships) (Middendorp & DeLima, 2003).

The final stage of change is maintenance. The new behavior has become solidified in this stage and the individual is working to prevent relapse. The client's challenge is to maintain the gains that he has already made (Miller, 1995). The use of rewards, countering, environmental control and helpings relationships should all be maintained when working with individuals in this stage of change. The ultimate focus should be on assisting the client to identify and use strategies to prevent relapse and to learn a variety of maintenance skills (Miller, 1995).

Within this model there is a matching between the client's readiness for change (current stage of change) and the choice of intervening strategy utilized. In addition, there seems to be a match between a client's stage of change and the likelihood of treatment compliance. According to Norcross & Prochaska (2002) clients "who leave soon (after fewer than three sessions) and prematurely (as judged by their therapists) are generally in the precontemplation stage" (p. 2). Within this model there is a final match between the client's stage of change at the beginning of treatment and their success at the end of treatment (Norcross & Prochaska, 2002). Those who start treatment at a latter stage of change are more likely to be successful than those who begin treatment in the earlier stages of change (precontemplation). By being aware of the clients' stages of change and the above mentioned factors the counselor is in a better position to understand their clients' needs and to apply the appropriate treatment interventions strategies.

The Transtheoretical Model makes no assumption about individuals' readiness for change. Rather, the model recognizes that different individuals will be in different stages at different times. Hence, stage- appropriate interventions must be developed for everyone (Velicer et al., 1998). This fact lends this model to working with involuntary

clients who for the most part tend not to be fully ready for change and tend to be in either the precontemplation or contemplation stages of change. The matching within this model of specific intervention strategies with the specific needs of clients, based on their readiness to change has resulted in both very high participation rates and high retention rates (Velicer et al., 1998). These rates are in great contrast to traditional intervention programs that suffer from great problems with dropout rates as a result of a mismatch between the clients' needs and their readiness for change with the form of intervention utilized. According to Kinnerley (1999), "problems with program attrition and lack of participation make these programs [domestic violence intervention programs] an ideal target for stage matched interventions" (p.25).

Pretreatment Motivational Programs (Prep-groups)

The use of pretreatment motivational programs (prep-groups) can be dated back to the late 1960's (Yalom, Houts, Newell & Rand, 1967). However, the majority of the research on preparation groups tends to focus on preparing patients for group psychotherapy (rather than focusing on orientating domestic violence offenders to the group treatment process). While an abundance of the domestic violence literature points to the recommendation of preparation/ orientation of members to group work (Daley et al., 2001; Gondolf, 1997b; Gondolf & Foster, 1991; Saunders & Hanusa, 1986), much less research has explored the use of prep-groups within this population group and even fewer highlight the empirical findings of its effectiveness.

While the majority of the information being provided here is being pulled from the research on psychotherapy groups, the rationale, the contents and the efficacy results of these prep-groups can still be viewed as relevant and applicable to groups with male

partner abusers. According to Piper and Perrault (1989), the majority of prep-groups are one session in length and range from passive/observational participation to active/behavioral group member participation. Pre-group meetings have the benefit of preparing the group members for the group experience, ensuring that all group members are equally oriented to the group process and provide an opportunity to get the members acquainted with one another and with the facilitators. An important role of the facilitator at this initial stage is to demonstrate a non-judgmental, safe environment where the member's feelings, reactions and concerns can be acknowledged and pursued (Toseland & Rivas, 2001). Prep-groups tend to explore the expectations and roles of both the group members and facilitators. They clarify the purpose, goals, rules and objectives of the group; discuss restrictions on confidentiality, advantages of groups, common misconceptions about groups (Corey & Corey, 1992; LeCluyse, 1983; & Meadow, 1988), and consequences of dropout. Furthermore prep-groups clarify the non-negotiable aspects of group (attendance and rules), while at the same time, clarify the clients'/offenders' rights and choices (Toseland & Rivas, 2001). Finally, preparation groups provide an opportunity for client resistance to be explored and for their questions about the group experience to be answered.

According to Corey and Corey (1992), "reviews of the literature are generally favorable concerning the benefits of advance preparation" (p.96) of group members. Moreover, according to LeCluyse (1983), the preparation of group members "is an aspect shown by research to have a positive impact on the efficacy of the group experience (p.170). In a survey of the literature, Piper and Perrault (1989) found that members who participate in preparation groups are more likely to be prepared and motivated for the

group experience, are more knowledgeable about the group itself and the issues covered in the group, and are more likely to have higher attendance rates and decreased dropout rates than those members who do not participate in pre-group preparation. It is also suggested by these authors that pre-treatment groups have few costs associated with them. These researchers encourage such prep-groups for those group programs that experience poor attendance and high dropout rates as these issues do present serious problems and prep-groups do seem to have something to offer in this area (Piper & Perrault, 1989). Members who participate in preparation groups are additionally less likely to be anxious about the group experience, are more likely to be successful (Corey & Corey, 1992) and are more likely to be satisfied with the ensuing group experience (Toseland & Rivas, 2002).

Meadow (1988) empirically tested the significance of the preparation of clients for participation in a treatment group. This research provides evidence that clients who have preparation have more realistic expectations of the group experience and demonstrate a clearer understanding of the group purpose. According to LeCluyse (1983), group members who have been oriented to the group work process have “increased faith in the group, more awareness of appropriate group behaviors and rules and lower levels of anxiety (p.173). Preparation for the group work process reduces client anxiety as it decreases the uncertainty of the group experience.

Although less evident in the research literature, prep-groups for programs dealing specifically with partner abusers do exist and are highly recommended by many researchers studying attrition rates in these group programs (DeHart et al, 1999, DeMaris, 1989; Gondolf, 1997b; and Gondolf & Foster, 1991). Rooney (1992) highlights six

important steps that should be considered in the pre-group preparation of involuntary group members. These steps include: clarifying what is not negotiable, clarifying rights and choices (reduces reactance), preparing for oppositional behavior (leaders can reframe this behavior and emphasize with feelings of pressure), identifying current motivations and goals, identifying positive skills and knowledge that can be learned, and finally, identifying possible role models to bring into the group. According to Bennet and Williams (2001), the majority of batterer programs provide a form of orientation to its members prior to the main program and the orientations seem to vary in duration from a couple of hours to several weeks.

The goals of orientation groups specifically for this population group are “to socialize the batterer to the expectations of the program, increase his motivation to attend and participate, and conduct more in depth assessment” (Bennet & Williams, 2001, p.266). Bennet and Williams (2001) additionally highlight the evidence that group orientation programs reduce attrition rates from partner abuse programs.

Gondolf and Foster (1991) highlight the importance of providing an early orientation session to program inquirers that introduces the men to the “consequences of their battering, the possibility of criminal sanctions, and the requirements of group counseling” (p.347). An early orientation session has the ability of engaging the men while they are responsive. Additionally, it has the ability to reduce the waiting period between program inquiry and group treatment. Gondolf and Foster (1991), therefore conclude that early orientation sessions have the ability to reduce pre-program attrition. According to Corey and Corey (1992), client resistance (which is an enormous problem in groups for mandated domestic abusers), “is often the result of a failure on the leader’s

part to adequately explain what groups are about, how they function and how members can become actively involved” (p.98). Consequently, the prep-group can be utilized as a means of adequately addressing these issues and thus limiting resistance.

Brekke (1989) evaluates how well these orientation groups prepare the abusive men for more intensive group work. In this study, the purpose of the orientation group is to “prepare clients for a highly structured cognitive-behavioral group, to function as a ‘holding tank’ for wait-listed clients, and finally to ‘select out’ inappropriate group members based on actual group experience” (Brekke, 1989, p.78). The orientation group described includes 5 two-hour sessions that includes five overall goals: (1) to develop cohesion (2) to teach the time-out procedure (3) to provide a non-judgmental setting to enhance sharing (4) to educate and challenge the men (5) to introduce group members to program rationale, purpose and treatment model (Brekke, 1989). The results of the men’s self-reports indicated that the orientation groups were “successful in engaging and preparing the men for highly structured group treatment” (Brekke, 1989, p.84). Using a cohesion scale developed specifically for this study, it was discovered that the longer the men remained in the preparation group the more cohesive the group was. It is important to additionally note that only 25% of the men dropped out of the orientation group itself (relatively low for this population group) and 88% of those members attended and completed the 20-week cognitive-behavioral skills group.

Tolman and Bhosley (1990), compared the effectiveness of two separate pre-group preparation structures (4 hourly sessions [one per week] verses an intensive 8 hour orientation workshop) for decreasing attrition from groups for men who abuse their female partners. The weekly pre-group format provided a supportive environment, it

allowed the men to vent their frustrations, it taught some initial techniques for controlling their violence and it allowed the men to set individual goals for themselves (Tolman & Bhosley, 1990). It is important to mention that these weekly sessions had an open membership, were extremely short in duration (one hour) and the facilitators of these pre-groups often differed from the leaders of the core group. The intensive orientation workshop included educational information, behavioral techniques and films. Within this orientation greater focus was placed on member interaction. The results of this study revealed that while not statistically significant group preparation does play a role in engaging men who batter (Tolman & Bhosley, 1990). The intensive workshop format had a significantly greater impact in decreasing the rate of dropout from the core group experience compared with the short weekly sessions. The authors' hypothesized that this finding had to do with extended preparation time, greater knowledge and skill development, and increased member interaction.

As a part of these pretreatment group programs Saunders and Hanusa (1986), and Rooney (1992) highlight the potential for the use of peer mentors/ role models to enhance motivation and illustrate success. Rooney (1992) additionally points to the fact that hard to reach clients (involuntary clients) are more likely to be influenced by their peers than by group facilitators. The EVOLVE program in Winnipeg, Manitoba makes use of peer co-facilitators in their first stage program for men who have behaved abusively towards their partners. These peer co-facilitators have been through the first-stage group themselves and have completed the Peer Mentoring Training Program at Men's Resource Center on how to be an effective and responsible peer counselor.

Recently the Probation Services Family Violence Unit in Winnipeg, Manitoba has also initiated a peer assistants' program. According to Klostemaier- Starkewski (2002), peer mentors are those individuals "who have been there, received treatment and are now in a place where they are motivated to continuously change their behaviors...and are willing to mentor those who are not in that place yet"(p.2). The abusers benefit from the mentor program because they are supported and challenged by men who have shared similar experiences. In addition, the group members have the benefit of having role models who can possibly share some of their success stories. The process to becoming a peer mentor within the family violence unit includes: completing a treatment program (P.A.I.G, first stage treatment at EVOLVE or the closed group at MA MA WI), participating and/or observing in the P.A.I.G program (act as guest speaker), completing the Peer Mentor Training program at the Men's Resource Centre, completing probation or conditional sentence orders and finally co-facilitating a P.A.I.G or PAST program (Klostemaier-Starkewski, 2002).

Summary

This literature review reveals the immense amount of work that has been performed in the area of groups with men who abuse their partners. The overview of the variation of groups in terms of its structure, duration, membership, facilitation, how success is defined and theoretical approach utilized, validates the complexity of "properly" understanding and treating this population group. The concentration on cognitive behavioral and feminist practices in group-work were highlighted because they are recognized and supported practices in this field and are proven to be at least moderately effective with partner abusers. The concerns of partner contact and program

dropout were thoroughly discussed. Finally, the tools for working with and motivating involuntary clients were provided and the use of preparation groups was encouraged. Through this extensive overview, the empirical and theoretical rationale for the necessity of intervention groups for men who abuse their partners becomes apparent.

CHAPTER THREE- THE INTERVENTION

Background Information about Manitoba Corrections

The mandate of Manitoba Corrections is “to contribute to public safety by managing offenders with the appropriate degree of control, supervision and support, and by providing appropriate programs, services and encouragement to assist offenders to deal with those issues which bring them into conflict with the law” (Manitoba Justice Corrections). The values of the Manitoba Corrections team include: respect, accountability, growth and development, recognition and the interdependence of multiple services to achieve a “crime free society” (Manitoba Justice Corrections).

The team at Manitoba Corrections includes probation officers, government staff and contract workers who are all accommodating to students for field placements and practicums. Manitoba Corrections provides a range of services for both adult and youth offenders who are in the community. These services include: intake services, assessment of offender risk and need, case management (supervision, support and counseling), short term group work, intensive group work for high risk offenders and referrals to other community resources. All the services provided by Manitoba corrections are designed for mandated clients and are free of cost.

The Partner Abuse Short Term Program (PAST)

The Partner Abuse Short-Term (PAST) program is the program currently being relied upon by Manitoba probation services for all male partner abusers who have been mandated by the courts to attend domestic violence programming. According to Bacon & Bracken (2002), the PAST group took its present shape in 1992 following the Pedlar

Report which recommended that Manitoba Probation Services integrate an “educational program for men who abuse their partners” (p.12) into their present services. According to Browne (2003), “the PAST program was seen as a response to the increase in numbers of men convicted of domestic violence, many of whom could not be put into the already existing long term domestic violence program” (p.28). This short-term program is considered a first step in looking at abusive behaviors (Simon, 2003), and includes twelve two-hour sessions that is a condition on the domestic violence offender’s probation order (Bacon & Bracken, 2001). This program is a structured educational group that is based in both cognitive behavioral and pro-feminist approaches. The major themes covered in the PAST program include: power and control and its connection to violence, the consequences of using power and control in relationships, the various types of abuse, self-talk and personal beliefs, warning signs, timeouts, cycle of violence, myths and facts about partner abuse, socialization and the impacts of abuse on partners and children (PAST Manual, 1995). The practice methods used throughout the group intend to enhance the likelihood that the group content will be personalized to the individual men's lives. This group experience aims to enable group participants to challenge their own abusive behaviors, learn new healthy behaviors, and provides a setting where relationships can be formed with others who share similar patterns of behavior. The PAST program “employs many of the techniques described in the domestic violence literature and is similar in its focus to a variety of other batterer intervention programs being utilized across North America” (Browne, 2003, p. 29).

With this said the PAST program has been criticized for its short duration (24 hours), its heavy reliance upon the reading and writing skills of the group participants, its

use of outdated statistics and videos (Browne, 2003) and the fact that it has turned into a catch-all program for all domestic violence offenders. Currently the high, medium, and low risk offenders, based on the PRA, are all being mandated to the PAST program. This demand stands in direct contrast with the "What Works" risk principle that maintains that if the program is to be considered appropriate or effective the level of treatment intensity should match the offenders' risk level (McGuire & Priestly, 1995). Thus, according to the risk principle, the PAST program (a non-intensive program) should be reserved for low- medium risk offenders while the high risk offenders should be mandated to such programs as PAIG (Partner Abuse Intensive Group). Due to the lack of resources and programming in the area of domestic violence in Manitoba, the PAST program has unfortunately "unofficially" also become the catch-all program for all domestic violence related offenders regardless of their relationship with the victim. Consequently, individuals whose victims are other than their partner or ex-partner are being mandated to this group. Since the content of the PAST program is specifically related to "partner abuse" the program is not meeting these offenders' specific needs. Other criticisms include the fact that offenders are being sent to the PAST program on multiple occasions and the fact that the program material needs to be better adapted to become culturally appropriate for aboriginal and ethnic minorities.

The 2002 evaluation of the PAST program, conducted by Bacon and Bracken, attests to the positive outcomes that the PAST program has for many of the group members who complete the program. The evaluation found that the men who complete the PAST program are "less likely to re-offend against their partners and the incidence of physical and emotional abuse decreases within 6 months of program completion" (Bacon &

Bracken, 2002, p. 144). Furthermore, those who failed to attend/complete the program had higher re-offense risk scores than those who completed the PAST program. The evaluators recommended the continued use of the PAST program with certain alterations and revisions. Two of the recommended modifications were addressed by the student in her practicum placement, while some of the other modifications are being considered by the PAST revision committee which is presently making adaptations to the PAST program (the student was an active member on this committee).

The recommendation to "consistently provide orientation regarding the PAST program to those referred to the groups in order to enhance their readiness and receptivity to the program information" (Bacon & Bracken, 2002, p.138) was instituted by the student in her practicum placement by developing and implementing a preparation group that was compulsory for all the men mandated to the specific PAST groups that the student facilitated.

The second recommendation that was implemented by the student was the performance of follow-up interviews with the offenders after they had completed the group. Due to certain restrictions that will be later discussed, the follow-up interview took place on the last day of the PAST group. According to Bacon & Bracken (2002), this follow-up with offenders presently only occurs "if there is sufficient time left on the probation order and (if) caseload size permits such intensive work by the probation officer" (p.142). The follow-up service, provided by the student, reduced the burden on probation officers and ultimately ensured that all group members received at least some individual follow-up contact after the termination of the program.

Procedures

The student's practicum consisted of multiple procedures. These procedures included:

1) The student developed the content and structure of the PAST preparation group. This required:

A. Bringing together the ideas and knowledge of probation officers and PAST group facilitators through individual consultations. The student attempted to set up interviews with all the probation officers currently holding cases within the family violence unit at 470 Notre Dame and all of the contract workers currently facilitating the PAST program within the community. Within a 2 month period the student had met with 24 probation officers, 10 contract workers, the PAST revision committee (a committee that is currently working on revising the PAST program and that includes domestic violence workers from across Manitoba and from both the community and institutional settings), both the medium and high risk domestic violence unit teams, the co-facilitator and the peer mentor in order to get their recommendations and feedback regarding the proposed prep-group session. In order to make these consultations worthwhile the student developed informational handouts to be sent out to these individuals and groups prior to the student meeting with them. The purpose of doing this was to provide them with information regarding the purpose/aims of the prep- group session, what the session would likely include, and information regarding who the prep- group is for, its length and when it would likely occur. Individuals were also offered literature regarding the evidence of the effectiveness of preparation groups if so

desired. The ultimate purpose of this handout was to trigger their thinking. After reading this handout, they would hopefully have comments, recommendations and feedback for the student to integrate into the making of the prep-group session. The student specifically questioned the probation officers, contractors and the various committees and teams about their ideas regarding the prep-group session's content (what should be included), format (should it be attached to a specific PAST program or should it be unattached so that only once an offender has attended a prep-group meeting he could be signed up for any PAST program), personnel (should a probation officer be present and or facilitate the prep-group session), length (how long should it be), and methods to motivate and enhance client readiness and receptivity to the program information.

- B. Reviewing the related research on pre-group orientation sessions in order to ensure that the prep-group was amalgamating the content and tools that have been discovered to be advantageous in the literature.
- C. Reviewing the feedback and recommendations from previous PAST group members. A form was developed by Probation Services (via the student) that solicited PAST group members' feedback about the proposed preparation session (appendix A). The questionnaire sought to attain the group members' opinions on whether they believed that they were well prepared for the group experience, whether they thought meeting with a peer mentor prior to group would have been helpful, whether they thought a preparation group meeting before the onset of group would have been beneficial and finally and most importantly what they wished they knew more about before the onset of group. This questionnaire was

given to 6 separate PAST groups. In total, 68 PAST group members filled out the questionnaire. Since the questionnaire was handed out to the men on the last day of their group, only men who completed the PAST group to its entirety had the opportunity to share their opinions and recommendations to be included into the making of the prep-group session.

- D. Attending a prep-group session for the PAST program at Headingly Correctional Centre to observe and determine what could be transferable and appropriate for the community setting.
- E. Observing and participating in 6 PAST groups in the community in order to gain first hand knowledge of what is required in a preparation session, to begin to understand some of this clientele's specific needs and to gain a better understanding of the course content, the group process and to begin to gain the tools and confidence in order to facilitate both the prep-group session and the PAST program for the proposed intervention.
- F. Formalizing a preparation guide (manual) for the pre-group sessions. This required meeting with co-facilitator to make revisions and to ensure that he was comfortable in facilitating the set out material.

2) The student and the experienced co-facilitator implemented the prep-group session on two separate occasions.

- A. The prep-groups were a single session (3 hours) and were compulsory for all the men mandated to these specific PAST programs.
- B. After the implementation of the first prep-group session, the student made adjustments to the manual based on the comments and recommendations from the

co-facilitator, peer mentor, the supervising probation officer (who observed the pre-group session), the group members' participant feedback surveys and the PAST revision committee's assessments.

- 3) The student and the experienced co-facilitator followed through with the group participants by facilitating the PAST program.
 - A. Each of the two prep-group sessions was followed by the presentation of the PAST program.
 - B. The PAST program embodies 12 distinct sessions (2 hours per session) and can be carried out in an array of formats. The two formats used within this practicum placement included:
 - I. Eight, 3-hour sessions, on consecutive Tuesday and Thursdays, from 6:00 to 9:00 PM (with one 15 minute break during the evening).
 - II. Four, 6 hour sessions, from Tuesday through Friday, from 9:00 to 4:00 (with a one hour lunch break and two 15 minute breaks throughout the day)
- 4) Upon completion of the PAST program, the student provided the opportunity for the PAST group members who completed the program in its entirety to meet one-on-one with the facilitators. This met the student's proposed goal of implementing in-person follow-up interviews. This follow-up session transpired on the last day of the PAST program and provided the group members with an opportunity to hear their evaluations, see what was going to their assigned probation officers, debrief their experience in group, review their personal plans for nonviolence and assess their stage of change in comparison to that which they assessed during the prep-group session. The follow-up interview additionally allowed for lingering questions and

concerns to be addressed and for community resources that were specifically applicable to their current needs and desires to be reviewed.

- 5) The student participated in the revisions of the current PAST program by sitting on the PAST Revision Committee 2002-2003.

- A. The material developed for the prep-group session will for the most part be amalgamated into the new PAST program.

Clients

This practicum solely focused on adult male domestic violence offenders who had been charged and convicted under the Criminal Code of Canada and who had been mandated by the courts to attend, participate in and complete domestic violence programming as a condition of their probation order. Within the province of Manitoba this domestic violence programming takes the form of the PAST program. This client population includes offenders from all three risk levels (low [5 & Lower], medium [6 to 11] and high [12 & Higher]) based on the Primary Risk Assessment (PRA) and they ranged from first time offenders to those with multiple charges. While the entire client population experienced the preparation group for the first time, some of the offenders have been through parts of or even the entire PAST program before. Clients deemed inappropriate for the PAST program include those with serious mental health issues and those with serious alcohol/drug addictions that have proven to hinder their productivity and interaction with others. These considerations are well supported by the literature on group work with domestic violence offenders. Due to the high numbers of domestic violence charges and the elevated rate of attrition, the first PAST group that the student

facilitated had 19 offenders referred to it, while the second PAST group had 24 men referred to it.

Setting

The implementation of this practicum took place within the Family Violence unit at the Community & Youth Corrections, Adult Probation Unit on 470 Notre Dame. The group room was accessible from the street, thus preventing the men from having to go into the probation unit during the program. This large group room had plenty of space for everyone to sit comfortably and for small group exercises to be utilized. Chairs were set up in a semi-circle, with the facilitators and the peer mentor at the front. The use of a semi-circle rather than rows and the exclusion of desks reduced the boundaries/obstacles that tend to separate the facilitators from the group members. This set-up eliminated the classroom setting and contributed to feelings of comfort and trust thus enabling enhanced participation. Within the second group, there was a student who observed the group process and she sat amongst the group members. Within this setting, there were flip charts and audio-visual equipment to enhance the presentations. In addition, each of the men was provided with a personal folder to keep his handouts and some of his written assignments. Coffee was available throughout each session and the student brought snacks on almost every day of the program in order to enhance motivation and trust and ultimately to assist the group members to feel more comfortable within the group setting. This group setting also has a washroom close by, a fridge where their food could be stored for the day and grocery stores and restaurants nearby where the group members could go for lunch. Both sets of prep- groups and their corresponding PAST programs took place within the confines of this group room. Having the prep-groups in the same

location as the PAST groups allowed the men to become familiar and comfortable within the group setting.

Personnel

Both of the prep-groups and the PAST programs were co-facilitated by the student, Lauren Hershfield, and an experienced male independent contractor by the name of Ken McCorkle. The benefits of having both a male and a female facilitator are discussed and supported in the literature review. In order to continue with the goals set out in the prep-group sessions - that is, to enhance safety and comfort, decrease anxiety and encourage the receptivity of the program ideals - it was important that each PAST group utilize the same facilitators as those used in the prep-group session. Moreover, in order for facilitation not to be a (between-group) factor when evaluating the effectiveness of the initiation of the prep-group session, the same facilitators for both sets of groups (both prep groups and PAST programs) were utilized. McCorkle has facilitated the PAST program since 1999 and has extensive counseling experience through his prior private counseling practice. The student's previous experiences that proved to be beneficial to the practicum experience included: working with immigrant women who have experienced domestic violence (Immigrant Women's Association), co-facilitating an intensive solution focused group program for medium risk youth on probation (Community and Youth Corrections), working as a crisis counselor (Klinic) and co-facilitating a non-mandated group for men who have behaved abusively towards their partners (EVOLVE). Neither of the group facilitators works for Probation Services as a Probation Officer thus making the group environment less threatening for the group members.

A peer mentor was also involved in both of the prep-group sessions. The advantages of involving a peer mentor have been discussed and supported in the literature review. These reviews highlight the potential of the peer mentor to enhance client motivation and to be a good model of success. The peer mentor had previously been on probation and mandated to the PAST program and since then on his own accord has participated in the PAIG (Partner Abuse Intensive Group) program, delivered through probation services; both the first stage and second stage domestic violence programs, run through EVOLVE; the peer mentor training, conducted by Men's Resource Centre; and just recently has acted as a peer mentor for the PAIG group administered within the community. Within the first of the two PAST groups that the student facilitated as part of her practicum experience, the peer mentor took a much more active role by attending 2 additional sessions.

Within the second group of the student's practicum experience, an honors criminology student, performing a student placement within the intake unit of Community Corrections, joined the group. She acted mostly as an observer of the group process but assisted with both individual and small group exercises and provided the men with support and encouragement.

Duration

In terms of duration, the prep-groups were 3 hours in length and each were followed up by a 24 hour PAST program. The first PAST group, including the prep-group session was 9 sessions in length and spanned over a 5 week period (Tuesdays and Thursdays for 3 hours). The second group on the other hand, with the inclusion of the

prep-group session was 5 sessions in length and spanned over a 1-week period (Monday through Friday, 3 hours on Monday and 6 hours every other day).

Supervision

Phil Simon, Associate Area Director of the Family Violence Unit, Denis Bracken, professor at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, and Ken McCorkle, the experienced co-facilitator of the program provided clinical supervision from a social work perspective to enhance the student's learning experience.

Recording

Implementation of Procedures

Numerous tools were utilized within the intervention process to assist the student in carrying out her role as the facilitator and to aid her in monitoring and evaluating her clinical experience of developing a preparation group and co-facilitating the PAST program.

1. Available to the student was a comprehensive facilitator's manual for the PAST program. This manual acted as both a guide and reference to the student, assisting her in the facilitation of the 12 sessions of the program.
2. The student met with the co-facilitator of the two groups both before and after each group session. The pre-group meeting was designed to prepare for the session, get the group room organized, organize the handouts, discuss possible challenges that may arise within the session, and clarify any concerns related to the course content. The post-group meeting provided the opportunity to debrief the group session in terms of group participation and group functioning. Observations of how the prep-group seemed to have influenced the dynamics of the group, the challenges and/or

concerns within the group and the feedback on the student's work as a facilitator were all thoroughly explored. Finally, within the post-group meeting, the facilitators decided who would facilitate which of the next group's sessions.

3. The student recorded session notes for each group session (appendix B). Prior to group, the student recorded the session goals. Following the group session, the goals were reviewed in terms of how well the student believed the session goals were met, what went well, and what could have been improved. In addition, space was provided on this form for the student to record questions and concerns (that she had for her supervisor) and for the next session's plans to be noted. This form ensured that the student was aware of the session goals and that the objectives of the sessions were met. As part of these session notes the student attempted to keep track (through observation) of how well the group adjusted to, and participated in, the prep-groups and the PAST programs. By observation only, the student attempted to see how well the preparation session contributed to the group members' adjustment in the PAST group (what, if any, impacts did the preparation group have on the men's participation in the PAST group). The purpose of this observation was not to assess the group participants' processes of change, but rather, to reflect how well the student developed and co-delivered the program and to analyze whether the preparation group had an impact on the group members' experience of the PAST program.
4. The student maintained a log throughout the practicum experience. This log was a means of recording her new learning experiences and education gained on a weekly basis.

5. The student met with the Associate Area Director responsible for domestic violence group programming in Manitoba periodically to keep him updated on the development and implementation of the new prep-group program and to clarify any questions and/or concerns that she was struggling with.
6. Upon completion of the program, the men had the opportunity to record their opinions of the PAST program through the use of the participant evaluation developed by Manitoba probation services (appendix C).
7. The student engaged in a self-evaluation of the group process and her participation in it. This evaluation was based on Northern and Kurland's (2001) group work evaluation (appendix D).
8. The student received both verbal and written feedback from the group participants, the co-facilitator, the peer mentor and any observers of the prep-group session. The student developed a brief participant feedback survey. The purpose of this form was to attain the group members' feedback on the prep-group program and to see the ways in which it influenced the rest of their experience in the group. This form was a means of allowing the student to evaluate her own practice. Within the first group, this form was distributed to the group participants post PAST group as part of the PAST evaluation (appendix E). Within the second group this form was split up. Part of the survey was distributed immediately after the prep-group session (part a) while the remaining aspects were left for the last day of the PAST program (part b). This divided survey can be viewed in appendix F. The discrepancy between the means of handing out this survey will be discussed in a later section of this report. The student also developed an informal evaluation of the preparation group for the co-facilitator,

the peer mentor and the supervising probation officers (who observed the prep-group sessions), to fill out (appendix G). This evaluation provided the student with insights into the prep-group session and will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

Progress of Clients

The student's focus within this practicum placement was to monitor and evaluate her development and implementation of the preparation session, observe the potential impact it had on group members' experience of the PAST program and to assess her progress in the facilitation of the PAST program. Secondary to the student's self-evaluation was the participants' progress made throughout the group. To meet the standards of Manitoba Probation Services the group participants' progress was evaluated based on their:

- (a) Attendance: Within the context of the PAST program, completion requires full attendance and consequently if participants are late or miss a session they are terminated from the group experience and their evaluation will read incomplete.
- (b) Participation: The group participants' level of participation was assessed based on their involvement in the group setting.
- (c) Attitudes: The co-facilitators evaluated the group members' attitudes based on their willingness to participate, comments made, and on the energy and effort they put into the group and its process.
- (d) Homework and written assignments: Throughout the program the group participants were asked to complete worksheets, fill out true and false questionnaires and to practice certain techniques outside of the group setting. The intention of these assignments was to personalize the group information to each of the group members'

personal stories and to allow the information being learned in group to be generalized into their outside lives. This process also allowed the facilitators to assess the clients' understanding of the course material; to determine whether the participants were committed to the change process; to see if the participants were taking any responsibility for their past actions; and to ensure that they were applying the course material to their own specific situations.

- (e) Personal plans for non-violence (warning signs and timeout plans): The group participants' personal plans for non-violence were evaluated based on whether they reflected a good understanding of what was learned in group and whether a genuine effort was put forth. The individual's literacy and level of comprehension were kept in mind within this process.
- (f) Willingness to accept accountability and responsibility for their past actions: This 'willingness', for the most part became evident through comments made by group members throughout the group process. With this said, since this program is purely educational and not therapeutically based, and since it is in fact not an expected outcome of this program that group members will assume responsibility, it often became difficult to assess whether the individual had accepted responsibility for his actions.
- (g) Pre and post group scores: The group members were given the same true and false quiz both at the onset of the group and at termination. The purpose of this quiz was to determine whether the group members' knowledge regarding domestic abuse was enhanced as a result of the program.

The overall progress of each group member, post group, was passed on to his corresponding probation officer.

CHAPTER 4 - STUDENT REFLECTIONS

This chapter concentrates on the student's reflections on the development and implementation of the prep-group sessions, the observed impact of the prep-group sessions on the men's experience of the corresponding PAST programs, some of the key objectives of the 12 sessions in the PAST program and the use of the one-on-one follow up interviews at the end of the PAST program. Throughout this reflection, aspects from the literature review such as feminist and cognitive behavioral interventions, motivational interviewing and the Transtheoretical Model will all be drawn upon.

The Development of the Prep-Group Session

As outlined in the procedures section of this report, the development of the prep-group session involved:

1. A comprehensive review of the literature.
2. The incorporation of ideas and recommendations from probation officers, contract workers, the PAST revision committee, both the medium and high-risk domestic violence unit teams and past group members.
3. The student's direct observation of 6 PAST groups within the community and 1 pre-group session already occurring within the institution (Headingley).

Throughout these meetings, the student became aware of some common themes and concerns that these individuals and groups strongly held in regard to the prep-group program.

Student Consultations

A primary theme throughout the student's consultations was whether there was indeed a need for a prep-group session. The majority of those interviewed held an

optimistic view of the proposed prep-group session seeing the advantages that the group setting could offer and the important goals of trust, safety, comfort, familiarity and motivation that could only be achieved within the context of a group setting. However, despite the finding found in the Bacon & Bracken report (2002), that the group participants are not being consistently oriented to the PAST program, there was some resistance particularly by probation officers to have this preparation/ orientation implemented in a group format. Many thought that this job of preparation should be left in the hands of the individual probation officers as they perceived that they were already providing this service and the group session would thus likely be repetitious. In addition, many felt that it would be difficult to get the offenders to this extra session as difficulty was experienced completing the 24 hour PAST program itself. Moreover, many felt uncomfortable having to breach their clients for a lack of attendance to a pre-group session and others felt this was an impossible task in rural Manitoba. The probation officers that held these views were much more comfortable with the idea of the student providing everyone with preparation information that could be utilized with their clients prior to their entry into a group. This information, they felt, would provide consistency in orientation by ensuring that each group member was being prepared and oriented on the same topics and issues. The student found this initial resistance puzzling since this prep-group was just proposed as a pilot project and would not require their direct assistance. Despite the initial resistance, all of the individuals and groups that the student consulted encouraged the student's project and seemed to be interested in the student's observations, feedback and recommendations in regards to the outcome of the group preparation session.

The format of the ensuing prep-group session was also a common theme of debate within the various student consultations. The debate transpired over whether the prep-group session should stand on its own (unattached to a specific PAST group) and be primarily a prerequisite for entry into a PAST group or if it should be attached to a specific PAST program. The idea behind the unattached version of this prep-group was that it could be offered to group participants on a few occasions each month. Only once the offenders had attended a prep-group session could they be assigned to a PAST group. Those in favor of the prep-group being unattached to a specific PAST program expressed that they felt the prep-group could be used as a screening process. If participants did not show up to the prep-group session it would reveal that they were not yet ready for the PAST program and thus the probation officer should not waste one of his/her limited spots on the group list with these particular clients. Similarly, the prep-group could identify the clients' level of motivation and thus PAST groups could be divided based on motivation level and hence could be delivered differently to better meet the needs of the varying motivation levels. Proponents of this format thought it would enhance the flexibility of the program, ensure client readiness and would ultimately decrease the rate of dropout from the PAST program (the less motivated clients could be weaned out).

It was the student's belief that the concept of an unattached prep-group session neglected some of the key benefits of a prep-group program. A prep-group session that is attached to a specific PAST program provides the opportunity for trust, rapport and safety within the confines of the group setting to be established. These factors could not be established in the unattached format as both the group members and the group facilitators would be different within a subsequent PAST program. The attached prep-group session

on the other hand, could be perceived as primarily an additional session, not a program on its own, as both the facilitators and the group participants are the same. Within this format, the group members have an opportunity to become acquainted with the other group members and the group facilitators thus allowing for some continuity and familiarity for the onset of group. A concern regarding this attached format is the fact that it does not address the problem within Manitoba Corrections and within all groups for involuntary clients of pre-program attrition. Getting the offenders to this prep-group session would be just as difficult as getting them to the first day of the PAST program. To address this concern it was suggested by both probation officers and contract workers during the consultations that the group could be overbooked for the prep-group session to ensure high numbers of group members at the onset of the PAST program. Another suggestion, consistent with the student's own personal views, was that there should be two prep-groups for every PAST program (the group members could be given a choice of which of the two prep-group sessions he would attend). The latter idea enhances both choices and flexibility, providing the group members with an enhanced opportunity to complete the PAST program.

Through much consultation and deliberation with the Associate Area Director it was decided that for this pilot project, attaching the prep-group session to a particular PAST program was the most feasible solution. This format required less administrative work (only have to sign the men up to one program), less lag time between preparation and group and it met the important goals of providing consistency and initiating the development of trust and rapport. To the student's dismay, due to budget concerns and due to the concern that if a choice was provided the majority of the men could attend one

of the prep-groups (leaving the other one with very few members) only one prep-group was offered for each PAST program thus limiting the opportunity for flexibility and neglecting the issue of preventing pre-program dropout. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the existing format of this prep-session requires a review in order to better meet the recommendations of the individuals working in the arena and to better address the severe problem of pre-program attrition.

Many other common themes to be covered in the session were discussed with the above-mentioned social service workers such as: the ideal facilitator for the prep-group session- its duration, its purpose, its content and the proposed concept of involving a peer mentor. In terms of group facilitation there was a large diversion of opinions when it came to the student's decision to choose between probation officers or contract workers to deliver and facilitate the prep-group session (currently within Manitoba probation, Winnipeg offices, the PAST program is facilitated by contract workers only). Some probation officers and contract workers thought it was extremely important for a probation officer to be the predominant facilitator of the prep-group session. These individuals deemed probation officers to be in a greater position of power and authority, to be in a better position to inform the group of the consequences of non-compliance and more capable of answering the group members' questions regarding charges, corrections policies and the legal system.

In contrast to this opinion others felt that the presence of the probation officer was not necessary within the context of the prep-group session and some expressed that their presence could in fact hinder the relaxed and safe environment that the student was hoping to attain. These individuals/groups stressed the fact that the contract workers

provide a sense of continuity, safety and trust as it is they who will be facilitating the corresponding PAST program. In addition, it was noted that the contract workers should have weight/authority behind them, that the group members have the ability to call their individual probation officers within the realm of the group if they do have questions or concerns and that probation officers prior to the onset of group should have already discussed with their clients the ramifications for non-compliance as each probation officer, to some degree, seems to be using their own discretion.

Once again, after deliberation with the Associate Area Director and the co-facilitator it was agreed that a probation officer would be present throughout the prep-group session for the purpose of answering any questions/concerns that the facilitators were not comfortable in answering, however, otherwise he/she would sit at the back and act primarily as an observer of the group process. It was anticipated by the student that this observer role would not hinder the relaxed and comfortable environment that she was hoping to achieve.

Regarding the duration of the prep-group session, suggestions ranged from 1 hour in length to an entire day long session (6 hours). The student took into consideration the varying suggestions and determined that the prep-group session should be 3 hours in length. This amount of time was deemed necessary in order to attempt to cover the enormous amount of topics that were recommended for the prep-group session and it was hopefully still short enough to hold the group members' attention and motivate them to return to the following group sessions. This time span also seemed to fit nicely within the existing PAST program format as the PAST group runs in either 3 or 6-hour increments. Thus, within those programs that run for 8 sessions (3 hours each), the prep-

group would just be one additional session. For those other programs that run for 4 sessions (6 hours each), the 3-hour prep-group session would be a good way to ease into the program. To enhance consistency and to ensure that the group members could attend the prep-group session it was ensured that the day and time of the prep-group session was consistent with the day and times of the corresponding PAST program.

The majority of those consulted felt that the time spent within the prep-group session should attempt to reduce resistance by capturing and motivating the group members. With this said, very few suggested any concrete means of motivating involuntary group members. Others felt that the focus of the prep-group session should be on orienting and preparing the group members to the group process and thus thought the focus should be more on rules, procedures and what the group members could expect from the remaining group sessions. Because both objectives seemed necessary and relevant within the context of a prep-group session, the student attempted to combine them.

All the individuals who were consulted supported the concept of involving a peer mentor in the prep-group process. It became evident that the role of the peer mentor, that is his sharing of his past experience on probation and being mandated to go to group, his highlighting of his current life situation and his supporting the group members' current frustrations, could all in fact be powerful means of motivating the group and a unique means of breaking down initial resistance. As with the student, many of those who were consulted felt that it should be ensured that the chosen peer mentor was trained, experienced and was comparable to the group members in terms of lifestyle and past experience. As mentioned earlier, the chosen peer mentor had previously been on

probation for two years, had been mandated to both the PAST and PAIG programs, attended EVOLVE' s first and second stage programming and went through peer mentor training at the Men's Resource Centre. This peer mentor seemed to be an ideal model of change and success for the group members. With the support of these consultations the student felt comfortable in confirming the peer mentor's presence for the prep-group sessions. The student ensured that the peer mentor was able to attend both prep-group sessions and that he was comfortable sharing some of his experiences with the group members and was supportive of the men asking questions of him.

Much of the time within the consultations was spent discussing the potential topics to be included in the prep-group sessions. It became evident to the student that there was much overlap of the individuals' and group's ideas and that there was definitely no shortage of ideas. The most common recommendations of themes to be covered within the context of the prep-group session included:

- Introducing the group members to each other, the facilitators and to the topics and format of the PAST program.
- Explaining the purpose, rationale, philosophy, limitations and rules of the PAST program.
- Reviewing the consequences of non-compliance (both personal and legal), the expectations of participation and the importance of taking responsibility for their own actions.
- Discussing the group members' options and choices, the reason why a group setting is utilized and the facilitators' roles, goals and expectations.

- Brainstorming for their own group rules, qualities of a healthy relationship in comparison to that of unhealthy relationships, costs of using violence (power and control) in relationships and the benefits of attending group sessions.
- Allowing the group members to vent their frustrations and to share with the group their goals and expectations of the program.
- Dispelling the common myths about group-work and the PAST group more specifically.
- Informing the group of the statistics of the PAST group programs.
- Teaching the group about the use of defense mechanisms, the different forms of abuse and the various 'stages of change' (Transtheoretical Model).
- Informing the group members of the standards upon which they will be evaluated on and what exactly will be shared with their individual probation officers.
- Talking to the group members about zero tolerance. Since this is an area that brings up much resistance and anger, the necessity to diffuse this subject at the onset of the group was stressed.
- Utilizing small group exercises and an icebreaker of some sort in order to loosen inhibitions and to create a more relaxed environment.

Unfortunately, the student did not get as much as she hoped from the past group members' "participant questionnaires" (appendix A). As mentioned earlier this questionnaire was given to 6 separate PAST groups (68 PAST group members) prior to the development of the proposed prep-group in order to attain the group members' opinions on whether they believed that they were well prepared for the group experience, whether they thought meeting with a peer mentor prior to group would have been helpful,

whether they thought a preparation group meeting before the onset of group would have been beneficial and finally and most importantly what they wished they knew more about before the onset of group. In hindsight, the questions provided on the questionnaire may have been too abstract for many of the group members and some of the questions proved not to be that relevant or helpful for the purpose of developing the prep-group session. A group discussion primarily on what the group members wished they had known about group before its onset would have been much more profitable. Their feedback could then have been more easily integrated into the development of the prep-group sessions.

The Objectives of the Prep-Group

Based on the pre-group preparation literature and the above mentioned consultations the student developed specific objectives that the prep-group strived to achieve. The objectives of the prep-group were to:

- Enhance client readiness and receptivity to the program information
- Ensure that all group members are equally oriented to the group process
- Increase motivation for change
- Enhance feelings of safety and comfort within the group setting
- Decrease anxiety
- Prepare the men for the larger group setting
- Provide an opportunity for the group members to get acquainted with one another and with the facilitators
- Attempt to decrease the rate of dropout within the PAST program.

The student also wished to integrate the suggestions of the Transtheoretical Model and the concepts and skills of motivational interviewing in order to better meet the needs of the mandated client. The student predicted that many of the mandated clients on entry into the prep-group session would be either in the precontemplative or contemplative 'stages of change' described by the Transtheoretical Model of change (discussed in chapter two, p.45) and thus, although not necessarily ready for action (change), they may benefit from material designed to increase their knowledge and awareness of the risk and potential consequences of their current behavior (consciousness raising) and may require assistance in resolving their ambivalence (Kennerley, 1999). The prep-group session along with the rest of the PAST program was designed to: a) raise the group members' awareness of the impacts of their abusive behaviors b) increase the group members' knowledge and awareness of the possibility of change. It was the student's belief that if the pre-group preparation was effective it might encourage the group members to become less resistant and to be more open to the PAST program and the possibility of change.

Based on the student's consultations, the feedback provided by past group members, the research in the pre-group training literature and with the aim of meeting the above-mentioned objectives of the prep-group session the student developed a manual for the prep-group session. This manual was later adapted for the second implementation of the prep-group program based on the feedback from the peer mentor, the co-facilitator, the supervising probation officer, the PAST revision committee and the PAST group members who experienced the implementation of the prep-group session and its corresponding PAST program. The changes made for the second implementation of the

prep-group session will be noted following this description of the contents of prep-group manual and its implementation within the initial prep-group session.

The Prep-Group Manual

Outlined below is a brief summary of the topics of the manual from the initial prep-group session. Following each heading the student will reflect on the purpose and/or aims of including that particular section in the prep-group session.

➤ **An Introduction and Welcome to the PAST program**

----- Have the facilitators and the peer mentor introduce themselves, share some personal information about themselves and share with the group some of their relevant experiences

----- Encourage the group members to introduce themselves and either say one thing about themselves or how they are currently feeling

Purpose = These tasks begin the process of preparing the group members for the unfamiliar and potentially threatening group experience and are means of developing trust and rapport.

➤ **Inform the group members what PAST stands for**

Purpose = to clarify who this group is for and to dispel some of the group members' possible beliefs that they should not be there as they were not physically violent and thus group would not be relevant to their specific needs. To avoid such resistance, the facilitators, when defining PAST, should briefly explain to the group members that there are various forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial etc and therefore the course material will still be relevant to each group member's individual needs.

➤ **Describe the purpose of PAST**

Purpose= Often in groups, members fear having to disclose personal information about themselves. Explaining to the group members that the purpose of the PAST program is to learn new skills and information and that it is primarily educational in nature should decrease anxiety and create a less threatening environment.

➤ **Explain why a group setting is used**

Purpose = to help deal with any cynicism about group-work (Behroozi, 1992b). Within this section the facilitators explain that a group setting provides participants opportunities to learn, draw support and receive feedback from each other and helps reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness by recognizing that others have shared similar experiences, feelings and frustrations.

➤ **Explain the roles of the facilitators and the peer mentor**

Purpose = to continue with the theme of establishing trust and rapport and to meet one of the aims of the program; that is, enhancing feelings of safety and comfort within the group setting. To enhance this safety and comfort it is vital that the facilitator's roles be differentiated from that of probation officers (less threatening). In addition the student needs to discuss in detail with the group members her role as both facilitator and student in order to receive their written consent for her final report.

➤ **An introduction to the topics being covered in the 12 sessions of the PAST**

program and a description of the range of formats that the group will include

Purpose = a means of socializing the men into the group and ultimately preparing the men for the larger group setting. To reduce any anxieties over literacy issues the men should be reassured that during written work there will always be a facilitator in the back

room to help out with the assignments as many of the questions are not written well and thus are confusing to answer. The facilitators should inform the group members that they will be evaluated at the end of the group program and they too will have an opportunity to evaluate the program and its facilitation. Providing the group members with this clear structure should work to reduce resistance and provide safe parameters for group work (Caplan & Thomas, 19995).

➤ **Dispel Myths (Misconceptions about group)**

Purpose = to once again meet the aim of the prep-group program of reducing anxiety.

Some of the myths that should be dispelled include: that women never have to go to these groups, that the members will have to bare their soles in this group, that this group is an attack on their masculinity and that this group is for bad people. The group members should additionally be asked if there are any unanswered questions they might have concerning group. This aspect of the prep-group session is ultimately set out to alleviate unrealistic fears.

➤ **Provide statistics about PAST program**

Purpose = The presented statistics provide the group members with a description of the amount of PAST groups that run each year, who groups are run for, and evidence that past group members have been satisfied with the program (based on the 2002 PAST evaluation consumer satisfaction scale performed by Bacon & Bracken). The student deemed this empirical evidence as relevant as it reveals to the group participants that they are not alone; that the program has been seen as effective; and that past group members enjoyed the program. Access to this information would ideally motivate the group

members to remain committed to the group, thus meeting the program aims of increasing motivation for change and decreasing the rate of dropout.

➤ **Review and discuss the handout on the program's purpose, rationale, philosophy, goals, limitations and rules**

Purpose = This handout, a pre-established aspect of the existing PAST program, will be implemented by the student in order to socialize the group members to the expectations of the program, meet the prep-group programs' aims of ensuring that all group members are oriented to the group process, and finally prepare the men for the larger group setting. This discussion should emphasize the fact that abuse is a learned behavior. This fact, works to enhance optimism that change is possible, improves self-efficacy (both important tenants of motivational interviewing) and thus enhances motivation for change. Within the framework of this conversation, the facilitators should stress the fact that ground rules are the program's expectations of them and compliance with such rules is mandatory for program completion. To assist the group participants in meeting the rules of attending all sessions and not being late, the student developed a calendar that noted the dates and times of each group session so that the group members could plan ahead. Based on the tenets of motivational interviewing, this is a practical tool that has been found to assist in the enhancement of attendance rates (Miller, 1998) and thus meeting the student's aim of ultimately decreasing the rate of dropout from the PAST program. Providing a tool as simple as a calendar is a means of providing practical support to the group participants, it assists in the removal of obstacles and is a means of showing true interest in the participants' attendance (Miller, 1998).

➤ **Stress the importance of taking responsibility and accountability**

Purpose = to prevent/diffuse blaming statements that are often heard throughout the group experience. The student felt that it was important for the facilitators to point out to the group members the common things heard by facilitators in every group: "What about her", "She should be the one sitting here" "It takes two to tango" and to stress to the group that this group is about men because every participant in the group is male and that this group is not going to talk about their partner's or ex-partner's issues as they cannot change or control someone else's behavior. Emphasize to the group members the fact that the only thing that they can control is themselves and that they are 100% responsible for their own behavior in relationships (their response is their responsibility). Once the above-mentioned blaming/minimizing statements are brought to the men's attentions it should become much more difficult for the men to rely upon them.

➤ **Get the group members to write their own group rules**

Purpose = to create a sense of control and choice which was taken from them when forced to be part of the PAST program. This 'power return' ultimately allows the group members to take some ownership of the group thus enhancing motivation and creating a greater attachment and commitment to the group process. This concept stems from the literature on motivational interviewing which utilizes a client-centered approach (Miller, 1995). The group members should specifically be asked if they have any other rules that they want to add to the programs' predetermined rules- do they have expectations of the facilitators or of each other and what do they think they need to have to have a positive group?

➤ **Use an 'icebreaker'**

Description = The group members should be divided up into pairs and be provided with numerous optical illusions and be asked to record under the picture what they believe is depicted in the picture. After about 15 minutes, the various responses should be recorded on the flip chart.

Purpose = to enhance participation and motivation, to provide an opportunity for the group members to get acquainted with one another, to encourage openness to multiple perspectives and to meet a common request in the student's consultations of integrating an 'icebreaker' into the prep-group session.

➤ **Brainstorm for the benefits of attending group versus the costs of not attending (flipchart)**

Purpose = Based on the Transtheoretical Model of change this type of exercise assists the involuntary client in working through their ambivalence, evokes reasons to change, and emphasizes the risks of not changing their behavior and the consequences of not attending group. All of these factors work to increase the group participants' motivation to attend and participate and assists them in their process of moving into either the contemplation or preparation 'stages of change'.

➤ **Goals for the PAST program**

Description = Go around the circle and ask everyone for their goals for the group. The facilitators should begin this process to provide a model of an "appropriate" goal. The group members should be informed that on the last day of group they will return to this flipchart to assess whether each group member feels that they have achieved their set out goals.

Purpose = Goal setting plays a significant role in motivation for change as, according to Miller (1985), it is the discrepancy between one's goals and one's current behaviors that motivates change. Goal setting also helps address the men's perception that the need for change is irrelevant as through this exercise they are admitting to things that they can possibly work to change. The student chose to have this section in the middle to end of the manual so to ensure the group members are comfortable in sharing their goals, so that their goals can be realistically set based on the confines of the group (by this point in the group they have been informed of what the program is, its goals and what it will entail) and so that the usual reluctance and resistance that occur at the onset of groups will have an opportunity to subside.

➤ **Defense mechanisms**

Description = A graphic that illustrates the various defense mechanisms that people use should be drawn on the flipchart and the various defenses should spiral around an inner circle that represents shame, guilt and inner pain. Each of the defense mechanisms (distance, blaming the source, denial, minimization, rationalization, blaming and projection, and displacement) should be defined and shame should be differentiated from guilt. To ensure that the group members understand these important mechanisms that people rely upon, a simple non-threatening example of a boy who utilizes these defenses to protect himself from feeling shame/quilt after eating an entire jar of cookies should be explored. After having the group members intrigued by this simple example, a more relevant (and threatening) example that has been developed by the co-facilitator of a man who uses these defenses after having been charged with assault should be highlighted.

Purpose = The goal here is to start breaking down some of the group members' barriers, get beyond shame and use guilt as a motivator for change. Although this aspect of the prep-group session does not work to specifically meet one of its set out objectives, it is designed to diffuse the defenses used throughout the PAST program. By labeling the often heard comments within group as defense mechanisms right at the onset of the program, it is the student's belief that the amount of defenses used will decrease and thus the level of accountability and responsibility taken for past actions will be enhanced. By aiding the group members in assuming some responsibility and accountability, this section of the prep-group session indirectly enhances motivation for change.

➤ **Talk about zero tolerance**

Purpose = to broach the most requested topic from the student's individual consultations. Zero tolerance is an issue that comes up within almost every PAST group and the prep-group session has been deemed as a perfect opportunity to diffuse this subject for the rest of the PAST program. The student believes it is imperative that the facilitators avoid arguments with the group members about this issue as according to the literature on motivating involuntary clients, arguing is counterproductive and enhances client resistance (Miller, 1995). Validating frustrations on the other hand, is a means of expressing empathy and, based on the tenets of motivational interviewing empathy, enhances motivation for change (Miller, 1995). The expression of empathy is a client-centered approach that works to help eliminate the group members' perception of coercion and thus reduces their resistance to being involved in the group process (Miller, 1995). In line with the Transtheoretical model the expression of empathy can assist those specifically in the pre-contemplative stages of change. Providing this time to discuss

zero tolerance also can enhance feelings of safety and comfort within the group setting (a set out aim of the prep-group session) by letting the group members know that it is okay to share their frustrations in a respectful manner and that they will not be attacked or "punished" for doing so.

➤ **Introduce the 'stages of change' (Transtheoretical Model)**

Purpose = Based on the student's training with the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) on motivating involuntary clients, the student thought it would be relevant to teach the group participants about the five stages of change (Transtheoretical Model) and to have them assess their own change process both at the onset of group (the prep-group session) and once again on the last day of group. A handout has been developed that defines each stage of change and the example of quitting smoking can be utilized to illustrate how an individual would act at each stage. After this non- threatening example is utilized an illustration of a person charged with assault going through each of the stages of change should be demonstrated. The group members should be informed that the PAST program could help them start their change process or support them with the changes that they have already started making. The student believes that by bringing the steps of the change process to a conscious level, the process is more realistic to achieve.

➤ **Brainstorm in small groups qualities of a healthy relationship and then have each group present their lists to the larger group**

Purpose = to decrease anxiety and provide the group members with another opportunity to get acquainted with one another. Based on the tenets of motivational interviewing, it becomes apparent that this exercise motivates change by setting up discrepancies

between each group member's current behavior in relationships and his newly formed goals for a healthy relationship.

➤ **Talk about choices**

Purpose = to help eliminate the group members' perception of coercion and to assist them in alleviating their reactance to the group and its facilitators. The choices of attendance, participation, disclosure, honesty, level of accountability assumed and what part of them they choose to bring to the group is ultimately up to the group members and this fact should be pointed out to them. The number of group members that choose to attend the day's session, despite the consequences, should be pointed out and the group should be commended for 'choosing' to attend. To emphasize the concept of choices a poem called "Two Wolves" that speaks to choices should be read out to the group and the group participants should be left with the question "What part of you do you want to bring to group: the part that is angry and resentful or the part of you that is open to learning and is prepared to hear what the group, its members and facilitators have to offer"? According to Miller, 1995 a "perceived freedom of choice ... appears to reduce client resistance and dropout" (p.94), hence the reason the student felt it was necessary to include this section in the prep-group session.

➤ **A peer mentor should be involved in the prep-group session**

Description = The peer mentor is available to share his experiences with the PAST program, describe his initial resistance, explore with the group what has changed for him as a result of his participation in the PAST group, and highlight what he has done in this area since completion of his program and what things are like for him today.

Purpose = The peer mentor is a means of identifying a possible role model. His role within the prep-group sessions is to enhance optimism that change is possible, illustrate success and to influence the involuntary clients (as resistant clients are more likely to be influenced by their peers than by facilitators) (Miller, 1995).

➤ **Checkout**

Description = Ask each group member: how they felt about the session, what they liked most about the session, and why they were going to come back to the next session.

Purpose = This type of checkout is a means for the student of receiving an informal evaluation of the prep-group session from the group participants. The more formal evaluation of the prep-group session will take place at the termination of the PAST program.

Client Demographics: First Prep-Group Session

In terms of the first preparation group and its corresponding PAST group, although 19 clients were referred, only 10 men showed up to the first group session (the prep-group) and out of that 10, 7 men completed the group in its entirety. These men were mandated to attend 9 sessions (one being the prep-group session), each of which was 3 hours in duration. The combination of the prep-group and the PAST program spanned over a five-week period.

The first preparation group and its corresponding PAST program included:

- Men between the ages of 19 and 44.
- Aboriginal (1), Metis (3) and Caucasian men (6). (Two of the group members who dropped out were Metis, while the third was Caucasian).

- Men who were separated, single, living with or dating the victim or men who were currently in new relationships. Many of these group members had a no contact condition (NCC) on their probation order thus prohibiting them from contacting or communicating with their partner/ ex-partner.
- Men who were both employed (6) and unemployed (4). An interesting finding within this specific group was that all of the employed group members completed the group, while only one of the unemployed group members finished the group to its termination.
- Men with diverse educational backgrounds. These backgrounds ranged from not completing high school to the completion of a Post Graduate degree. More specifically, 4 of the group members had their grades 9 and 10 (2 of the 4 completed the group), 4 of the group members had their grades 11 and 12 (3 of the 4 completed), 1 group member had a university degree (this group member completed the group) and finally 1 group member had a Post graduate degree (this member completed the group).
- Men with a diverse range of charges. The charges that mandated their attendance in group included breaches of court orders, fail to comply with recognizance, forcible entry, and assault. In every case the victim was their partner.
- Based on their probation officers' assessments prior to group:
 - ⇒ 9 of the group members were reported as moderately motivated for group while one of the group members was assessed as highly motivated.
 - ⇒ 2 of the group members were reported as chronic alcohol/drug abusers (neither of these group members completed the program).

⇒ 4 of the group members had previously been referred to the PAST program. 3 of the 4 clients self reported that this was their third time attempting to complete the PAST group (These 3 group members all completed the group this time around).

In terms of the 3 men who did not complete group, one only made it to the pre-group session, one made it to the first 4 sessions and finally one made it to the first 6 sessions. Unfortunately due to the strict restrictions of the PAST program, both lateness and absences are considered incomplete and thus prohibit the men from returning to the remaining of the group sessions once they have missed a single session. The reasons for non-completion of these 3 men were unfortunately not disclosed to the group facilitators.

This diverse population, in terms of risk level, age, ethnicity, relationship status, employment education, charges, motivation, alcohol/drug abuse, past referral to group and need, provided the student with different learning opportunities in joining, motivating and respectfully challenging this clientele.

The Implementation of the First Prep-Group Session

Since only 10 of the 19 referred group members attended the initial prep-group session, it became evident that the format/structure of the prep-group session, how it was being delivered, had no influence on pre-program attrition, which is currently a significant issue for Manitoba probation's PAST program. Although disappointed with this large pre-program attrition rate the student was relieved, as a smaller group seemed much less intimidating for the initiation of the prep-group program.

It is the student's belief that the majority of the established objectives of the prep-group session were achieved. The stated objectives of preparation; orientation;

enhancement of client readiness, receptivity, motivation; the development of feelings of safety and comfort within the group setting; decreased anxiety; and the opportunity for the participants to get acquainted with one another were all completely met, to the student's expectations, in the prep-group session. Unfortunately due to the time restraints of the prep-group session and the excessive amount of information that the student wished to include, the prep-group session seemed rushed and the sections of the prep-group manual on the stages of change, healthy relationships and the discussion on choices were left out. The student and the co-facilitator felt that these missed topics were important and relevant, that they were worth piloting and that the PAST program could permit their inclusion into the first session. Together the student and the co-facilitator decided that these topics should consequently be pushed forward into the first day of the PAST program rather than being neglected all together. In addition, it was decided that the prep-group manual would have to be adapted for its second implementation so that the above-mentioned topics could be included.

Based on the varying stages of the group process this prep-group session can be seen as marking the initiation of the 'beginning stage' of the group process. Corresponding with the literature in this area this 'beginning stage' opened with awkwardness, silence and distance (Corey & Corey, 1992). With this said, the expected resistance and defensiveness during this beginning stage, for such involuntary clients, was barely detected. All of the group members agreed without question to fill out the student's consent form and almost no blaming, minimizing or denying statements were heard throughout the session. It is the student's experience that this group's lack of reliance upon defense mechanisms during the opening session is a rarity. The overall non-

resistant, non- defensive attitude on the first day of group stands in great contrast to the first day of the PAST group described by Hendrickson-Gracie (2001). Hendrickson-Gracie (2001) described the PAST group members on the first day of group as "resistant" (p. 43). He provided the reader with examples of the group members' attempts to engage him in power struggles, their need for control over the group process and their attempts to rationalize, minimize, and justify their behavior to themselves, stating: "I just hit her once", "She hit me first", and "I shouldn't be here. I'm not a violent guy". (Hendrickson-Gracie, 2002, p.45). Such statements although considered "normal" for the first day of the PAST program were not present at the onset of the prep-group session. In contrast, a relaxed environment ensued throughout the prep-group session.

In both the student's and the co-facilitator's past experience it was a common occurrence to hear that many of the group members' goals for group were to avoid a breach of their probation. This group instead focused more on the positives and, for the most part, all seemed genuine in their interest to get something meaningful out of group. The group members goals included: "To learn from group", "To take things more seriously", "To absorb everything I can", "To complete group", "To understand new things", "To gain tools so that I don't have to come here again" "To learn to recognize signs of anger and avoid them", "To learn to vent anger in a positive way", and "To pick up tools that can be used in my next relationship". It is the student's belief that the group members' positive attitudes, their lack of resistance and defiance and their limited use of defense mechanisms stems from the discussions within the prep-group session on the importance of assuming accountability, the fact that their responses are their responsibilities and the discussion on defense mechanisms. Consequently the student

deems these subjects as necessary and relevant aspects of the prep-group session. Moreover, it is the student's belief that the flexible, non-confrontational approach assumed by the facilitators (based on the client-centered approach assumed in motivational interviewing) additionally contributed to the group members' positive and open attitudes and, unlike a confrontational approach, did not impel the group members to hide behind defenses. It is the student's belief that because the facilitators waited until the second half of the prep-group session to ask the group members for their goals of the program it provided the group members with an opportunity to become comfortable within the group setting, to develop some trust for the facilitators and the group process, and to become more familiar with the purpose and content of the group. These factors allowed the men to more accurately set goals for themselves based on the boundaries of the program. Providing this time between their arrival and the setting of goals helped match the group members' goals with the group's purpose (it set a template for their goals to be set by).

The other aspects of the prep-group session that were particularly effective include: the initial use of introductions, the writing of the group members' own group rules, the use of the icebreaker on perception, and the use of the peer mentor. In previous groups that the student observed, strangely enough, neither the facilitators nor the clients' introductions occurred at the onset of the first session. The initial use of introductions made sense as it seemingly transformed a room full of "offenders" into a room full of individuals. Such introductions also assisted the group members in getting acquainted with one another and knowing more about the facilitators seemed to put them a bit more at ease.

The writing of the group members' own group rules seemed to meet its set out purpose; that is, to create a sense of control and choice and to allow the group members to take some ownership of the group. This process enhanced the members' attachment and commitment to the group process and it drastically influenced their involvement and participation in the group setting. The rules that the group members came up with including: "Try to get as much as you can out of group", "Have open lines of communication", "Be respectful", "Stay on topic", "Come with a positive attitude" and "Have an open mind to new ideas" attest to the positive attitude in the group environment and the relevance and importance of the inclusion of this section in the prep-group program. Without the inclusion of this exercise, the group members would not have abided by these rules (as they are not part of the PAST program's rules) and they may not have felt such an attachment to the group process. At this initial stage of group these rules were the explicit norms by which the group was governed. According to Corey & Corey (1992), it is within this 'beginning stage' of group that both explicit and implicit norms are established. While the explicit norms are noted above, some of the implicit norms that developed within this prep-group session included: everyone always sitting in the same chairs; the freedom to yell out opinions/ideas; looking to the facilitators, rather than the group members, for validation; and while not being defensive, it seemed to be the norm not to vocally be accountable for their actions. At the time, the establishment of such implicit norms seemed automatic and virtually harmless. However, in hindsight the student is better able to see her role in their development and realizes that although these norms are not necessarily negative it would have been beneficial for both the facilitators and the group members to address these norms and perhaps even alter them while they

were developing. With this said, the development of implicit, positive norms such as listening when others were speaking and not criticizing others' opinions were nevertheless developed and encouraged.

The use of the icebreaker on perception went very well. By splitting the men up into pairs an opportunity for some diversity in the group structure was created. The men had an opportunity to get to know each other on a more one to one basis and it additionally provided a chance for the quieter group members to speak up. This exercise also had the advantage of having the group members admit that there are many ways to see things (before they knew where the exercise was going) thus almost obligating them in a way to agree that they would be willing to look at things from others' perspectives throughout the group and beyond. Most importantly, this icebreaker allowed the group members to have some fun, which consequently contributed to the relaxed and non-reactant atmosphere that transpired.

Finally, it is the student's belief that the use of the peer mentor in the prep-group session proved to be both powerful and significant. The peer mentor was extremely open and honest about his past charges and his personal experiences with the justice system and programming. Although still quiet at this stage in the group process it was apparent that when the peer mentor began sharing his personal experiences the group members were open to his comments and their interest was peaked. After the prep-group session the student hoped that the peer mentor would return and visit on at least one more occasion during the PAST program. It was her belief that in a later stage of the group process the group participants would be more comfortable asking questions and be in a better position to seek the advice of someone who had at one point been in their shoes.

In addition to the time management problems that have already been noted above, it is the student's belief that the prep-group material was slightly repetitious in nature and it was weak in its discussions on zero tolerance, the stages of change, and participant choices. The repetitious nature of the prep-group session became exceedingly evident throughout the session. Although repetition is an important technique in emphasizing a point or assisting the group in comprehending or remembering a topic, the time restrictions of the session did not allow for such repetitiousness. It became evident to the student at that point that the prep-group manual would have to be adapted for its second implementation in order to reduce the areas that overlap so that time could be permitted for the topics that were left out.

The discussion on zero tolerance described to the group members the facts about the zero tolerance policy, the reason it came into existence, what was happening before zero tolerance and had the group members brainstorm for both the strengths and weaknesses of the policy. Although the handout that was provided was clear to the group members, the discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the policy and how the police are currently implementing it was not as effective. The group members were very open to listing the weaknesses of the policy, yet despite being a very open minded group up until this point, the men were unable to see any strengths of the policy in terms of how they saw it being implemented by the police. Many of the group members commented on the fact that they had tried calling the police before and were laughed at by the officers. Some of the men even resorted to defense tactics claiming that their partners abused this system. The student addressed the latter point by reminding the group members that they have the choice available to them to not stay in a relationship where a partner is abusing

this system (just calling the police for no reason). To diffuse the somewhat escalated environment, the facilitators and the peer mentor validated the group members' frustrations and quickly changed the focus of the discussion to looking at the things they can control (themselves). The student believes that if the peer mentor was not there to empathize with the members' frustrations and to explain to them that there are in fact strengths to the policy, the men would not have been able to move forward as quickly as they did. The focus was hence shifted away from the things that the men and that the group as a whole had no control over changing (ie. the zero tolerance policy) as it was a waste of important energy that could be focused on them and the development of new and important skills and techniques. Based on the literature on the various stages of the group process, the negative feelings and tension that occurred are normal for the 'beginning stage' of group and in fact can strengthen the cohesion of its members. According to Corey & Corey (1992), "negative feelings may surface [at the beginning stage of group] as members test to determine if all feelings are acceptable" (p. 141). Although this discussion did not go as planned it enhanced the positive group dynamics by demonstrating to the group that they share similar frustrations with each other (thus leading to a sense of camaraderie) and by revealing the fact that the facilitators are open to hearing about and are empathic to their frustrations (thus demonstrating to the group participants that they can feel safe and comfortable in expressing themselves in group). Since the time in the prep-group session is not available to give this topic justice and since the group members were apparently not ready to see the strengths of the policy at this point of the group process (which in hindsight seems to make much more sense) it was decided by the co-facilitator and the supervising probation officer that the lengthy

discussion on zero tolerance and its strengths and weaknesses should be eliminated. The prospect of eliminating this discussion piece in future sessions was disappointing for the student as it was a highly requested topic for discussion in the prep-group session, it was a great tool to express empathy to the group members (by validating the group members' frustrations over the policy) and it could be a great exercise in weighing the costs and the benefits of the policy. Unfortunately within this prep-group session the scale tipped heavily to the side of the costs thus confirming the fact that this exercise had to be adapted or eliminated for the second implementation of the prep-group session.

It is the student's belief that the introduction to the 'stages of change model' presented in the first session of the PAST program, required improvements in a variety of areas. Firstly, beginning the PAST program with this topic seemed out of place. This topic would have been a better fit for the prep-group session as the prep-group session spoke a lot about change. The two-day break between sessions seemed to disrupt the flow from the prep-group and as a result the men seemed unable to relate to this topic. The second aspect of this topic that required improvements was the fact that the initial example - cessation of smoking- may have been too personal and too controversial for the purpose of this discussion because the majority of the men were in fact smokers. The third area that required modification for the second prep-group was the fact that the men were given the choice of assessing their 'stage of change' in one of the following areas: 1. Anger management skills 2. Controlling abusive behavior 3. Relationship skills. Though the men were told they did not have to share their answers with anyone involved in the group, they were still hesitant to write their answers down. Having multiple ways that the men could have answered this question appeared to be unclear and confusing and

consequently may have left them unsure of what to record and what the importance of doing this exercise was. The final area that required consideration within the presentation of the 'stages of change' model was that it should have been covered after the discussion on healthy relationships, not before. By brainstorming with the group qualities of healthy relationships before this topic, the student could have discussed change in the sense of wanting to change behavior in order to get closer to these ideal healthy relationships. It was the student's belief that if the above changes were made the application of the 'stages of change' could become highly effective, thus becoming a more worthwhile endeavor.

The final area of weakness was the fact that the discussion on choices once again did not seem to fit outside the confines of the prep-group session. The point of talking about choices was to reduce resistance, enhance motivation and to enhance the perception of personal control. All these reasons point to the necessity of having this topic covered at the end of the prep-group session thus leaving the group members with a sense of personal control over themselves (empowerment). This discussion seemed empty in the first session of the PAST program and the purpose of the poem (asking the group members to choose what part of them they want to bring to the PAST program) was hence lost.

Compared to other PAST groups that the student has helped facilitate, the amount of member participation and the degree of openness to the corresponding PAST program revealed in this first session (the prep-group session) was significantly greater. It is the student's belief that this enhancement in participation and openness to change are due both to the material covered in the prep-group session and as a result of the safe environment that was created. In turn both can work to intensify the group dynamics for

the remaining PAST group program. The prep-group session left the student feeling both optimistic and motivated for the PAST group program and the student additionally felt confident that her learning objectives for the session were met and that the group members were properly oriented and prepared for the initiation of the PAST program material.

The Adaptation of the Second Prep-Group Session

Based on consultations with the co-facilitator, the peer mentor, the supervising probation officer and the PAST revision committee and based on the comments in the group members' evaluations of the prep-group session it became clear that certain modifications to the prep-group manual were necessary for its second implementation. Although very satisfied with the initial implementation of the prep-group manual it was clear that the student needed to reduce the repetition within the prep-group session in order to allow additional time for other relevant topics. The modifications made to reduce this repetition in the original manual included:

- Removing the section on the explanation of "why a group setting is used" and adding it to the brainstorming session on the benefits of attending group.
- Developing a handout to be read out to the group members that listed a summary of the topics to be covered within the 12 sessions of the PAST program. This idea was a suggestion by the PAST revision committee who believed that this handout would act as guide in the discussion and thus would provide the group members with a concrete visual of the topics being covered and it would more importantly assist in delivering this topic quickly and efficiently.

- Removing the section of the manual on the myths and misconceptions about group because throughout the session in some manner or other each of the myths gets dispelled on its own.
- Combining the sections of the prep-group on the program's rules and the group members' rules that in the first manual were delivered as separate entities. Not only does this seem to make more sense but it also expedites the process.
- Removing the section that had the group members brainstorm the costs of not attending group in comparison to the benefits of attending (which proved to be extremely repetitious) and replacing it with an exclusive focus on the benefits of attending group.

It was the student's belief that the exclusion and/or integration of such topics would enhance the opportunity for the missed topics to be included into the prep-group session.

Additional modifications to the original manual were made to the sections on zero tolerance, the stages of change, the role of the peer mentor and the timing of the prep-group evaluation. The discussion on zero tolerance was for the most part revamped, as it was this topic that was the cause of the most criticism. Rather than discussing the purpose, history, strengths and weakness of the policy, the manual was revised to eliminate these areas and to primarily focus on the fact that there is nothing that we as a group can do to change the zero tolerance policy and thus the group's efforts need to focus on the things that can be altered (the role they played in the situation). Specifically, the manual was revised to advise the facilitators to work with the men to reapply the energy they expend on laying blame on others (partners, ex-partners, court, police, CFS, probation, zero tolerance) and to place it on themselves. The focus of the discussion, in

other words, should be to inform the group members that the feelings of powerlessness they experience with those involved in the zero tolerance policy are allayed when they focus on changing themselves; for the only true power one can hold is the power to control oneself.

For this second implementation of the prep-group session the student made some minor adjustments to the 'stages of change' component of the program. The 'stages of change' model was adapted by using a less threatening example to describe its steps (working out rather than smoking) to avoid defenses that arose in the first implementation (as the majority were in fact smokers) and a more concrete question was developed to be asked to the group to assess their stage of change: "What stage of change do you believe you are in toward getting closer to a healthy relationship?". To assist the group members in addressing such a question, the student would ensure that this time the presentation of the 'stages of change model' would occur only once the group members had an opportunity to brainstorm for the qualities of a healthy relationship.

For the second implementation of this prep-group session, the peer mentor made a request to the student to meet with her prior to its onset. This meeting provided the student with an opportunity to discuss with the peer mentor his personal suggestions for the modified manual and discuss his vision of playing more of a facilitation role within the upcoming session. It was agreed that the peer mentor would add to his past role in the previous prep-group session by facilitating the sections on stressing the importance of taking responsibility and accountability and the brainstorming session on the benefits of attending group. The peer mentor felt that he could genuinely relate to these areas and felt as though the effectiveness of this information could be heightened with his direct

involvement (the group may be more receptive to him during such discussions). It was made clear to the student that the peer mentor had wished that this form of preparation between him and the student was done prior to its first implementation (as for the first prep-group the student had purely sent him a copy of the manual by mail and conversed with him via phone on a few occasions). The student agreed that such preparation between her and the peer mentor was in fact extremely beneficial and in hindsight regrets not having such a meeting in the program's onset.

Finally, in contrast to the first prep-group session which had the group participants evaluate the session after the completion of the PAST program in its entirety (appendix E), the manual for the second implementation was adapted to include part of that evaluation at the end of the prep-group session itself (appendix F-part A). The purpose of this modification was to increase the likelihood that the information provided to the group members in the prep-group session was fresh in their minds. It was the student's belief that this modification would provide her with significantly better feedback from the group members, as the details of the prep-group session would not be forgotten as they were in the program's initiation.

Client Demographics: Second Prep-Group Session

In terms of the second preparation group and its corresponding PAST group, although 24 clients were referred, only 15 men showed up to the first group session (the prep-group) and out of that 15, 9 men completed the group in its entirety. These men were mandated to attend 1 prep-group session that was 3 hours in duration and 4 PAST group sessions that were 6 hours in duration. These programs combined, spanned over a one-week period.

The second preparation group and its corresponding PAST program included:

- Men between the ages of 23 and 61.
- Aboriginal (4), Metis (4), Black (1) and Caucasian men (6). (Two of the group members who dropped out were Aboriginal, two were Metis, two were Caucasian, and one was Black).
- Men who were divorced, single, or men who were living in common law marriages. Many of these group members had a no contact condition (NCC) on their probation order thus prohibiting them from contacting or communicating with their partner/ex-partner.
- Men who were both employed (5) and unemployed (7). It was not identified on COMS (Criminal Offender Management System) whether the three remaining group members were employed or not. Unlike the other group mentioned above, employment did not seem to have a bearing on group completion.
- Men with diverse educational backgrounds. These backgrounds ranged from not completing junior high school to the completion of high school. More specifically, 1 group member had his grade 5-8 (this group member completed the group), 5 of the group members had their grades 9 and 10 (3 of the 5 completed the group), 6 of the group members had their grades 11 and 12 (2 of the 6 completed the group), and the educational levels were not provided for the 3 of the remaining group members.
- Men with a diverse range of charges. The charges that mandated their compliance in group included mischief under, breaches of court orders, failure to comply with recognizance, failure to comply with undertaking, forcible entry, and the majority were convicted of assault. In every case the victim was their partner.

- Based on their probation officers' assessments prior to group:
 - ⇒ 11 of the group members were reported as moderately motivated for group, one of the group members was reported as highly motivated for group, one of the group members was assessed as being between moderately motivated and resistant, while one of the group members was marked as resistant along with a warning that he minimizes his charges and feels that his charges are "bogus". Lastly, one of the group members did not come with a referral and thus was not assessed for motivation for the group experience.
 - ⇒ 4 of the group members were reported as chronic alcohol/drug abusers (2 of the 4 of these group members completed the program).
 - ⇒ 6 of the group members had previously been referred to the PAST program (4 of these 6 once again did not complete the PAST program to its entirety).

In terms of the 6 men who did not complete group, 3 only made it to the pre-group session, 2 only made it to the first 2 days' of group and finally one made it to the first 4 days but missed the last day of group. The reasons for non-completion were regrettably not disclosed to the group facilitators. With this said, 4 of the 6 men who did not complete the program to its entirety did in fact attempt to return, however, unfortunately were too late.

The Implementation of the Second Prep-Group Session

Present at this session were the 15 group participants, the student, the experienced male co-facilitator, the peer mentor, a supervising probation officer and an additional student who wished to observe the group process. Overall the implementation of the second prep-group session was very positive. However, despite the modifications made

to alter the first prep-group manual, the session continued to be rushed and various sections were still left out. The sections on zero tolerance, qualities of a healthy relationship and the 'stages of change' had to be once again pushed forward into the next session (the first day of the PAST program). The student believed, nevertheless, that the objectives of the prep-group session were sufficiently achieved and thus were worth the pursuit.

As a whole, little resistance was detected from the group members within this prep-group session. With this said, one group member presented as extremely angry and demonstrated this by refusing to take handouts, not signing either of the consent forms (one, which was specifically for the student's practicum placement) and expressing to the other group members during the section on goals for the PAST program that he had "No Goals". The student expressed to this group member that it was his choice to fill out the consent forms and she would respect his choice by not including his comments in her practicum report. She did remind him, however, that there was an expectation to participate in order to complete the program. At the break during the session, the co-facilitator arranged for the duty probation officer to speak with this participant in private about the expectations of him to ensure that he was prepared to continue with the program.

The second prep-group had much in common with the first prep-group in the sense that once again there was almost no blaming, minimizing or denying statements heard throughout the session and the fact that the group members' goals for the PAST group were so positive. The group members' goals for the second PAST program included: "To continue change", "Learn from group and learn how to respect my partner's views",

"Learn as much as possible so I don't have to end up back in jail", "Learn from my mistakes and learn to control my anger", "Learn new techniques to control anger", "Learn to respect other individuals and learn how to communicate", "Learn to think in a different way so that my anger won't get the best of me", "Learn more about the other group members", "Stop yelling and shouting and learn ways to gain patience", "Learn different ways to vent frustrations", "Hope to be able to offer things to the group and hope to have fun". It is the student's belief that this lack of reliance on defense mechanisms and the positive attitudes portrayed via these goals were influenced by both the content and the environment created within the confines of the prep-group session.

The peer mentor, although still a significant and relevant part of the prep-group session assumed a role that may not have been as powerful as during the first implementation of the prep-group session. As requested the peer mentor took on more of a facilitation role within the session. Unfortunately this facilitation role seemed to take away from his other role of mentoring the group and thus, in hindsight, it is the student's belief that the peer mentor role should be reserved exclusively to that of a mentor and support.

Another disappointing factor involving the peer mentor was the fact that the section on zero tolerance was moved into the PAST program. The group therefore could not take advantage of the peer mentor's significant assistance in this area. Moreover, the student was concerned because she wished to debrief zero tolerance and the men's corresponding frustrations prior to the onset of the PAST program and did not wish to begin the PAST program on this negative note. With this said, once approached in the second session, the means by which the student facilitated this section was powerful and unlike its delivery in

the first prep-group did not cause much resistance from the group members. Although the prospect of originally eliminating the discussion on the group members' views regarding the strengths and weakness of the policy was extremely disappointing for the student (as she did have high hopes that this was a great tool to express empathy to the group members) it proved to be a worthwhile endeavor as the opportunity for the men focusing on the costs of the policy was removed and the time spent focusing on themselves and their behavior was enhanced. The modifications made to the section on zero tolerance proved to be both a time saver and more importantly an asset to the group process.

Prior to the end of the prep-group session the student ensured that she left time for the discussion on choices as during the initial implementation of the prep-group program it proved not to be appropriately placed outside the confines of this session. The group members consequently seemed much more able to relate to the topic and thus seemed to feel more empowered as a result.

As with the initial prep-group, members in this prep-group session displayed enhanced participation and openness to change and appeared to be prepared, oriented and motivated for the initiation of the PAST program material. Much to the student's surprise, the presence and involvement of the supervising probation officer and the additional student did not seem to hinder the blossoming group dynamics.

The PAST Program

The following is a brief summary of: the objectives of the 12-sessions of the PAST program, the student's reflections on her direct experience within the PAST group setting, the characteristics of the varying stages of the group process as observed by the

student, and the impact that the prep-group sessions seemed to have on the group members' experiences. This brief review will speak about similarities and differences of the two PAST groups. The reader should be reminded at this point that the first PAST program took place over a 5 week period while the second occurred over 4 days. Within this time span, attendance at the first PAST group decreased by 3 (10 showed up to the initial prep-group session, while only 7 completed) and the second PAST group decreased by 6 (15 showed up to the prep-group session, while only 9 completed). It should also be noted that the order in which the sessions were delivered vary from the order that they appear in the official program manual. In addition, some modifications in the program content have been adjusted and modified by the student and the co-facilitator based on the co-facilitators past experience regarding what works and what does not work in the PAST program.

Although it will not be explored here in detail each day of the program commenced and finished with a check-in and checkout. Such a process provided the group members with an opportunity to explore their feelings about the group sessions, share any of their concerns, and learn more about each other and about the facilitators. It is the student's belief that this tool along with the prep-group session enhanced the level of trust, rapport, communication and self-disclosures that transpired throughout the program. Ultimately these qualities further enhanced the group environment where positive group dynamics flourished.

Session # 1: Partner Abuse Program Introduction

Objectives:

- To receive some informal feedback about the prep-group session
- To complete the material from the prep-group program

- Learn the definition of partner abuse
- Learn the definition of power/control and its relation to violence
- Learn the costs of using power and control in relationships
- To perform the pre-test questionnaire

Reflections:

As a means of receiving feedback about the previous prep-group session from the group members, the student specifically asked the group members "What things from the last session [the prep-group] made you want to come back?" It was the student's intention for this questioning period to be an informal means of evaluation of the prep-group session. Unfortunately, the group members had a difficult time remembering what occurred during the prep-group session and as a result very little was gained by the student from this format of questioning. This confirmed the student's realization that she could not rely on such an informal evaluation and hence had to modify this evaluation process by having the second PAST group fill out part of an evaluation on the prep-group session (appendix F- part A) immediately after its initiation within the confines of the prep-group session.

The tone of the two groups in this first session of the PAST program was positive. This tone made it extremely easy for the objectives of the session to be met. The group members in both PAST groups appeared very receptive to the somewhat threatening content of the group (the definition of partner abuse and how abuse/violence maintains power and control) and were active participants in the brainstorming session on the consequences of using power and control in relationships. It is the student's belief that the amount of participation and group involvement within this session was definitely influenced by the rapport, trust and safety developed in the prep-group session. In addition, the cooperation displayed among group members was an indicator of the

foundations of cohesion that often begin to initiate during this initial stage of the group process (Corey & Corey, 1992). Unlike other PAST groups that the student has facilitated these groups did not bring up their frustrations about their partner's involvement in the situation or the question of why she does not have to attend such a program. It is the student's belief that the prep-group had thoroughly addressed all of these concerns/frustrations thus eliminating this form of resistance from the group members. Overall, the prep-group seemed to establish a positive tone for the initiation of the PAST program and allowed the group members to begin the PAST information with a positive frame of mind. Meeting the facilitators and the other group members in the prep-group session allowed the group members to be comfortable and at ease when they came to the first day of the PAST program.

In both groups the vocal members were particularly positive. This fact seemed to shut down any negative remarks from the other group members and it made the group more comfortable thus allowing positive group dynamics to flourish. In the first implementation of the PAST program it was noted by three participants who had been to parts of the PAST program before that the group dynamics were already better in this group than their previous groups and that thus far this group seemed to have a much better flow (as noted in chapter three, while the entire client population experienced the preparation group for the first time, some of the offenders had been through parts of or even the entire PAST program before). The student attributed these group members' perspectives to the addition of the prep-group session to the original PAST program. Within the second implementation of the PAST program the one resistant member from the prep-group session who refused to participate apologized for his negative attitude and

expressed to the facilitators that he was ready to participate and was prepared to fill out the student's evaluation of the prep-group session. This change of attitude represented at least a partial appreciation for the prep-group session. While in the first PAST group, group participants demonstrated very little self-disclosure (as risk taking is relatively low within this 'beginning stage' of the group process [Corey & Corey, 1992]), participants in the second PAST group revealed a great deal. These members disclosed their past experience of witnessing abuse, being abused, and their inability to change despite their desires to do so. Although the student was pleased to see the group members' comfort in disclosing personal stories, she found it interesting that the disclosures tended, for the most part, to be about the abuse that had occurred to them rather than the abuse that they had inflicted on others. To avoid deterring disclosures so early on in the group process the student allowed these men to stay in the "victim role" and only planned to challenge this role and redirect their attention to the impact of their abuse on others if it remained consistent and unchanged in the latter sessions of the group process. It was the student's belief that this enhanced level of self-disclosure so early on in the group process (which is rare for the 'beginning stages' of group) may have been modeled after the peer mentor who disclosed some personal experiences within the prep-group session. Although it is not the goal of the PAST program to attain such disclosures it is the student's perspective that such disclosures can enhance the level of trust and rapport in the group setting, can be a means of beginning to be honest with themselves (a form of accountability) and as a result can enhance the motivation for change among the group members. With this said, within the second PAST group, as a result of one group member excessively dominating the group with his personal disclosures about his problems with anger, the student and the

co-facilitator made the joint decision to change the seating in the semi-circle for the next session. The purpose of this change was to ensure that they were not directly looking at the dominating group member (focusing on other group members would hopefully encourage their participation and limit the focus on the dominating group member).

This session was extremely helpful for the student as the discussion on power and control and its relation to violence highlighted the feminist influence on the PAST program. Providing information to the group members on power and control and its costs on relationships is a means of consciousness raising used in feminist interventions. Such consciousness raising (increasing information about self and problem) is a central, first step in assisting the offenders in gaining an awareness of the costs of their behaviors and examining their own underlying sexist expectations and attitudes.

Session # 2: Types of Abuse

Objectives:

- To define and recognize the different types of abuse
- To review the power and control wheel and contrast it with the equality wheel
- View a video "In Our Best Interest" and pinpoint the various forms of abuse depicted in the scenes.
- To learn what types of abuse apply to them

Reflections:

By this point in the group, both of the groups worked particularly well when divided into small groups; thus, the student and the co-facilitator attempted to utilize small group exercises as much as possible. The division of groups varied each time to avoid the development of small cliques within the larger group setting. Keeping this in mind, the larger group was divided into 3 smaller groups to brainstorm about the different types of abuse (physical, sexual and emotional /mental) and each group was asked to

record their ideas and be prepared to present them to the larger group. This exercise, although not personalized to each man's experience, generated a great deal of conversation in both groups. Having the men come up with the different forms of abuse themselves was significant as it was the group members themselves explaining/convincing other group members that certain behaviors were in fact abusive. Having the men challenge each other's ways of thinking seemed to be far less threatening and more easily accepted by the group members than if the challenges had come from the facilitators. This group dynamic fits nicely with the theory in the peer mentor literature that points to the fact that hard to reach clients (involuntary client) are more likely to be influenced by their peers than by facilitators (Rooney, 1992).

The discussion on the vignettes that displayed a variety of forms of abuse allowed the men to see the abusive behaviors on the power and control wheel put into practice. This practical exercise clearly pinpointed various forms of emotional abuse that are often not considered abusive by the group members. In previous groups the student had helped facilitate, the men had been quite resistant to these vignettes and tended to note everything abusive the female partner in the vignettes did. In contrast to this resistance, the men in both of the practicum groups focused primarily on the men's abusive behavior and they recognized how controlling the men in the videos were being. Thus, it appeared that the conversation in the prep-group session on defense mechanisms and personal responsibility might have truly been effective. This exercise was then followed by a discussion on the equality wheel (a model of healthy behavior). This model provided corresponding alternatives to the behaviors on the power and control wheel thus

providing a picture to the group members of what a healthy relationship consists of and enhancing the likelihood that they will strive to achieve such goals.

A significant learning experience for the student occurred within the second PAST group. While the student was utilizing the VCR for the vignettes, the co-facilitator initiated the use of the remote control. Although at the time this seemed insignificant to the student one of the group members stated: "Look at him being a man and using his power and control over the TV". Not only did this prove to the student that the group members had listened and understood during the implementation of the first session, but more importantly, it acted as a warning to her that she and the co-facilitator had to ensure that they modeled to the group members a relationship of equality not one of power and control. The need for the co-facilitating team to model equal power dynamics, non-abusive male-female relationships and an assertive female role model is supported in the literature on domestic violence groups (Bennet & Williams, 2001).

This session was additionally helpful for the student as it allowed her to see some of the feminist values and approaches put into practice. The above-mentioned need for the co-facilitating team to model equal power dynamics speaks to the feminist goal of creating an environment that re-teaches equality and non-traditional gender socialization and challenges men's control over women. In addition, through the expansion of the definition of abuse (so physical abuse does not get replaced with other forms of abuse) and the use of a pro-feminist model that assists abusers change from using behaviors on the "power and control wheel" to using behaviors on the "equality wheel" (Pence and Paymar, 1993), the student became aware of the impact and influence of the feminist

approach within the confines of the PAST program and its corresponding impact on the group members.

Session # 3: Self-Talk

Objectives:

- To learn about negative and positive self-talk
- To learn about the self-talk model (how positive and negative self-talk have a corresponding impact on an individual's feelings and behavior).
- To learn about calming and reassuring self-talk statements

Reflections:

The topic of self-talk is covered in session eleven of the PAST program manual. The reason for this modification of order was that in developing a personal plan for non-violence (warning signs [session 3 of the manual] and time outs [session 4 of the manual]) it is necessary for the group members to identify their self-talk. The student and the co-facilitator agreed that it made good sense to first teach the group participants what self-talk is. The need for this modification in session order was verified in Bacon & Bracken's (2002) evaluation of the PAST program, which found through their discussions with facilitators, that "nearly all of the [facilitators] have switched the order in which modules are presented, for example modules 10 and 11 coming after module 2" (p.136).

Since the concept of self-talk tends to be both difficult and abstract for many group members to comprehend the co-facilitator initiated this discussion by pointing out to the group members examples of self-talk that were probably occurring within the confines of the group setting. His examples included: "This group sucks", "When is break?", "Man, am I hungry", and "This guy has no clue what he's talking about". The group members laughed at these suggestions and noted that they were aware that they always talked to themselves throughout their days. The co-facilitator went on to

differentiate the differences between positive and negative self-talk and their corresponding impact on feelings and behaviors. To enhance the link between self-talk and feelings and behaviors a realistic guided scenario (of their partner arriving home very late) was provided to the group. The group was asked to record what their self-talk, feelings and behaviors would look like while waiting for their partner, first using negative self-talk, and next using positive self-talk. The use of this exercise seemed to make the link between self-talk and feelings and behaviors remarkably evident. The discussion on self-talk was additionally beneficial as the use of story telling seemed to increase the group members' interest and the use of the guided scenario allowed them to be very active participants in the group process.

This session was helpful for the student as it allowed her to see some of the cognitive-behavioral concepts and techniques put into practice. Adapting negative self-talk is an example of a cognitive technique that is commonly used in men's' groups such as this (Saunders, 1989). Since negative self-talk often distorts the abusers' perceptions of their partners' actions and behaviors it often precedes abusive behavior. The goal of using cognitive techniques in this session was to reveal and replace negative, irrational thought patterns (negative self-talk) with accurate, healthy and productive patterns (positive self-talk). During this session the group members were specifically asked to identify what they say to themselves that is inaccurate and/or unhelpful and to replace it with more realistic and helpful statements. The focus within this session was on changing cognitions to produce desired changes in affect and behavior (Corey, 2001). Overall, this session allowed the student to see how cognitive behavioral interventions

provide changes in the group members' thinking and feeling and hence ultimately alter the group members' eventual behaviors.

The collaborative approach with the group members also stood out to the student as a distinctive cognitive-behavioral approach. This model of intervention stresses the need for the client and the facilitator to work together to recognize cognitive and behavioral patterns that result in problematic functioning. In addition, the facilitators' role within this session as educator also stood out to the student the cognitive behavioral approach used in the group. The facilitator's job in cognitive behavioral therapy is to take the role of educator and thus it is his/her responsibility to create learning experiences that work to alter the group members' cognitions (Foreyt & Rathjen, 1979). The use of the guided scenarios within this session displayed both the collaborative approach assumed within this program and the facilitators' role as educator.

Session # 4: Personal Beliefs about Self-Talk

Objectives:

- To develop realistic and helpful beliefs
- For one to identify, challenge and change their own unrealistic and unhelpful beliefs to be realistic and helpful

Reflections:

This session took the discussion about self-talk even further than the last session and concentrated on the beliefs that lie behind each individual's self-talk (which in turn influence feelings and behaviors). This focus on beliefs was accomplished by dividing the larger group into smaller groups and providing them with the opportunity to examine some beliefs and to determine with their groups whether these beliefs were realistic or helpful or not. For those beliefs that were unrealistic, the groups were asked to rewrite the belief to make it both helpful and realistic. This discussion in small groups went over

quite well. The small groups allowed the quieter group members to have their voices heard and had all the men thinking about their own belief systems. Through this exercise the group members had an opportunity to see some similarities in their ways of thinking and it also allowed them to hear differences and to challenge each other's thinking. It was interesting to see that many of the men agreed to disagree which in the student's perspective was a positive means of communication and they accepted other group members different self perceptions. It is the student's belief that the discussion in the prep-group session on the importance of looking at things from other people's perspectives (within the 'icebreaker" exercise) may have influenced this style of communication. Overall, this exercise generated much discussion and it was apparent that the men were learning from each other. This exercise allowed the co-facilitator and the student to step back and allow the group to share their ideas with each other. Based on this discussion, the group members developed a fairly good understanding of the importance of ensuring that their beliefs are both realistic and helpful because of the influence that their beliefs had on their self-talk, feelings and behaviors. Moreover, the group members were provided with an opportunity to personalize the discussion on beliefs and self-talk and apply it to their own situations and to each individual's self-talk by doing an assignment which made them make their negative self-talk more positive. This assignment provided the facilitators with an opportunity to ensure that the group participants had a true understanding of self-talk. As with the last session, such restructuring of thought patterns is a popular means of applying cognitive techniques in practice with men who abuse.

The tone in this session continued to be positive and the amount of challenging discussion regarding belief systems illustrated that the men were comfortable in sharing their beliefs within the group setting. During the first group the student was slightly nervous about implementing this session, as it was the first time that she had facilitated this session before. As a result, it is the student's perspective that her facilitation of the session could have been improved upon and that her ability to respond to the group members' challenges needed some practice. By gaining more practice in her role as a facilitator and by observing how the co-facilitator handled such challenges from the group members, the student felt much more confident in her delivery of this session during the second PAST group program.

Session # 5: Personal Plans for Non-Violence (Warning Signs)

Objectives:

- To learn what a personal plan for non-violence is
- To learn about warning signs of violence
- To look at different types of warning signs
- To begin to be aware of one's own warning signs

Reflections:

This session provided the group members with an opportunity to learn what warning signs of abusive behavior are, to have the myth that violence/abuse "just happen" dispelled and to become aware of the 5 different categories that the warning signs fall under (situations, behaviors, body signs, feelings and thoughts and mental images). Learning about such internal and external cues that precede abusive behavior is a common theme covered in cognitive-behavioral group programs such as this. The inclusion of this topic into the program highlights the focus of this intervention on re-

educating and re-training the group members in replacing their maladaptive behaviors with healthy and productive ones.

As a large group the members brainstormed an array of warning signs that fall under each of the 5 categories. Hearing the different ideas from group members helped enlighten the group members to each other's ideas and assisted the group participants in becoming aware of specific warning signs of which they were not originally cognizant of. This type of activity once again provided the group members with an opportunity to learn from each other rather than from the facilitators.

In response to the question (posed by the facilitators) of which feelings can be identified as warning signs, the men focused on such feelings as anger, rage, and frustration. Consequently, the student explored with the group the concept of the funnel of anger. This funnel depicts the reality that men are taught to stuff their feelings (insecurity, jealousy, loneliness, hopelessness, helplessness, sadness etc...) so as to hide any weakness, but that this stuffing eventually builds to frustration, anger, rage (acceptable feelings for men to express) and ultimately to abusive behaviors. The group members acknowledged and related to this common act of stuffing their feelings. The student encouraged the group members that when feeling angry they should explore what other feelings are behind the anger as it is those feelings that must ultimately be addressed.

To enhance the understanding of warning signs the student used a visual drawing of an escalator. This drawing depicted how the warning signs fit into the process of escalation and how the warning signs can be utilized to signal to an individual that he/she is starting to escalate and can assist him/her in beginning the process of de-escalation

(once we become consciously aware of warning signs it becomes much easier to go down the escalator). An example of a train leaving a station was also used to enhance the group members' understanding of warning signs. The group was asked when is it easier to stop a train; when it's just first leaving the station or when it has picked up its full speed. The group agreed on both occasions that it is easier to stop the train before it has picked up speed (when it is first leaving station). The student facilitator brought this idea back to warning signs by explaining that it is easier for us to stop ourselves (maybe take a time out) when we first start noticing our warning signs rather than waiting until our speed picks up and we are escalated and already acting out on our anger. It is the student's belief that such simple examples proved to be well accepted by the group members and were particularly necessary for the more concrete learners.

This session came to an end with the group members filling out and handing in their own personal warning signs. This assignment was to be reviewed by the student and the co-facilitator and then given back to the participants on the last day of group for them to make the necessary corrections before this assignment got handed into their probation officers. Insight into their own personal warning signs will hopefully assist them in the future in recognizing when they are building up to abusive behaviors and will provide them with an opportunity to remove themselves from the situation before they "choose" to act abusively.

It is the student's perspective that her facilitation of this session went much better compared to the last session that she facilitated. The student was much more confident with this material as she had facilitated this material before. This sense of confidence

allowed the student to feel more relaxed in the group and thus much more receptive to the group members' challenges.

Session # 6: Time Outs

Objectives:

- To learn the definition of a time out
- To learn the rules of a time out
- To develop an individual time out plan and include it in one's personal plan for non violence

Reflections:

This session provided the group members with an opportunity to learn the differences between taking a time out and walking away and the various means of working around the challenges of the time out. In addition, the session further provided an opportunity for the men to develop their own time out plan.

Although not part of the regular PAST program this session began with an introduction to the three D's (deny, dump and deal). The group members were explained that denying is a means of stuffing/repressing their feelings (a passive act). The group members indicated their understanding of the ways in which this behavior could eventually lead to a temperamental outburst. Dumping was explained as acting out in an abusive manner and was described as an aggressive act. Finally, dealing (an assertive act) was described as managing feelings in a healthy manner. The group members related well to these three categories and by defining the deal 'D' as assertive it was more likely to be sought after by the group members. This piece was tied nicely into the section on time outs by explaining to the group that one way to start 'dealing' with a situation may be to take a time out (a first step).

At the onset of this session in the first PAST group it was the student's goal to have the group members share their past experiences with time outs. Due to the lack of communication between the student and the co-facilitator this goal was not achieved to the student's expectations and thus disclosures of personal experiences with time outs were limited. It is the student's belief that the group members would have benefited more from this discussion if they had been asked specifically about their personal experiences/struggles with time outs. In contrast, in the second PAST group, each member was asked if they knew what a time out was, whether they have ever taken one before and if so, whether it was effective. This questioning provided an opportunity for each group member to share both their knowledge and experience with the time out (to vent if necessary) and to learn what has worked and what hasn't worked for other people. During the participant's explanation of their time outs the student recorded some key aspects of their experience on the flip chart. This information was then drawn upon when the group was looking at the differences between a time out and walking away. Through the comparison of a true, successful time out and the recorded information about the group members' experiences of their time outs it became clear where some of the individual group members went wrong. By reviewing with the participants what parts of their past time outs needed to be modified to make them true time outs, the learning experience became more relevant to the individual participants' needs and situations. Truly understanding and acknowledging the differences between taking a time out and walking away proved to be extremely relevant. Several group participants who initially described taking time outs that hadn't worked (thus leaving them feeling frustrated and critical with the time out plan), realized after this discussion that they had actually not

taken proper time outs and had in fact 'walked away'. Consequently, this discussion left these group members feeling much more optimistic about the future use of the time out plan. This technique, used in the second implementation of this program, proved to be effective.

While it is the student's experience that in other PAST groups participants become quite angry and tend to put a lot of blame on their partners during this discussion on time outs, the practicum groups were much more open to the possibility of the time out working and all presented as prepared to take a practice time out for homework. As a result of asking the group members about supports available to them during time outs, the student became much more aware of the fact that many of the group members lacked supports in their life, lacked knowledge of the community resources available to them, and lacked the ability to trust others. Many of the men then relied only on themselves as a their sole support. This fact emphasized the need to inform the group members about the free community resources in their areas. As part of the follow-up interview that will be discussed later, all of the men were provided with a list of community resources and were briefed on the resources that fit their specific needs.

During the second PAST group, a slight power struggle between two group members arose. This struggle was between a vocally dominant group member and a group member who seemed to want this position but due to a health condition could not take on this desired role. The timing of this conflict in this session marked the 'middle stage' of the group process that is characterized by testing behaviors and conflict. Such acts indicate that the participants are starting to feel more comfortable and safe within the group setting (Corey & Corey, 1992). After the conflict was openly recognized and

discussed, the tension between these two group members dissipated quickly. Other indicators that the group had reached the 'middle stage' of the group process were the establishment of patterns of interaction, deepening of interpersonal relationships, enhanced group cohesion and the group members' enriched ability to give and receive feedback, all of which are typical characteristics for the 'middle stage' of group (Toseland & Rivas, 2001). The majority of the group work occurred within this 'middle stage' and it was at this point that the group participants were the most committed to the group process.

This session was a significant learning experience for the student as it helped her understand the ways in which cognitive behavioral techniques are practically implemented in a group setting. Ultimately the time out plan is a means of replacing maladaptive behaviors (abusive behaviors) with new learned adaptive ones (time out plan). The concept of the time out plan fits perfectly with the fundamental assumption of cognitive-behavioral therapy that states that learned abusive behavior can be unlearned. The time out is a means of assisting the group members in taking a step to unlearn abusive behaviors. According to Grusznki & Bankovics (1990), time outs are an extremely common behavioral technique utilized in groups for domestic abuse.

Session # 7: Cycle of violence

Objectives:

- To understand the cycle of violence and how each phase applies to them
- To learn how to break the cycle

Reflections:

This session was greatly expanded upon by the co-facilitator. Rather than exclusively focusing on the 3 phases of the abusers cycle (tension-building, violent episode and the apologetic phase) and the means by which they are maintained (power

and control), the co-facilitator explored and graphed with the group members the cycles for the addict, the partner, the co-dependent and the children. Through the use of a handout assignment it became evident that the group members all developed a good understanding of their own cycles of abuse/violence and through the group discussion the facilitators explored the various means of breaking the cycle.

The discussion on the cycle of abuse as described in the manual seemed to go over extremely well in both groups. The way this section of the program was presented was very clear and concrete and it provided the group members with an opportunity to brainstorm their ideas on the 3 stages of the cycle. Encouraging them to identify their own distinct behaviors within each phase allowed the participants to personalize the course content to their own personal stories. The use of both the drawing on the flip chart and the handout provided a picture of this cycle for the more visual learners. What was particularly interesting to the student was that the co-facilitator within this section filled out his own cycle and shared with the group the importance that he does this on occasion. He went on to explain to the group that no one is immune to negative thoughts and/or actions and that this handout is a means of staying accountable. The student saw the co-facilitator's actions as a means of self-disclosure with the group members and was a means of identifying with the participants. It seemed important that the co-facilitator stressed to the group that this assignment was not being handed in to their probation officers as it provided the group members with an opportunity to really be honest with themselves. To illustrate examples of the cycle of violence both the video *Shifting Gears* and clips from the movie *Unforgivable* were shown.

The presentation of the expanded version of the cycle (developed by the co-facilitator) that was broadened to all types of addictions including power and control seemed to be both relevant and interesting within the context of this session. This model which includes the phases: calm period, tension building, fall (fall back into the negative behavior), guilt, and promises, is more extensive than the traditional cycle and thus allowed the group to see how one's guilt about a behavior and how the promises they make to their partners fit into this cycle. This model is more sensitive to the group members as it recognizes that the men's "fall" can truly be a surprise to them and that when they make promises at that time they actually mean them. In addition, rather than simply attributing the cause of the cycle to the need for power and control, this model goes further to identify the underlying pain. The group members appeared to relate better to this concept. This model of the cycle of violence is less confrontational than the program manual's and the group members were much more receptive to it.

Although important, the student viewed the section on the partner's cycle of hope and the co-dependents' cycle as too concrete for the purposes of this group. As described by the co-facilitator, these cycles were depicted as consisting of: the calm period, tension building, sabotage, relief, ridicule, and the belief of promises. The significant difference between the two cycles was that while the women in the cycle of hope would be using sabotage to get the fall over with, the co-dependant women would be using sabotage to satisfy her need to be needed. It was the student's fear that some of the more concrete learners may have assumed that all women partners sabotage the men's healing process and ridicule their partners when they feel safe to do so. The student's fear was actualized in the second PAST group where one of the group members reported to the rest of the

group that everything made sense now that he had learned that his partner was a 'co-dependent'. While the key focus of this group is for the men to take responsibility for their own behaviors, it became evident that these cycles worked to take this responsibility away from the group members. The idea of a co-dependent sabotaging the abuser's recovery to meet her need to be needed negates the focus within the PAST program that the group members responses are their responsibilities. As a result of this misinterpretation, the co-facilitator decided that he would no longer use such a cycle in the group environment. In the future it still may be helpful to present the women's cycle of hope in a different manner to demonstrate how the abuser's cycle directly influences and impacts the partner's cycle.

The discussion on the children's coping mechanisms (delivered by the co-facilitator) in relation to their parents' cycles was successful in both groups. Within this section, the men learned about how children are affected by these cycles of behavior and how they too become part of the cycle. In addition, they learned specifically about the 4 common styles of coping of children: the hero, the scapegoat, the lost child and the clown. This discussion kept everyone's attention and the group members appeared to see themselves in the various children's roles. This section provided some of the group members with an opportunity to open up and share with the rest of the group their identification with one or more of the children's roles. To the student's dismay, none of the group members in either group could identify how their cycles were or have been impacting their own children. Although neither of the PAST groups relied heavily upon defense mechanisms, it became clear that the group members' sense of accountability for their actions was not being utilized. This concerned the student as the feminist focus on the abuser accepting

responsibility and accountability for their actions was evidently, seriously being neglected by the PAST program. Although the link between their cycles and the impacts on their children was unclear it was the hope of the student that the men were able to transfer this learning to see how their own children may be affected by the abuse in their homes.

Within the first PAST group, the student did not feel as though she played a big role in the facilitation of this session. This was a disappointment to the student facilitator as it was important to continue to co-deliver the sessions and present to the group members as an equal facilitator of the group. The sharing of the facilitation role is particularly important since facilitators want to model an equal relationship between men and women. Within this session the student had an additional concern about the group members' comfort level with her compared to that of the co-facilitator. At the end of the session the student realized that the co-facilitator has been making an effort to shake the group members' hands prior to their exit from the group setting (a sign of respect and friendliness that the student had unfortunately failed to join in on) and that it was the co-facilitator who had been facilitating the majority of the check -in and checkouts (a time where most of the trust and rapport were being developed). From that point on in the first PAST group and during the entire duration of the second PAST group, the student deliberately said hello to everyone by name when they entered the group environment, shook the group members' hands prior to their exit from group and delivered an equal amount of check ins and checkouts as the co-facilitator.

Overall, this session was particularly helpful to the student as it exemplified what should and should not be included into the group based on the group members'

comprehension level and how to better develop trust, respect and rapport with the group members. The teaching of the cycle, which explained to the group members that partner abuse doesn't just happen and that it is planned and that it is the need for power and control that maintains the cycle, additionally allowed the student to gain an appreciation of the practical use of the feminist approach within the group setting.

Session # 8: Myths and Facts about Partner Abuse

Objectives:

- To learn myths and facts about battering

Reflections:

Session 8 was initiated with a review of the concept of beliefs and how beliefs ultimately affect behavior. It was explained to the group members by the student that if we act based on our beliefs and our beliefs aren't based on reality (if they aren't true or helpful) there can be damaging results (abuse) and thus it is important that we take a look at our own beliefs about partner abuse and assess whether they are true or not and whether they are helpful beliefs to hold. To commence this process of assessing their beliefs the large group was split into groups of two to determine whether 10 different common beliefs about partner abuse were true or false and why. In dividing the group members up, the student ensured that she did different pairings than usual so as to break down the cliches that on the surface may have just begun to form. The participants had good discussions with their partners and respectfully challenged each other's reasoning. The group members were comfortable coming back to the larger group setting with varying opinions from that of their partners.

The first PAST group was fortunate enough to have the peer mentor join them during this session and join in with the group members to work on this exercise. Doing the

assignment was a means for the peer mentor to bond with the group, show understanding and respect and identify with the group members. In addition, completing this exercise allowed the peer mentor to integrate his answers and reasoning on the 10 common beliefs into the larger group discussion. The large group discussion on each of the beliefs about partner abuse within the first PAST group in particular went very well. Unlike the second PAST group that was already quite bonded by this point in time, the first PAST group's dynamics flourished during this exercise. The men both supported and respectfully challenged each other, everyone shared their own personal beliefs and values, and it became apparent at the end of the exercise (2 hours later) that the group members had dispelled the myths about partner abuse. Adding to this discussion was the perspective of the peer mentor who openly shared both his past and current views about these beliefs and his personal stories about his past abusive behaviors. Despite the fact that the peer mentor was not involved in this session in the second PAST group, the group members surprisingly agreed that the 10 stated beliefs were in fact myths about partner abuse. Even when it came to the difficult beliefs that stated "The abused woman shouldn't take the children away from their father" and that "If it was that bad the women would leave", all the group members disagreed and shared their reasons why children should not remain in the home of an abusive relationship and why it is often difficult for women to leave. It became apparent in the second PAST group that the majority of its members acknowledged that they were responsible for their own behaviors. During both PAST groups, the student also had the opportunity in this exercise to tie in aspects from the video One Hit Leads to Another which the group members had just previously viewed and review the handouts developed by the program. This session had a marked

enhancement of member-member interaction rather than the member-facilitator interaction seen in other stages of the group process. This style of interaction is exclusively typical to the 'middle stages' of group (Corey & Corey, 1992).

Overall, the visit from the peer mentor at the first PAST group was beneficial. The peer mentor displayed honesty with the group members by sharing his current struggles and reinforcing to the group that he will always need to work at the things they were learning. This statement was tied into previous teachings on the 'stages of change' (from the prep-group session) by illustrating that the peer mentor was in the maintenance stage of change that still requires constant relapse prevention skills and awareness. The group members admitted that they could relate to some of the peer mentor's experiences and appreciated his attendance and involvement. Unlike the prep-group session, where the group members were uncomfortable and full of anxiety, during this 'middle stage' of group the members were much more at ease and demonstrated this by asking the peer mentor questions and respectfully challenging him about some of his new beliefs and perspectives. This fact points to the need to have the peer mentor visit on at least two occasions (once in this 'middle stage' of group) in order to provide the group members with an opportunity to ask him questions when they are more comfortable within the group setting and are more committed to the group process.

While debriefing post group the peer mentor highlighted the fact that the energy in the room felt great, that he was impressed with the level of participation and disclosures and that he truly liked the flexible and open group style that the student and the co-facilitator were using. His previous experience with the PAST group was that it was much more rigid and closed to discussion and sharing. The co-facilitator stressed that the

peer mentor's involvement helped group members come out of their shells within the session and that the group members participated more and disclosed more in this session than ever before.

In terms of group dynamics, by this point in the two groups, the group members had become much more unified. They were visiting more both before the group and during the breaks, they seemed free to respectfully challenge the facilitators, the peer mentor and each other, and they were able to understand and acknowledge others perspectives. In addition, individuals from each of the PAST groups brought snacks for the group, an extremely rare phenomenon for a PAST group. Through the group members' jokes, use of nicknames, enhanced disclosures, and heavy discussion it was clear that they were comfortable within the group and were having a good time. The cohesion within the groups became clear when one of the group members in the second PAST group stated that he was sad that group was going to end soon and that he hoped he would bump into some of the guys after group. In the student's experience such an open expression of feelings/ vulnerability is rare in a PAST program, especially for one that is run over a 4-day period.

Session # 9: Socialization

Objectives:

- To understand how men and women are socialized, and the impact this has on promoting violence.
- To understand the consequences of staying in the male role.

Reflections:

In an attempt to develop an extensive list of the various influences on each of our lives, this session commenced with an exploration of the meaning of values and a search for the ways in which the group members developed their own personal values. The co-

facilitator validated the group members' suggestions and keyed into the group member's ideas regarding the influence of the media and emphasized to the group the fact that the media is in essence a reflection of societies most current values. To further explore the impact of the media the video "Tough Guise" (not a pre-established aspect of the program) was viewed. This video explores the male role, how the media portrays masculinity, the fronts/disguises that men have to use to stay in the male role, and the consequences of remaining in the male role. Although the language in the video "Tough Guise" is difficult it does seem to be a video that group members can relate to and enjoy. The video's examples are current and are focused on a male audience. The facilitators chose not to use the video suggested by the program "Still Killing us Softly" as this video also uses difficult language but in addition to this, it is not current and it tends to be much more oriented to a women's audience and women's issues. As a means of reviewing the video "Tough Guise", the co-facilitator drew a box on the flip chart and asked the group members for stereotypical characteristics of men and then names for men who don't have such qualities (who don't fit into the box). It was explained to the group that society often encourages men to stay in this role and that the media plays a large role of boxing men into these qualities. It is the student's opinion that doing this exercise personalizes society's pressure on men to the participants' own needs and issues. To counter this exercise the socialization of women and the impact that the media has on their socialization was explored. As with the men a box was drawn on the flip chart and the group members were asked to list stereotypical characteristics of a "real woman" and names for women who don't hold such qualities (if they don't fit into the box). In the first PAST group it was interesting to see that the group members seemed particularly nice in

the stereotypical qualities that they came up with for the women (intelligent, decisive, rich etc...). The student only got the more stereotypical qualities after some real prodding and after informing the group members that they were being much too easy on the women. This phenomenon may have had to do with how society is now trying to promote women (i.e. Oprah), or more likely it had to do with how the student asked the question or the fact that it was the female facilitator who was asking the question. The group may have revealed very different answers if the male facilitator had asked the questions and done the recording. This suspicion was somewhat verified in the second PAST group where, when the male co-facilitator delivered this exercise, the group members were more "real" in revealing the stereotypical qualities of women (big boobs, skinny, sexy, promiscuous etc..).

The fact that the roles are rigid and set up conflict between the sexes, that the roles limit options for both genders, that some of the characteristics are positive and both genders could benefit from them, that some of the characteristics are not desirable (negative consequences) and that some are not realistic and set the person up for failure (adding to the tension building cycle), were all thoroughly explored with the group members. The ultimate link between staying in this rigid male role and the use of abusive behavior was made apparent. The inability to fit the role, the messages that society gives about the need for men to have power over their partners and the common objectification of women in advertisements were all linked to abusive behavior. To terminate this session, the necessity of stepping out of the stereotypical male role and stepping into healthy human qualities was explored.

In the first PAST group the student and the co-facilitator chose to use a different form of facilitation for this session. Rather than designating one facilitator for each session, they instead attempted to deliver the session conjointly. This lack of designation seemed a bit disorganized and it made it much more difficult for the student to contribute. Due to this disorganization it was both the student's and the co-facilitator's fear that it may have looked like the experienced male co-facilitator was directing the student when to do things (hence, not modeling an equal relationship). As a result of this negative experience, the student and the co-facilitator chose to return to their original means of delivering the program for the second implementation of this session in the second PAST group.

In terms of group dynamics in both groups at this point the group members had done some shifting of chairs. Breaking this implicit norm revealed a great comfort level within the group environment. In addition at this point it had become difficult to determine which members of the group were originally the quiet ones.

This session was particularly helpful for the student as it allowed her to see some of the feminist values and approaches put into practice. This session's focus on the gender role socialization, by the media, of men and women, and its connection to violence and abuse corresponds to the feminist orientation that views domestic violence as a sociopolitical problem that maintains men's power and control and keeps women in subordinate roles (Adams, 1989). By focusing on the societal context within which domestic abuse occurs the men may be in a better position to challenge their own value and belief systems. The feminist view that abuse and violence are learned and reinforced

by society is emphasized within this session and it is the goal of this session (as it is of the feminist perspective) to re-educate its members.

Session # 10: Victim Impact: Women

Objectives:

- To begin to learn about the impact of domestic violence on women

Reflections:

This session centered on the video "Love, Honored and Bruised" which portrayed the physical, emotional and behavioral impacts of domestic abuse on one woman (Jeannie).

As a means of debriefing this video the student and the co-facilitator had the group members brainstorm for examples of what Jeannie went through both emotionally and physically from both her and her husband's perspective (Farmer Fox). Debriefing this exercise in such a manner illustrated to the group members how different the two perspectives were and how much Farmer Fox was minimizing, justifying and denying his behaviors. Within this exercise the group members pointed out the fact that not once did Farmer Fox directly admit to his behavior, that there was an excuse for each of his responses ("it was a justifiable response") and that at several points in the video he referred to Jeannie as both a child and as a thing ("she needed to be disciplined like a child", "she was the closest thing around" etc...). It was at this point that the student re-addressed the important theme of the objectification of women that had been covered during the last session. The concept, that individuals' often objectify/ dehumanize their victims prior to acting abusively was explored with the group members. It was stressed to the group that referring to someone as a thing, or by using degrading names to refer to the individual dehumanizes the person thus making it easier for him/her to be abused. This dynamic was compared to times of war when the military refers to the enemy as

strategic targets and the victims as collateral damage. These tactics are utilized in the military to make it easier for the soldiers to be able to perform their duties and to remain detached. Within both PAST groups the group members expressed horror and empathy for Jeannie and a great understanding of the emotional and physical impacts of the abuse. This video also provided the opportunity for the group members to see first hand the intergenerational effects of abuse.

Unfortunately the delivery of this session was rushed in both PAST programs and thus the extremely relevant material on the history of violence against women, the statistics about violence against women and the impacts of partner abuse on women were reviewed very quickly. Consequently, it is difficult to determine whether the group members developed a good understanding of the relevance of this session and whether they had the opportunity to integrate any of this material to their lives and to reflect on the impacts that their abuse could possibly have had on their partners. The student regrets not leaving enough time for this session, as she believes that this area is one of the most important sections of the program. Without victim empathy, change seems near to impossible.

During this session, the first PAST group had another surprise visit from the peer mentor. Within this session the peer mentor shared with the group members the work that he had accomplished through the PAIG program which included a victim empathy letter (a letter he had written from what he thought would be his partners perspective, sharing "her" experience of the abuse) and an accountability record of his most violent episode. The peer mentor's reading of this letter was a means of modeling to the group, openness, accountability and responsibility for his past actions and was a great example

of how to drop defense mechanisms. However, the group members were not as responsive to the peer mentor as they had been the week before. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and the fact that the facilitators did not know the peer mentor was coming to the group, the peer mentor's presentation was done quickly in the last 15 minutes of group. Not only were the group members anxious to leave for the day, it is the student's perspective that the men were definitely in a different stage of the group process, where they seemed much less involved in the group process and much more detached. This is normal for the termination stage of group (Corey & Corey, 1999). The student would expect a better response from the group members during the middle sessions of the program where the group members are at a high point of being dedicated/attached/involved/committed to the group process. This response from the group challenged the student's original hypothesis that the group members would be the most receptive to the help and support of the peer mentor at the end of the group. In hindsight, the student realized that the necessity to discuss the dates that the peer mentor would attend group was key to ensure sufficient time for his involvement and to assess the group members' stage in the group process.

During the next session when the involvement of the peer mentor was addressed, the group members' comments revealed a great deal to the student: "The information was not appropriate for me", "It's too bad that he had to get into that far", "He has a long way to go", "It was interesting", "It was too bad he had to get so escalated", and "He was further into it (the abuse) then all of us but I appreciate the honesty". Only one group member stated that he shared some of the similar experiences and feelings as the peer mentor and this was a powerful piece for him. Other than this last comment, the

comments demonstrated the heavy reliance upon defense mechanisms (minimization, denial and distance) and revealed a lack of responsibility and accountability by the group members for their own actions. This was surprising to the student as thus far in the program such use of defense mechanisms had not been evident. In addition it was apparent that the men were defining physical abuse as much worse than emotional abuse thus showing a lack of understanding of the victim impact section of the program that states clearly that emotional abuse can be just as devastating as physical abuse. To the student's dismay, the group members evidently did not internalize the emphasis within the feminist approach on confronting denial, justification and minimization and the expansion of the definition of abuse (so physical abuse does not get replaced with other forms of abuse). Despite the attempt of the peer mentor to model to the group members an amazing sense of responsibility and accountability for his actions, the reading of these letters proved to be threatening for the majority of the group members and thus left them on the defense and perhaps even fearful of further work in this area (i.e. the PAIG program).

Session # 11: Victim Impact: Children

Objectives:

- To begin learning the impact of domestic violence on children

Reflections:

This session centered on the video "The Crown Prince" which illustrated the impact of witnessing abuse on children. The debriefing of this video reinforced to the group facilitators that the group members have in fact been listening and have gained a fairly good understanding of the course content. This fact became especially clear when the group was posed the question: "Why did Billy (a character in the video) resort to

violence in the garage?" and the group members responded with answers that included: "Violence is a learned behavior", "He was losing his power and control over the situation", "He was in denial", and "Like father like son". Such responses represented to the student a key understanding of some of the major themes in the program - learned behavior, power and control, defense mechanisms and the intergenerational cycle. The group members initiated a group discussion on the negative messages about women that Billy's father was trying to pass on to him, recognizing statements such as "Got your fuzzy blanket", "I'm the king of the castle and you're the crown prince", "Have you stopped hiding behind your mother's skirt" and "A man's wife doesn't have the right to do this" as phrases that could have negative impacts on a child. The group members clearly seemed to understand how Billy's dad objectified his wife and how he was additionally using an array of defense mechanisms. Throughout the discussion, both PAST groups made it clear to the facilitators that they were aware of, and were empathic to, the impacts of witnessing abuse on children as many disclosed that they too were exposed to such violence as children in their families of origin. As a result of this reflection on family, one group member in the second PAST group had a significant emotional response that the student had yet to witness in a PAST program. This group member began sharing his past abuse by his older brother and this resulted in hysterical crying and shouting. Although extremely rare for a PAST program, the student was not completely shocked by such an intense disclosure and emotional response as this group, since the prep-group session, was extremely bonded. The above-mentioned group member chose to take a time out, and on break spoke both with the co-facilitator and a fellow group member. Although time was provided for the group members to speak to their role as victims in

their own family of origins they were also challenged by the facilitators to consider the impacts that their abusive behavior has had on their children. To drive home this point a list of the impacts on children who witness abuse was explored with the group members.

To aid the group members in assisting their children to break the cycle and to help them to be proactive in repairing/preventing any harm done to their children, the student initiated a discussion on the things that children need once they have witnessed abuse in the home. The time provided for this section proved to be worthwhile as it focused the group on a positive note (what we can do now) rather than staying in the negative (what we have already done). This exercise seemed to empower the group to believe that they were in a position to positively influence their children's healing. Focusing on how to actually make positive changes seemed to be extremely relevant despite the fact that it is not part of the pre-established program.

Since this session was nearing the end of the program, it was important for the student to prepare the members for the group's termination. This preparation took the form of questions for the group members: 1. How do you feel about group coming to an end? 2. Do you plan to continue working on change after this group? 3. Who are your supports? Since these questions were personal and since the student and the co-facilitator wanted truthful answers, they had the first PAST group record and hand in their responses. Although meaningful answers were attained from the group members through this process, in hindsight, this piece would have been more meaningful for the group dynamics if the group members had shared their responses with the rest of the group. Consequently in implementing this exercise in the second PAST program, the student and the co-facilitator had the group members share their responses with the rest of the group.

Due to the obvious comfort level within this second PAST group, the student was less wary that these personal questions would be too threatening for the group members to answer. The group members' responses regarding their feelings about group termination included pride about completion ("I feel good cause this is my 3rd attempt to complete group" and "I also feel confident that I will complete it this time"), happiness over acquired knowledge ("I learned a lot about abuse and about myself changing for the better" and "Happy because I've learned a lot of tools I can take with me and use in the future"), and sadness over the group's termination ("I feel a bit sad because I met some cool people I might never see again", "I hope we'll bump into each other after group end in another context" and "I wish the group was longer as I was learning lots about myself"). Based on the student's experiences, such disclosures of sadness over the PAST program ending are rare. Remarkably, 15 out of the 16 group members (in both PAST groups) responded that they planned to continue on working on change after the termination of group. The means by which change would continue varied from: taking time outs when necessary, using the tools learned in group, individual counseling, couples counseling, taking more group programming, staying alert to warning signs, and working with probation officers and CFS workers. The purpose of the last question was to assist the group members in realizing that positive supports are necessary when making changes and when personal supports were not available the student familiarized the group members with positive community resources. The majority of the group members listed family members and friends as their positive supports however a minority of the group members listed only themselves as their sole supporters. This form of preparation for termination proved to be an excellent means of providing the student with

an idea of relevant information in terms of what types of change the group members planned and what community supports may be appropriate for them.

Session # 12: Program Wrap-up

Objectives:

- To review the program
- For participants to review their control plans (warning signs and timeouts), and revise as required
- To evaluate the program
- For the group members to determine whether they met their sought after goals.

Reflections:

The goal of session 12 was to wrap-up the program. This wrap up consisted of having the group members complete their personal plans for non-violence to be handed into their probation officers; complete the post-test that was developed by Manitoba probation services to act as an assessment tool to measure the group members progress in the PAST group; answer review questions about the course content as these questions served as a proactive means of reviewing the course material; and evaluate both the prep-group program and the PAST program. This session concluded with a review, in the large group setting, of the group members' goals set for themselves during the prep-group session. In every case within the two PAST groups the participants said that they had reached their sought after goals and some went so far as to express that they had exceeded their own expectations.

It should be noted that within this last session, one group member in each PAST program displayed resistance. Although these two group members were identified at the beginning as the most resistant of the group members, throughout the PAST program their resistance faded and both became positive and fairly active group participants. One

of these group members was annoyed over having to redo his control plan and the other initially refused to do it, surprising the student immensely. It is the student's belief that one man's resistance may have had to do with his lack of desire to re-write all the information as literacy was an issue for him, and the other man's resistance and outright anger stemmed from his intense frustration over the fact that his probation officer needed to see the work he had done in group. To resolve this issue the student both validated and empathized with the group members' frustrations and provided each man with the choice to not complete their control plans. They were informed, however, that if they did not choose to do the exercise it would have to be noted in their evaluations. It was interesting and extremely pleasing to see that in both cases other group members de-escalated these members and assisted them in completing the exercise.

The group dynamics overall felt different in this last group session, as there was less discussion and the group members, more than ever, were in a rush to get out of group. It is the student's belief that a few factors may have been at work. These included: the fact that the session was rushed limiting the time for discussion; that the material being covered was redundant and tedious and exclusively had to do with the program wrapping up; and that the group members were beginning a process of separation and were in fact preparing themselves for the end of group. This latter point is verified in Corey & Corey's research in group- processes that speaks to the fact that a decrease in participation and dedication to the group process is a normal reaction at the termination of a group (1992). With this said, there was indeed a sense of great accomplishment within the group. All of the group members expressed their appreciation to the facilitators and made it known that they had positive feelings about the group and felt they were more

educated because of it. In line with the corresponding literature in this area (Corey & Corey, 1992), a mixture of feelings including sadness, apprehension, pride and joy characterized this 'ending stage' of the group process.

To conclude this reflection on the student's experience of the PAST program it is relevant to note the student's surprise over the fact that the group members, in the shorter term group (the second PAST group) which occurred over a period of 4 days, were much more cohesive and disclosed much more in the group process than the group members in the longer term group (the first PAST group) which occurred over a 5 week period. It was the student's original belief that meeting more times over a longer period of time would create more opportunity for bonding and thus more intense relationships. In reality a short period of time, where the group members saw each other every day, proved to be much more intensive and thus created more intense bonds and enhanced communication. This immersion into the group content and the group atmosphere (this became their world for the week) and the fact that the group members did not need to get re-established each week contributed to the enhanced cohesion and openness of the second PAST group.

Follow-up Interviews

To meet the student's proposed aim of implementing in-person follow-up interviews, the student provided the opportunity for the PAST group members, who completed the program to its entirety, to meet one-on-one with the facilitators. Unfortunately, as a result of some of the group members' probation orders being terminated at the end of group and the fact that some of the group members were not easily accessible (did not have phones, did not have fixed addresses) the follow-up sessions had to take place on

the last day of the PAST program. Due to the time restrictions of the PAST program the follow-up interviews were restricted to approximately 10 minutes per group member. While each group members' follow-up ensued, the remaining group members watched the video "Unforgivable". It is the student's belief that this video is extremely relevant and appropriate for the termination of group as it illustrates the majority of the material covered within group.

This follow-up session consisted of a review of the group members' evaluation, an account of what material was going to their assigned probation officers, a reflection on their plan for non-violence, an assessment of their 'stage of change', a chance to debrief their experience in group, and a review of community resources.

A review of the group members' evaluations

The student and the co-facilitator read each of the group members their evaluation which reflected their attendance, degree of participation, attitude, written work, completion of homework, comments (did they reflect an understanding of the course material), significant contributions to the group (e.g. brought laughter, put people at ease, supported others, shared personal stories), their sense of accountability and responsibility, their issues that required further work and their interaction with the group and its facilitators. This process was a means of being honest and accountable to the group members and it kept them involved in the group process until the very end.

An account of material being forwarded to their probation officers

As a means of staying accountable, the group members were shown exactly what was being passed on to their individual probation officers. This consisted of the facilitator evaluations, their consent forms, their plans for non-violence and both their pre-tests and

post-tests. It should be noted that all but one of the group members improved their scores on the post-test compared to the pre-test by at least one point. This demonstrated to the student, the group members' enhanced understanding and knowledge of domestic abuse. Each group member's improved score was pointed out to him to provide him with a sense of accomplishment.

A reflection on their plan for non-violence

This reflection consisted of asking the group members if they felt confident with their plan for non-violence and if they had any concerns in terms of its practical implementation. The original aim was to assist the group members in modifying their plan for non-violence in case of changed circumstances; however, since the follow-up session was so immediate, no time had elapsed for changes in circumstances to occur. Consequently, the facilitators emphasized for the last time, the importance and relevance of this plan and encouraged the group members to adapt their plan in cases of changed circumstances

An assessment of their 'stage of change'

This consisted of getting each group member to assess their 'stage of change' in comparison to that which they assessed during the prep-group session. Their assessment during the prep-group had been kept to themselves to be revealed to facilitators at this point in time. It was interesting to see that none of the group members identified themselves (at the onset of group) as coming into group in the pre-contemplation 'stage of change', which is the most likely 'stage of change' at which the involuntary clients come into group. The majority of the group members had assessed themselves as in the contemplation stage of change while some of the group members stated they were

already in the preparation stage and one even perceived himself as being in the maintenance 'stage of change' at entry into the group. It was apparent that some social desirability factors were at work during the prep-group. At this follow-up session stage of the group one man assessed himself as still being in contemplation, one in preparation, three somewhere between the preparation stage and action stage, seven in the action stage and four either in, or verging on, the maintenance stage of change. Despite the fact that many of the group members may have over-estimated their degree of change, this process, had the benefit of assisting the group members to realize that change was and is possible, that they should be proud of themselves for instituting some changes and it helped point out what changes still remain to be accomplished. This process made change a conscious process rather than a subconscious one and by doing this exercise it allowed the group members' change processes to truly be considered, planned, worked on and maintained.

A chance to debrief their experience in group

Group members were given an opportunity to reflect with the facilitators on their experience within group, to disclose any frustrations or concerns that may have arisen within the context of the program, to share any apprehensions about group ending, to ask for guidance in terms of finding further assistance and resources and for them to ask any lingering questions without the presence of the entire group. This opportunity also provided a chance for the facilitators to share with the group members some positive oral feedback.

A review of community resources

Each group member was given a detailed resource list and resources were identified that were specifically applicable to their current needs and desires so as to ensure maintenance of change. Not only did this provide the group members with easy access to information about potential assistance and support but it also helped the student identify the group members who really wanted to continue work on themselves and on their relationships. The group members were specifically asked if they still had areas that they wanted to look at in their lives. While many of the group members showed interest in couples' counseling, a much smaller number showed an interest in longer-term therapeutic group work for themselves. The resource lists was especially important for two group members, as this last day of group was also their last day of supervised probation and thus their last contact with mandated supports.

It is the student's belief that the use of these individual follow-ups proved to be highly beneficial. In addition to the beneficial aspects of the follow-up interview mentioned above, the interview provided a wonderful means for the student and the co-facilitator to properly say goodbye to each group member, to commend them for completing the program and to encourage them to continue with their change processes. Not only was the follow-up interview good practice but it was an important way to truly evaluate the effectiveness of the group. Based on group members' comments, disclosures, questions and amount of communication within this follow-up interview (from both PAST groups) the men appreciated this opportunity to debrief with the facilitators alone. It should be noted however that having this interview on the final group meeting did contribute to some of the group members wanting to rush through their

interview. In addition, some men disclosed more personal details of their lives that because of the time restrictions of the interview could not be properly debriefed. The student's recommendation that addresses this concern will be discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE - EVALUATION

This section of this practicum report consists of six sources of evaluation. These sources of evaluation include the group members' evaluations of the prep-group session and the PAST program, the social service providers' (co-facilitator, peer mentor, supervising probation officer and an observing student) evaluations of the prep-group program, the co-facilitator's evaluation of the student's facilitation skills, the student's self-evaluation of the group process and her involvement in it, the student's assessment of the practicum and finally, the assessment of the educational benefits gained by the student. It is the combined results of these evaluations that enhanced the student's self-reflections and confirmed to the student that she has in fact accomplished her set out learning objectives.

Group Members' Evaluation

As a means of acquiring the group members' formal feedback and recommendations the group participants completed an evaluation on both the prep-group session and on the PAST program.

Participants' Evaluation of the Prep-Group Session (appendix E and F)

Overall, this evaluation sought the group members' feedback on whether the prep-group session prepared them for the PAST program, whether it was a means of motivating them to return to the rest of the group sessions, whether the advent of the peer mentor was beneficial, how they felt after the prep-group session, what were the most and least helpful aspects of the prep-group session and whether they would recommend its continued use. The prep-group evaluation was completed by all of the participants who completed both PAST groups.

Preparation:

All of the group members said 'yes' to the question that asked them "Did the first group meeting (the prep-group) help you get ready for the rest of the group meetings?" indicating to the student that they did feel prepared for the onset of the PAST program. Two of the group members replied 'no' to the question that asked "Do you feel that you knew what to expect from the group after the preparation session". Both of these group members indicated that there was too much information and that the material was covered too quickly within the prep-group session. This feedback confirmed the student's belief that the prep-group session had to be either made longer or that some of its content had to be removed. Comments that revealed the group members' feelings of preparedness included: "It was a great introduction to the people involved in the group"; "The first group helped by giving me a feeling of what I was getting myself into"; "Everything was explained about what's coming up in each session"; "I knew what to look forward to"; "It told you what to expect"; and "It helped me feel a little more comfortable".

Motivation:

All but one group member believed that the prep-group session motivated them to return to the rest of the program. The one group member who did not feel motivated by the prep-group session indicated that: "The first day is always shitty". Comments that revealed the group members' beliefs that the prep-group acted as a motivating force included: "I was comfortable enough with the environment to return"; "It set a good tone"; "Judging by the first day it seemed to be a good program"; "It was the goal setting [that] made me feel determined"; "It allowed you to meet new people with similar

problems"; "Once I found out how friendly and open the group was, then I realized [that there was] nothing to be afraid of"; and "It lets you know that it is not really a punishment but more like an informational seminar". It should be noted that while checking off the box that said the prep-group session helped motivate him to return, one group member reported that nobody motivates him but himself.

Peer Mentor:

All but one group member thought that meeting with the peer mentor on the first day of group was in fact helpful. The group member who did not indicate that the peer mentor was helpful stated that he never gave the peer mentor's involvement a thought. The other group members comments that supported the use of the peer mentor included: "He was open and honest [about] what he went through"; "He did not judge us"; "It gives us an idea of other people's involvement and how much worse things could possibly be"; "He helped in a way that made me understand"; "I wished he had time to share even more"; "He should have been here to help the whole time"; "Good to find out that people [can] actually change their lives"; and "The peer mentor made us all feel comfortable".

Feelings:

When asked about how they felt after the prep-group session, the group members comments included that they felt: "Relieved"; "Nervous but excited because it will teach me about my anger and what ignites it"; "Determination to finish the program"; and "Positive". The above quotations were largely from the first PAST group who were asked post- PAST group "What feelings were you left with after the prep-group session". In hindsight, the student realizes that this question was posed improperly in the second PAST group's questionnaire that was distributed immediately after the prep-group

session. Where it should have stated: "How are you feeling now that your first session is over", it instead read: "How do you feel about today's session". This error in wording drew out responses that focused on the group members' reactions to the session rather than how they were feeling on a personal level.

Most helpful aspect:

The various responses by the group members in terms of what they liked the most about the prep-group session included: "Meeting the facilitators"; "That I wasn't the only person having to participate in the program"; "Learning from the group"; "That people showed respect and patience for each other"; "The talking"; "The discussion on defense mechanisms"; and "That everyone was involved". The above quotations are largely from the second PAST group who answered this question directly after the prep-group session. In contrast to these reactions, the first PAST group who experienced much lag time between the prep-group session's implementation and its evaluation, tended to pick out the helpful aspects of the PAST program rather than the prep-group session (i.e. "Learning about timeouts and warning signs"). Based on the different responses between the two groups the importance of providing part of the evaluation immediately after its implementation was confirmed.

Least helpful aspects:

The majority of the group members commented on the unbearable heat in the group room and two of the group members commented on the excessive depth and length of the prep-group session. It was remarkable to see that many of the group members stated that they liked everything about the prep-group session.

Future use of the prep-group session:

All of the group members who completed the PAST program thought that it was a good idea for the prep-group program to be continued in the future. Comments from the group members included: "Knowing people that you will be with for the next 8 sessions and being comfortable with them will entice all involved to return"; "I like the idea because it kept you on track"; "Let's you know what to expect from the course"; "Because it kind of breaks the ice so to speak"; "Good to have a half day session for the first group"; "It will motivate others to finish the group"; "It should always been used as an introduction"; "So that people will not run away - they can decide if they want to stay". It should be noted that one group member suggested that the prep-group session might be optional if it interferes with an individual's employment. It should be stressed here that the group members' verbal reports at the time of the first session of the PAST program were consistent with such written feedback.

Participants' Evaluation of the PAST Group

The "Participant Evaluation" (appendix C) of the PAST program was developed by Probation Services to attain the group participants' feedback on the course content, course leaders, audio-visual aids, length of the program and their thoughts on what they felt were the most and least helpful aspects of the program and the changes they would suggest for the future. This "Participant Evaluation" was completed by all of the participants who completed both PAST groups.

Course Content:

All of the participants agreed that the objectives of the program were clearly explained, that the information provided was suitable for their needs and that their

personal expectations of the program were met. In replying to this latter statement some of the group members' comments included: "I took some good pieces from the program", "I learned everything I could", "It made me more aware of my warning signs for me and my partner", and "Come the last day I felt very satisfied" hence revealing their genuine appreciation for the course material. In answering question # 2: "In my opinion, the program objectives were met", two of the group participants replied 'no' and did not comment on why.

Course Leaders:

All of the group members indicated that they felt the facilitators were well-prepared, communicated clearly and encouraged group participation. Direct comments from the group members in this section of the evaluation included that: "The facilitators made it very clear and easy to understand the sessions" and that "When someone in the group had difficulty they [the facilitators] would go out of their way to explain it". One group member commented on the fact that it was nice to see that the male co-facilitator was able to laugh along with the group when he made a mistake. On a rating scale from poor to excellent, seven participants evaluated the student as "good" and eight participants evaluated her as "excellent". The co-facilitator was evaluated as "good" by three participants and as "excellent" by the remaining twelve. It should be noted that one group member did not fill out this aspect of the program evaluation.

Audio/Visual Aids:

All but one of the group members indicated that they felt that the videos shown were related to the program content. It was ironic to see that the one group member who stated that the videos were not relevant made the comment "I did not like them, I don't believe

in violence". With this said, it should be noted that it was this group member who got extremely emotionally aroused by the video the "Crown Prince" (which was viewed on the same day as this evaluation was filled out). One of the group members made the important suggestion that although the videos did make a good point they were very outdated.

Length of the Program:

On a scale from too short to too long the majority of the group members (twelve) felt that the time allotted for the program was "about right", two of the group members felt that the group was "too long" and only one group member stood out as indicating that the program was in fact "too short". Once again it should be noted that one of the group members did not complete this aspect of the program evaluation.

Most Helpful Aspects about Group:

Six men commented on the benefits of the sessions on warning signs and time outs; one man explained that the drawing on defense mechanisms was the most helpful as it provided him with insights into pain, guilt and shame; one man indicated that the cycle was the most important for him; one member indicated that he had learned a lot about himself and another member noted that he could see himself in many of the areas of discussion in the program; and finally, three group participants indicated that the communication and support between group members was the most helpful. This aspect of the evaluation and those that follow were not completed by two of the group participants.

Least Helpful Aspects about Group:

One group member suggested that the session on time outs was the least helpful; one man indicated that the videos were very painful for him as he has been a victim of abuse; one group member made note of the fact that the writing in the group was hard for him; one man disliked that some of the group members "babbled" on too long; three of the group members stated that the least helpful aspects of group were the parts that did not apply to them, however did not indicate which parts those were; six of the group members indicated that "nothing" was the least helpful for them; and finally, one group member noted that the peer mentor's account of his most violent incident was not helpful and went on to explain "that his problems are not everyone else's" (obviously missing the point of this exercise).

Suggestions for Future Programs:

While the majority of the group members stated that there were no suggestions for change, others' suggestions included: "Run the program a little longer - say 2 weeks", "Limit babbling", "Shorten the program", "Change the room temperature", "Have a real meal on the last day of group", and "Decrease the involvement of the peer mentor". On a scale from poor to excellent, eight group members rated the course overall as "excellent", six rated it as "good" while only one group member rated it as "satisfactory". All of the group members indicated on this evaluation that they would in fact recommend this program to others. It should also be noted here that the group members' verbal reports throughout the program were consistent with this written feedback.

Social Service Providers' Evaluation of the Prep-Group Session

To attain the co-facilitator's, peer mentor's, supervising probation officer's and a student observer's formal feedback and recommendations regarding the prep-group session the student developed the "Informal Evaluation of the Preparation Session" (appendix G). This evaluation, which was given to these service providers immediately after the implementation of both prep-groups, requested feedback in the areas of prep-group content, length, student facilitation, peer mentor involvement, observations of the impacts on the group participants and recommendations/ suggestions for future use. The evaluations of the first prep-group session were particularly helpful to the student as they assisted her in the modifications made for the second implementation of the prep-group session.

Content:

Overall, the service providers felt that the content of the prep-group session was very good. They suggested that the topics were appropriate, that it made for a good introduction into group, that the content answered many of the questions that the participants ask, and that the content relaxed the group participants. They specifically identified the strengths of the prep-group session as: the discussions on defense mechanisms, stages of change, participant choices; the icebreaker on perceptions; the establishment of participant goals; and the involvement of the peer mentor. In contrast, the weaknesses of the prep-group sessions were identified as: the direct focus on zero tolerance, the repetition seen throughout the session, the fact that the planned content could not be sufficiently addressed in the three hours available to the session and the extensive focus on administrative content (information on roles, statistics, and

evaluations). It should also be noted that two of the service providers indicated the need for more participant interaction in the prep-group session.

Length:

While some of the service providers viewed the three-hour time frame provided for the prep-group session as appropriate others deemed this amount of time as insufficient. Those who believed that the three-hour period was sufficient stressed the fact that the prep-group is merely an introduction to the program and that a lot can be accomplished in such a period. In contrast, the majority felt that the prep-group was too short to appropriately cover the set out material in the manual and the three-hour time frame left the group members feeling rushed.

Facilitation:

As a co-facilitator, the student was described in the evaluation as "Well prepared", "Very comfortable" and "Very professional". Other comments about the student's co-facilitation included that "It appeared like she had been doing groups for a very long time"; "[She had a] good ability of "inviting" the men to talk"; "The fact that this particular student has done extensive preparation has made student co-facilitation possible at this point"; "I don't think that her being a student had any effect on how she presented or how the group responded to her"; and "She is a natural in front of the group". Suggestions for the student for improvement included creating less of a classroom setting and more of a group setting, inviting the quiet group members into discussion, and speaking slower on the topics that are more difficult for the group members to comprehend. It was also suggested that there might be areas of growth relating to challenging the participants and being challenged by them.

Peer Mentor:

The majority of the Service Providers felt that including the peer mentor in the prep-group session was extremely beneficial. The co-facilitator suggested that the involvement of the peer mentor was one of the greatest strengths of the prep-group session. Specifically he felt that "The insights offered and answers given to the group were invaluable and that the value of role-modeling is inestimable". It should be noted that the supervising probation officer and the student who observed the second implementation of the prep-group session commented that the peer mentor took on too much of a facilitation role and did not share enough information about himself with the group members. Thus, he did not appear to have a significant emotional impact on the group members. It was the peer mentor's belief that, although nervous, he reached some of the group participants.

Observations of the Group Participants:

Comments from the Service Providers based on their observations of the group members' experiences of the prep-group program included that the group members: "Seemed very keen", "Felt heard" and that "They appeared to relax much faster than in a normal group". In addition, it was noted that the prep-group "Seemed to create a comfort level within the group", "Enhanced group participation" and as a result of its initiation the group members opened up right away in the PAST group as "They were comfortable with each other and knew exactly what to expect". The student observer suggested that, without this prep-group session, a half a day of the PAST program would have to be taken to attempt to get the group members comfortable within their setting. It should also be noted that one of the supervising probation officers and the student observer felt that

the quietness and awkwardness that are typical of any first day of a program existed but subsided with the initiation of the 'icebreaker' exercise and with the discussion on zero tolerance.

Recommendations:

Suggestions for future use of this prep-group program included: that it should continue in its present format (attached to a specific PAST program) as group cohesion was already starting to develop, that it should be more intensive in order to evoke emotions, that it should be targeted more for pre-contemplators, that the peer mentor should be provided with more of an opportunity to talk about his personal experiences and that the peer mentor should meet with the facilitators prior to the prep-group session in order to better prepare for his role in the session. The co-facilitator suggested that the prep-group program should be continued but put under review for at least one year.

The Co-facilitator's Evaluation of the Student's Facilitation of the PAST Program

Throughout the implementation of the PAST programs, the co-facilitator provided the student with verbal feedback regarding her contribution to the PAST program. The co-facilitator was positive in his feedback regarding the student's facilitation skills in the PAST programs, much like the written feedback provided about the student's facilitation in the prep-group session. At the initiation of the PAST program, he noted that the student sounded shaky but that she adapted quickly and became more comfortable as the group progressed. The co-facilitator highlighted the student's ability to present the course material well, model appropriate behaviors and attitudes, assist group members when they got stuck, and her natural ability to put the group members at ease. Overall, the co-facilitator indicated that the student "Did an excellent job at her facilitation of the course

content". Suggestions made to the student for improvement included: always being aware of the group members underlying attitudes, shifting eye contact from the more negative group members to the more positive ones, bringing in more personal stories and examples as it is these that pique the group members interests, calling on the ideas of the rest of the group members when stuck with a group member's challenges, and constantly being aware of the time in group so as not to run late and to ensure that there is an adequate amount of time for every session. It is the student's belief that all of these suggestions will require time and experience to successfully be mastered.

Self-Evaluation of the Group Process

As a means of evaluating the group process and the student's participation in it, the student completed Northern and Kurland's (2001) group work evaluation (appendix D). Not only was this evaluation a significant means of evaluating herself, but it also acted as a means of keeping her aware of the varying group dynamics and steadfast in her involvement/influence in their development. More specifically, this questionnaire kept the student aware of her goals for the group members; the group's environment, composition and functioning (and her role in their development); the group members' individual needs and problems in functioning (and her role in addressing them); the formation of interpersonal relationships (and her role in their facilitation); the various forms of intervention utilized by the facilitators throughout the program; and the form of authority required of her and the co-facilitator. It is the student's belief that without such an evaluation tool many of the relevant aspects of the group process would have gone unnoticed and that her engagement within this process and with the group members would have been much less influential.

Since many aspects of group evaluation were addressed within the 'student's reflections' on her experience in the practicum, (Chapter 4), only the aspects of evaluation that were not addressed thus far and those that stand out in the student's mind as being key to her learning experience will be explored with the reader. The highlighted aspects include an evaluation of the: group composition, group environment, form of authority assumed by the facilitators, student's demonstration of understanding, formation of interpersonal relationships, group members' relationships with the student, various intervention skills utilized, problems in group functioning and the translation of learning from the group experience into the group members' lives outside the group.

Group Composition:

It is the student's belief that the group's composition was functional for the achievement of goals. All the group participants were men in the medium to high-risk levels on the PRA and they were all mandated to the prep-group and PAST program and thus all were on the same level, sharing the same initial frustrations and concerns. The fact that both groups had a diverse mix of ages, educational levels and ethnicities enhanced the opportunity for the group members to learn from each other's different perspectives. With this said, each group member had similarities based on age, education and ethnicity with at least one other person in group, therefore enhancing feelings of safety and comfort and decreasing feelings of isolation and shame. The size of both groups, small in comparison to the typical PAST program, enhanced the safety and comfort within the group setting and provided greater opportunity for client participation. All of these factors in the group's composition permitted the group to be functional in the achievement of goals.

Group Environment:

The facilitators created an environment that was maximally beneficial for the group members. As mentioned earlier, the chairs were set up in the shape of a semi-circle to reduce the boundaries/ obstacles that tend to separate the facilitators from the group members and to eliminate a classroom like setting. The flip charts that revealed the group's work were posted around the room to highlight the work the group had achieved together. The environment that resulted was conducive to feelings of safety and comfort, encouraged learning and participation, and decreased adversarial feelings between facilitators and group members. To make this environment maximally beneficial the facilitators presented themselves in a friendly way and encouraged the men to be open, honest and to share their frustrations if desired. Providing coffee and snacks also contributed to the relaxed atmosphere that ensued and was helpful in motivating the involuntary clients.

Authority:

It was the student's original assumption that such mandated groups would require the facilitators to take an authoritarian and/or directive role. To the student's surprise neither of the two groups challenged the group facilitators or the program content, and the group members were respectful to the facilitators and to each other. Consequently, the form of facilitation assumed by the facilitators was quite flexible in nature and participant involvement/ ownership of the group was encouraged. The fact that the facilitators spoke to group sitting down (presenting themselves on the same level as the group), that they encouraged the group members to develop their own set of group rules and that they

provided the group members with multiple choices throughout the program illustrated the flexible use of authority by the facilitators.

Demonstration of Understanding:

Throughout the program, the student emphasized participant strengths and validated participant frustrations as much as possible. When a participant concern, problem or question arose the student ensured that she demonstrated a genuine interest in the participant's problem and addressed the concern/problem/question to the best of her ability. The student additionally tried to pay attention to the small things that group members mentioned about their lives so that she could later ask them about these things. It was the student's belief that this inquiry into their lives demonstrated to the group members that somebody was in fact interested in their individual needs, problems and strengths.

Interpersonal Relationships:

Throughout the group, the facilitators developed interpersonal relationships between members by breaking the larger group into small groups or pairs. Using such groupings allowed the group members to get better acquainted with each other. In addition, the student pointed out similarities in comments or experiences that the group members shared. This process made the similarities between the group members' attitudes, thoughts and experiences clear and thus facilitated interpersonal relationships between the members. The snacks at breaks also enhanced the interpersonal relationships. Rather than having the group members split up in all different directions for the break, the food kept the majority of the men in the group room and created an atmosphere where conversations outside of the realm of the group content could be explored. Finally, it is

the student's belief that the initial flexible environment of the prep-group session facilitated the formation of interpersonal relationships.

Relationship with the Student:

The student perceived her relationship with the group members to be quite relaxed and friendly. The group participants were comfortable in joking around with the student, yet remained respectful of her "authority". Throughout the program, the group members disclosed personal information to the student and were comfortable in asking her questions about the program material. It had been the student's original fear that because the co-facilitator is male, older and had many more years of experience than her, the group members would be less resistant to his views and teachings and would be better able to relate to his experiences as a man. In contrast to the student's original prediction, the group members were not more resistant to her and did not judge her comments and teachings based on her sex, age and minimal experience. It should be noted that the one group member with whom the student met prior to the group was particularly comfortable with her. This initial contact enhanced the quality of his relationship with the student, made him more comfortable asking questions and sharing his concerns and it ultimately decreased some initial anxiety that often deters many men from coming to the group setting in the first place. Meeting with the group members individually before the onset of group is recommended for future groups so as to decrease anxiety and pre-program attrition and to enhance motivation and the development of relationships with the facilitators.

Intervention Skills:

The intervention skills of exploration and confrontation were used minimally throughout the program. The PAST program, with its clear objectives and time restrictions unfortunately does not allow for such skills and techniques to develop sufficiently. The skill of exploration was used in brainstorming ideas for the flip charts, however, did not extend beyond this to exploring the group members' personal stories. The skill of confrontation was used to respectfully challenge the group members to think in a different way (to take on another perspective). Since the group members did not present as very negative, did not rely on defense mechanisms (for the most part) and due to the belief held by the co-facilitator that it is not the facilitator's job to be confrontational, the skill of confrontation was very rarely utilized and was almost deemed unnecessary. It was the co-facilitator's perspective that a confrontational style of facilitation invited distance and resistance from the group members. Consequently, rather than being confrontational, the facilitators attempted to be both understanding and supportive in order to reduce the group members' walls of defense and to create a sense of safety so they could begin to challenge themselves and each other.

The skills of structuring, education and clarification were used to a great extent. The entire PAST program is structured in terms of its content and format. The facilitators had the authority to adapt this structure to better meet the needs of their particular group and hence chose to increase the use of small group exercises. In each session there was a certain amount of material that was necessary for the facilitators to cover and this created a structured plan to follow (however loosely). The skill of educating the group members was used throughout every part of the PAST program. The PAST program is an

educational program that provides the group with information and techniques to begin the process of stopping violent/abusive behavior against partners and teaches the men healthy means of altering their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Education takes the form of lectures, discussions, videos, debriefings, small group exercises and written work. Finally the skill of clarification was used to the maximum. Due to literacy and learning difficulties, the complicated and poorly written handouts and the old and complex videos utilized, the skill of clarification became both necessary and desirable. The facilitators ensured that the English they used was easily understood, that they debriefed all handouts and videos, that they used examples and stories to illustrate the important concepts and that they drew diagrams on the flip chart to aid the more visual learners. All of these techniques acted as means of clarification of the course content.

Problems in Functioning:

In the student's view there were very few problems in functioning in either of the groups. Although this was initially a relief to the student, it turned out to be a disappointment as these groups did not lend her much experience in the area of dealing with and de-escalating such difficulties as resistance and interpersonal and group conflicts. The student was not aware of any signs of difficulties in communication and none of the group members maintained dysfunctional member roles throughout the program. As mentioned throughout this report, the group as a whole did not exhibit very much resistance. With this said, a couple of the individuals on a few occasions hinted at their opposition to parts of the group. One group member in particular was resistant because he did not believe that much of the course material applied to him as he was no longer in a relationship and did not have plans to be in another. To deal with this

problem the student tried to express to this group member that the material in this program could also be applied to other forms of relationships and that many of the concepts, skills and techniques could be applied in his daily life. Another group member was at times angry about the justice system in general. To deal with this situation, the facilitators let him vent his frustrations and empathized with his strong feelings. The student tried to focus on the things that this participant and that this program could change rather than focusing on the things that were beyond his or the program's control. Successful up until this point in dealing with problems in the groups' functioning, the facilitators were less successful in dealing with the first PAST group's resistance towards the peer mentor on his third visit to the group. At the time it was the student's belief that since this resistance came out in the last session and since the peer mentor's readings were not introduced properly and thus seemed threatening it was both unfair and too late to challenge the participants' resistance. In hindsight, the student realized that the group members needed to understand the significant level of responsibility and accountability that the peer mentor was assuming and that their resistance and use of defense mechanisms had to be addressed.

Translation of Learning:

To assist in translating group learning to the participants' outside lives, the facilitators relied upon the peer mentor, practical examples and homework assignments. To assist in this translation the peer mentor shared with the group members what he has taken from past groups and the influence of using the skills and techniques learned in groups on his current life. Realistic, practical examples of problems/ issues/ situations that may happen in the group members' day-to-day lives were utilized throughout the program so that the

group experience was relevant to their own personal stories. Finally, homework was a means of getting the group members to practice some of the new skills outside of the group setting so that when group ended they would have already started practicing these new unique techniques. Examples of such homework assignments included: being alert to their negative self talk and practicing their use of positive self-talk, being tuned into their own personal warning signs, taking a practice time-out and noticing the influence of media in our society by cutting out magazine clippings.

The Student's Assessment of the Practicum

Overall, the student is very satisfied with the experience obtained via her planning, developing and implementing the prep- group sessions and her adaptations to and delivery of the PAST programs. It is the student's perspective that the initial goals and objectives for both programs were sufficiently met. Evaluations from both the participants and the service providers reinforced the student's view that the prep-group session was in fact relevant and appropriate to the group members' needs and that it met its objectives of enhancing client readiness and receptivity to the program information, orientating the group members to the group process, increasing motivation for change, enhancing feelings of safety and comfort within the group setting, decreasing anxiety, preparing the men for the larger group setting and providing an opportunity for the group members to get acquainted with one another and with the facilitators. To the student's great disappointment, the prep-group session did not meet the student's aim of decreasing the rate of dropout within the PAST group. It is the student's assessment that the prep-group did have an overall impact on the PAST program. In summary, the observed

impacts of the prep-group session on the PAST program, as assessed by the student, included:

- A shorter period of time was required for the group members to understand what was expected of them and what the group was to entail.
- The apprehension that is normal and expected on the first day of the PAST program was minimized.
- A positive tone for the initiation of the PAST program was established and group members were able to begin the PAST program with a positive frame of mind.
- Familiarity and comfort with the facilitators and the group members was enhanced.
- The early unification and cohesion of the group was initiated.
- The amount of participation, group involvement and self-disclosure was heightened.
- The level of resistance from the group members decreased.
- The reliance on defense mechanisms was minimized.

It is the student's perspective that such beneficial impacts of the prep-group session on the PAST program justify the continuation and perhaps even expansion of the prep-group session.

It should be noted at this time that since no long-term follow-up is incorporated into the PAST program and since recidivism rates are not seen as accurate reflections of abusive behaviors it is impossible for the student to truly assess the impact of the PAST program on the participants attitudes, feelings and behaviors. With this said, it is the student's perspective that both the prep-group session and the PAST program provided valuable education and learning experiences for those participants who completed them.

Achievement of Learning Goals

1. *To increase the student's knowledge of the key clinical issues in intervention with domestic violence offenders:* The student acquired knowledge of these issues both through her research for the literature review and through her direct practical experience of working with such offenders. The development of the literature review provided the student with a theoretical understanding of the varying perspectives on the causes of domestic abuse and ideas on some of the treatment modalities used in this area. The literature specifically informed the student of such issues in intervention as:

- The limitations of each of the treatment modalities
- The somewhat stringent stipulations for group work to be effective
- The common problem of treatment replacing physical abuse with emotional abuse
- The chance that such treatment may give women partners false and unrealistic expectations of their partner's progress
- The tendency to utilize a one size fits all philosophy that tends to ignore both the need to look at culturally competent models of intervention and the necessity to match the offender's specific needs and style of learning with particular styles and modes of treatment
- The significant rate of member drop-out both pre-program and throughout treatment
- The challenges of working with and motivating involuntary clients
- The alternative needs for members in varying 'stages of change'

The student's direct practical experience of working with offenders increased her knowledge of such issues in intervention as:

- Limited literacy and communication skills
- The compounding variables that the program does not address (substance abuse, lack of supports, abuse within the family of origin) which may correlate to the men's abusive behavior
- The initial task of eliminating the us verses them mentality
- The challenge of getting the group members to take responsibility and accountability for their actions
- The significant problem of pre-program attrition and the inability of the prep-group to address this issue

2. *To develop a preparation (orientation) program that properly addresses the offenders' criminogenic needs:* By using the literature on motivational interviewing and the Transtheoretical Model as the foundations for the development of the prep-group session, the involuntary offenders' needs were addressed within this program. The guiding principles of motivational interviewing such as the expression of empathy, the development of discrepancies between current behaviors and important personal goals, the avoidance of argumentation and the support of the participants' sense of self-efficacy were all intentionally integrated into the prep-group session in order to meet the variety of needs displayed by these involuntary clients. Based on the tenets of the Transtheoretical Model and the assumption that such involuntary clients were either in the precontemplation or contemplation stages of change at the onset of the prep-group session, the processes of change such as relationship building, raising the group members awareness about themselves and the problem (consciousness raising), and assessing the costs and benefits of change (reducing ambivalence) were all relied upon to meet the

offenders' needs. Through the prep-group's reliance on these models, the offenders enhanced readiness and receptivity to the PAST program information were consequently increased (Bacon & Bracken, 2002).

The student's original focus on 'the criminogenic' needs of the offenders have not been mentioned up until this point. Criminogenic needs are offender risk factors that are dynamic in nature. These needs influence and maintain offending behaviors and when modified are linked with reductions in recidivism (Bonta, 1997). The prep-group session did not adequately address these 'criminogenic' needs. However, the group members' antisocial attitudes, problem-solving skills, maladaptive cognitions and their hostility and anger, which have all been identified as criminogenic needs (Bonta, 1997), were all key targets within the PAST program. Consequently, it is the PAST program not the prep-group program that can be seen as responsive to the "What Works" 'need principle' that targets offender needs that are considered to be criminogenic in nature.

Another concern was the fact that the prep-group program did not address the "What Works" 'risk principle', of matching their risk level with treatment intensity. As developed, the prep-group program was designed for all men mandated to specific PAST program offerings, regardless of their risk level based on the PRA. In hindsight, the student realizes that this 'one size fits all' programming would not be deemed appropriate or effective in meeting the group members' needs by the standards of the "What Works" literature. On a more positive note, it is the student's belief that the "What Works" principles of program integrity (delivering a program with trained staff and with consistent aims and objectives), responsivity (matching teaching styles with the offenders' learning styles) and a reliance on a treatment modality that was skills based

and which had a cognitive component (Vernard & Hedderman 2000) were all integrated into the development and implementation of the prep-group program. Consequently, the prep-group session did in fact meet some of the “What Works” recommendations for effective practice.

3. *To obtain group facilitation skills:* Through the student's experience of observing and participating in six PAST groups and through her direct co-facilitation of two prep-group sessions and two corresponding PAST programs the student gained an abundance of skills as a group facilitator. Throughout this practicum the student had an opportunity to observe eight different facilitators deliver the PAST program. The variety of approaches, innovative techniques and practice methods used by these facilitators greatly assisted the student in coming up with her own unique style of facilitation. In addition, the contributions of the co-facilitator such as debriefings, his sharing of expertise in the area and his provision of direction, support, feedback and constructive criticisms with the student were essential to her learning experience and enhanced her competence as a group facilitator. As a result the student obtained group facilitation skills and gained confidence in this role and looks forward to further challenges in this area.

4. *To enhance the student's understanding of the application of the pro-feminist approach in a practice setting:* It is the student's perspective that she gained a partial understanding of the application of the pro-feminist approach within the confines of the PAST program. The discussions on power and control and its relation to violence; the expansion of the definition of abuse; the introduction to alternative beliefs, actions and behaviors; the teachings on both the power and control wheel and the equality wheel; the focus on gender role socialization by the media and its connection to a violent society within

which domestic abuse occurs; and the emphasis within the program that explains violence as a learned behavior are all examples of pro-feminist themes that are central teachings in the PAST program. By incorporating such teachings into the delivery of the sessions, the student's understanding of how pro-feminist approaches can be integrated into the practice setting increased. Through the student's practice she was able to see how consciousness raising (a tool in feminist practice) was in fact a first step in assisting the offenders in gaining an awareness of the costs of their behaviors. In addition, being part of a co-facilitating team that modeled equal power dynamics enabled the student to understand the emphasis within the feminist approach on creating an environment that re-teaches equality and non-traditional gender role socialization. The application of such feminist beliefs of changing sexist expectations and attitudes and the focus on the abuser accepting responsibility and accountability for his actions were not covered in the PAST program and thus limited the student's understanding of the application of the feminist approach in the practice setting.

5. To enhance the student's understanding of the application of cognitive behavioral techniques in a practice setting: It is the student's perspective that she gained a fairly good understanding of the application of cognitive behavioral techniques within the confines of the PAST program. The program's major focus on self-talk and beliefs allowed the student to see the practical application of utilizing cognitive techniques to reveal and replace negative, irrational thought patterns with accurate, healthy and productive patterns. The discussions on time outs, warning signs, cycle of violence, and alternatives to their current behavior are all examples of cognitive-behavioral themes that are central teachings in the PAST program. The delivery of such themes provided the

student with experience in applying cognitive behavioral approaches in a group environment. Through the student's practice she was specifically able to see the benefits of using the collaborative approach which is stressed in the cognitive behavioral literature and was able to see how cognitive behavioral interventions work to provide changes in the group members' thinking and feeling (hopefully to go on to produce desired changes in behaviors). The student's understanding of the application of behavioral techniques was specifically enhanced through modeling appropriate behaviors and attitudes, providing the group members with positive reinforcement and the assignment of homework exercises. Although the student does feel as though she had a substantial understanding of the application and implementation of cognitive behavioral techniques with domestic violence offenders, the restrictions of the PAST program limited her learning of anger control, assertiveness training, stress reduction, impulse control and the use of behavioral rehearsals, which are all key aspects of the cognitive behavioral approach.

6. To learn how to integrate cognitive behavioral techniques and pro-feminist practices in a group setting: Based on the student's partial application of pro-feminist practices and the more substantial application of cognitive behavioral approach within the PAST program, the reality of integrating the two techniques in practice became clear to the student. After having seen the use of the two frameworks integrated into the PAST program, the prospect of working with men who abuse with exclusively one theoretical framework seems limited. Based on her practical experience, the student is able to see more clearly that the cognitive behavioral approach truly fails to take into account the abusers' ability to control his anger and actions in other contexts (they choose who and

when to abuse), while the feminist approach alone places responsibility on poor socialization and society rather than on the abusers themselves. Consequently, the need to combine the two approaches, so the strengths of one approach can supplement the weakness of the other, seems imperative. Through the student's practice she has learned that both highlighting the social context within which domestic abuse occurs, as well as replacing maladaptive thought and behavior patterns with accurate and healthy ones are both relevant and necessary aspects to the group members' learning processes. Because both approaches are based on social learning theory they are optimistic that the abusers can re-learn new adaptive behaviors and thus their integration into practice seemed natural. With all this said, it is the student's perspective that the PAST program puts a much greater influence on the cognitive behavioral practice and hence it is unclear to the student whether the group members truly understand how societal attitudes towards violence, the unequal distribution of power between the sexes, and patriarchal norms influence their behavior in their relationships and thus limit their ability to overcome it.

7. To learn how to join with and work collaboratively with mandated clients thereby increasing their motivation for change: Joining and working collaboratively with the group members to enhance motivation for change was the student's number one priority from the onset of this practicum. To enhance the student's knowledge of how to acquire such skills she attended and participated in a two part training on "motivation and change" and "working with involuntary clients" (delivered by the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba). Through the implementation of her acquired skills from the training; the facilitation of the prep-group session which is based on the tenets of motivational interviewing; the use of a client-centered approach; the heavy reliance on check ins and

check outs which fostered trust, rapport and open communication; and a belief in an open and honest approach, the student is confident that she joined with and worked collaboratively with the mandated clients and that this relationship with the group members aided in the creation of an atmosphere which fostered motivation for true change to occur.

8. *To increase the student's knowledge of the stages of the group process:* Delivering PAST programs provided the student with enhanced knowledge of and a true picture of the various stages of the group process. It was interesting for the student to see how accurate the literature on the stages of the group process is to the reality of the stages of the group process that occur in practice. Since the focus within the literature in this area tends to be with voluntary clients, it was fascinating for the student to see how closely the stages relate to work with involuntary clients. Overall, the student's practice within the group setting contributed to her feelings of confidence in understanding the typical client characteristics and the corresponding facilitation roles required of her within each stage of the group process.

9. *For the student to learn how to evaluate her own practice:* Through the development of such evaluations as the "Participants' Evaluation of the Prep-Group Session" and the "Social Service Providers' Evaluation of the Prep-Group Session", the oral feedback obtained from the co-facilitator, the student's self-evaluation of the group process and her involvement in it and through the student's assessment of her ability in meeting her set out learning goals, the student feels confident in her ability to evaluate her own practice. In hindsight the student would have relied more heavily upon the use of 'yes/'no' questionnaires and Likert type scales rather than on the open ended questionnaires

utilized in her report. It is the student's perspective that the modification to such closed ended questions would have decreased the time spent on summarizing the individuals' feedback to the student and would have additionally and more importantly enhanced the accuracy of the student's reporting of their conclusions. Overall, the process of evaluating her own practice greatly contributed to the student's knowledge of what worked and what did not work in her practice and specifically what skills and techniques require ongoing improvement in her future work as a practitioner.

CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This practicum report described the processes through which a preparation group session was developed and implemented; two PAST programs were facilitated; and follow-up interviews were initiated. Through this experience the student was able to apply the corresponding literature in the domestic violence arena directly to a clinical setting.

A Summary

The first part of the practicum included the development of the prep-group program and involved individual consultations with probation officers, past group facilitators, feedback from previous PAST group members, and the student's own educated perspective based on her review of the literature. A significant aspect of the student's experience was the development of a prep-group manual which was later modified for the second implementation of the prep-group session in order to better meet the needs of the group members and to suit the time restrictions of the session. This manual was created as it was originally envisioned that this prep-group session would be made a mandatory prerequisite to the PAST program and thus other trained staff would be required to facilitate the session. Despite being supported by the Associate Area Director of the Family Violence Unit, it is unknown whether the prep-group program will be offered again in Winnipeg either in the community or in the institution. It should be noted that the development of the prep-group session enhanced the student's knowledge of the clinical issues surrounding intervention with domestic violence offenders and made her more aware of the necessity of matching the group program with the group members' specific needs.

The second aspect of the practicum involved the implementation of the prep-group to two separate groups of participants with the assistance of an experienced male co-facilitator. This portion of the practicum was extremely helpful in identifying the ways in which the group participants responded to the program material. Facilitating the program assisted the student in gaining skills in learning how to join with and work collaboratively with mandated clients, how to enhance their motivation for change and how to directly involve the peer mentor's support in practice. The implementation of these prep-group programs identified the need to constantly modify one's work to ensure that it meets clients' specific needs, and it illustrated how important practical experience is in gathering information on program effectiveness. Based on the group members' evaluations of the prep-group program, the social service providers' feedback and the student's perspective of its implementation, the prep-group session was deemed as beneficial and with continued modifications would be a worthwhile endeavor in the future.

The third aspect of the practicum involved the implementation of two PAST programs, each of which corresponded to a specific prep-group session. The use of the existing PAST program manual provided the student with a clear guide to follow in her facilitation of this group for domestic violence offenders and its flexibility allowed for the continued modifications in content, order and format by the co-facilitating team. The use of both cognitive-behavioral practices and feminist perspectives and teachings within the PAST program provided the student with a basic understanding of the practical use of such theoretical models and a better understanding of the impact and influence of these theoretical approaches on the group members. Additionally, the provision of the PAST

program assisted the student in gaining group facilitation skills and increased her knowledge of the varying stages of the group process. As with the prep-group session, a limitation to this program was its time restrictions. The time available within the confines of the PAST program limited the amount of group discussion, reduced the effectiveness of the theoretical applications, and eliminated time for the inclusion of individual work.

Throughout the implementation of the PAST program the student constantly searched for the possible impacts of the prep-group session on the men's experience of the PAST program. The benefits of the prep-group session on the PAST program as observed by the student were: the group members' awareness of that which was expected of them; the minimization of apprehension; the establishment of a positive frame of mind for the initiation of the PAST program; the enhancement of familiarity and comfort with the facilitators and the group members; early unification and cohesion of group members; enhanced participation, involvement and self-disclosures; and decreased resistance and reliance on defense mechanisms. Despite the many successes of the prep-group session, the goal of reducing the dropout rate from the PAST program was not in fact accomplished.

The fourth part of the practicum was the use of individual follow-up interviews. The initiation of such a practice was necessary to support the group members' individual needs. This portion of the practicum increased the student's awareness of each individual's opinions on the group experience and the amount of knowledge gained. These interviews enabled the student to provide individualized positive feedback to the group members to enhance motivation for future change. Moreover, this experience

provided the opportunity to have closure with each individual group member. The group members further benefited from this experience because they had an opportunity to see their evaluations, reflect on their plans for non-violence (to ensure that it was appropriate and realistic), assess their stage of change, debrief their experience in group and review community resources that were specifically applicable to their current needs and desires. With this said, having the follow-up interview on the last day of group was limited based on its inability in providing adequate time to each group participant and its inability in measuring maintenance of change over a longer period of time.

The final portion of the practicum involved the evaluation of the prep-group session, the PAST program and most importantly the student's evaluation of her own accomplishments. Through the group members and service providers' evaluations, the student gained an enhanced understanding of the aspects of the programs which worked and those which did not, their opinions on the use of a peer mentor, suggestions regarding the current length of both programs (the prep-group and the PAST program), their recommendations for future changes and what the student still needs to work on as a group facilitator. Overall, every group member who completed the PAST program recommended the continued use of the prep-group session and with the advent of modifications the social service providers additionally accepted and endorsed its continued use. In addition, all of the group members who completed the PAST program also thought it was beneficial and would recommend it to other people. Through the student's evaluation of the group process and her assessment of the educational benefits attained, the knowledge and skills she had gained as a result of the practicum experience became clear. Overall, the student was successful in accomplishing her learning goals

and was made more aware of the relevant aspects of the group process and her engagement within this process.

The practicum experience was invaluable in translating theories, concepts and teachings from the literature into the practice setting. The student's understanding of domestic violence, the issues related to the treatment of the offenders, and her confidence in working with such a population has dramatically flourished as a result of her participation in this practical experience. The willingness of the group participants to disclose aspects of their own personal stories enhanced the student's awareness of the compounding variables that contribute to their current life situations and the genuine difficulty of one program being able to address all their needs. Most important to the student was the knowledge gained as a result of working with the experienced co-facilitator. The style of facilitation, the techniques used and the advent of new content into the program provided the student with a wonderful model of facilitation.

The Value of Social Work in this Field

The focus of this practicum on engaging the group members, utilizing a client centered approach, assisting the group members in the resolution of problematic behaviors, enhancing social functioning through activities that focus on their social relationships, linking the participants with community resources, and working with the group members within the context of their environment fits perfectly with the goals that social work has set for itself. It is the student's belief that her social work education contributed to her understanding of the group process and her role in the development of positive group dynamics; provided her with the foundations of the theoretical practices and the knowledge base that were applied to the clinical setting; and gave her the tools to

facilitate and deliver such skills as encouragement, reflective listening, clarification, empowerment, and an emphasis on client strengths. The intervention used in the practicum placement allowed the social work student to work with domestic violence offenders in the context of the group setting while still maintaining a consideration of the larger community and societal context within which it transpires. Domestic violence continues to be a significant social problem that affects both individuals and communities at large, and as such, demands the continued involvement from the field of social work, which is dedicated to focusing on any problem or cluster of problems that affect both individuals and whole communities (Kirst-Ashman & Hull, 1999). It should be noted that a unique area of social work, not the focus of this practicum, involves targeting the environment for change and it is this important area that requires further consideration in order for this significant social problem to be properly addressed. Although extremely relevant, the focus on the abuser within this practicum placement is only one of many options for the field of social work. Community interventions addressing violence against women and the alternative and/or combined focus on direct victims, children, families, communities and society at large remain to be significant areas that require the multitude of services that social work provides.

Recommendations

To conclude, the practicum experience allowed the student to identify several recommendations for future work in this particular area of intervention with domestic violence offenders. First, it is the student's perspective that the prep-group session should become a mandatory pre-requisite to the PAST program. It is the student's belief that the current program leaps right into the program material without consideration of the group

members' readiness and what the participants need at this important stage of the group process. In contrast, the prep-group session takes the group members' 'stages of change' into consideration, explores what they can expect from the program and works to create an environment of safety, trust and motivation for change. Due to the original controversy over the format by which the prep-group session was to assume (attached or not attached to a specific PAST program) and due to the fact that the format which was piloted in the student's practicum (attached to a specific PAST program) did not minimize the PAST program's significant pre-program attrition rate, further consideration of the format to be used for the prep-group session is necessary and may require further piloting. Although a new format needs to be considered, the student feels the use of an open group (not attached) would defeat the goals of trust, cohesion and rapport that an attached prep- group provides. However, if Manitoba Probation's priority is to reduce the rate of dropout from the PAST program, the use of the unattached format may in fact be more appropriate. This format increases the likelihood that the dropouts will occur within the prep-group session rather than in the PAST program, that these individuals can be breached sooner (enhancing the immediacy and responsivity of the system) and that the PAST program can be filled with group members who have proven their motivation to attend through their attendance at the prep-group session. This format would better ensure client readiness for the PAST program and would likely decrease the rate of dropout from the PAST program (the less motivated clients could be weaned out).

Second, the use of individual interviews with the group participants on the last day of group should be continued in the future and the use of such interviews should be included pre-group and throughout the group process. It is the student's belief that

providing the group members with an opportunity to meet the facilitators prior to group would enhance the likelihood that they would show up to group. Moreover, these interviews would provide the facilitators with an enhanced knowledge of their clients' unique needs and enable them to better prepare for the group experience. Having time allotted throughout the PAST program for individual interviews could assist the facilitators in ensuring that each group participant is understanding and relating to the program content, that the group members are applying the program material to their personal day to day lives and that the participants are understanding the importance of starting to assume some accountability and responsibility for their past actions. Additionally, the use of individual interviews during the PAST program would enable the facilitators to discover and attend (in a timely fashion) to important issues raised. By using this format, the problem of discovering these issues on the last day of group would be avoided. Finally, longer-term follow-up is recommended by the student in order to provide useful information regarding both programs' long-term effectiveness.

Third, the use of the peer mentor in the prep-group session should be continued and the prospect of involving a peer mentor throughout the entire PAST program should be considered. If this latter recommendation is pursued, the peer mentor should consistently attend all sessions of the PAST program and be on time. To make this recommendation possible, the student supports the provision of an incentive to the peer mentors for their commitment to the group and for their ongoing support. Based on the experience of the practicum, it is the student's perspective that the peer mentor assume the role of supporter and role model, not of facilitator or teacher.

Fourth, it is the student's perspective that the PAST program's strict rules on lateness seems to significantly contribute to the high dropout rate and thus may require revision. A potential option to address this concern is when developing the group rules with the group members have them define the exact rules around lateness (what is considered to be late). This works to empower the group participants and enhance their commitment to the rule, as it would be theirs. It would then be the facilitators' role to ensure that the defined rule on lateness was realistic and within good reason. This process would hopefully create some room for flexibility in the program and would ensure that the group members were on board with this important rule.

Fifth, the PAST program may want to consider integrating more aspects of the feminist approach into its teachings. Although the program is time limited, it is the student's belief that the PAST program would greatly benefit from an enhanced focus on sexist expectations and attitudes, the assumption of responsibility and accountability for one's own actions (which is stressed in feminist influenced interventions) and the utilization of feminist techniques such as control logs, action plans and role-plays.

Sixth, inviting speakers from other agencies who offer long term, more intensive programming (ie. Men's Resource Centre, Ma MA Wei, Evolve) to speak to the group about their services would put a face to these agencies and enhance the likelihood that the group participants would seek their services. Involving the group members almost immediately into a different program may maintain their motivation for change and these programs would likely reinforce the positive changes that the offenders have already started making and assist them in making more.

Seventh, research into the factors that contribute to participant dropout from the PAST program would be useful so that specific programs could be designed to meet these clients' needs or so that these clients could be better assisted in attending group. Based on the student's informal observation of the group participants who completed both the prep-group and the PAST program, group members who were unemployed, chronic alcohol/drug abusers and who were from specific US ethnic backgrounds seemed more likely to drop out of the PAST program (this trend was much more evident in the first implementation of the PAST program) and would likely benefit from additional or different means of assistance and programming.

A final recommendation is the student's belief that the PAST program should integrate and follow more of the "What Works" principles that have been proven to be effective in working with offender populations. For instance Manitoba, Probation services may consider dividing the groups by risk level, to meet the "What Works" 'risk-principle' of matching risk level with treatment intensity and they may consider discussing such topics as social skills, peers and substance abuse in group in order to meet the "What Works" 'need-principle' of targeting criminogenic, dynamic risk factors that enhance the likelihood of re-offence.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Before starting the group** did you know what to expect from the group meetings? Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

2. **Before starting the group** did anyone explain to you what group was going to be about? (If yes, who?) Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

3. **Before starting the group** do you think it would have been helpful for you to meet with someone who had already completed the group to hear about their experiences in the group? Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

4. **Before starting the group** do you think a short meeting that explains how this group program works would be helpful? Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

5. **Before starting the group** what would have been helpful for you to know about the group?

APPENDIX B

Session Notes

Date of Session: _____

Session Number: _____

Session goals:

How, and to what extent were the goals met?

Student facilitator's analysis of the group session (e.g. what went well in the session, what could have been improved in the session?):

Questions and/or concerns:

Plans for next session:

(Taken from Lori Peter's Practicum Proposal, University of Manitoba, Social Work)

APPENDIX C

Partner Abuse Short Term Group ProgramParticipant Evaluation

Please indicate your reaction by checking either YES or No to the following statement.
Space is provided for additional reactions under comments.

Participant Name (optional) _____

Course Content

1. The objectives of the program were clearly explained.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

2. In my opinion, the program objectives were met.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

3. The information given was suitable for the subject.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

4. My personal expectations of the program were met.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

Course Leaders:

1. The course leaders were well prepared.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

2. The course leaders communicated clearly.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

3. The course leaders encouraged group participations.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Comments: _____

Audio/Visual Aids

1. The videos shown were related to program content.

Yes

☐

No

☐Comments: _____

2. The flip chart presentations were clear and easy to understand.

Yes

☐

No

☐Comments: _____

Time allotted for the program was:

Too Short

☐

About Right

☐

Too Long

☐

Material covered in the program was:

Too short

☐

About Right

☐

Too Long

☐

I rate the course over as:

Excellent

☐

Good

☐

Satisfactory

☐

Poor

☐

My rating of the course leaders are:

Name of leader: _____ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Satisfactory ☐ Poor ☐Name of leader: _____ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Satisfactory ☐ Poor ☐

I would recommend this program to others:

Yes

☐

No

☐What was most helpful to you about the program? _____
_____Why? _____
_____What was the least helpful to you about this program? _____
_____Why? _____

What changes would you suggest for future programs?

(Taken from the PAST Manual, 1995)

APPENDIX D

Student Self-Evaluation (Northern & Kurland's Group Work Evaluation)

1. Planning Stage.

- a. What did you want to help the group members achieve?
- b. Were the group's purpose and the member's goals congruent?
- c. To what extent was the composition of the group functional or dysfunctional to the achievement of goals?
- d. How suitable was the structure of the group to the needs of the members?

2. Initial Stage.

- A. To what extent and how did you orient the members to the group?
- B. To what extent did you create an environment for the group that was maximally beneficial?
- C. What norms developed in the group and what did you do to influence their development?
- D. What type of authority seemed to be required of you (permissive, flexible, directive, authoritarian)?
- E. Did the content of the initial meeting seem appropriate to the needs of the group?

3. Ongoing Assessment of Individuals and Group.

- A. To what extent did you demonstrate ongoing understanding of each member's needs, problems, and strengths?
- B. How aware were you of problems in the functioning of the group as a system?

4. Use of Relationships.

- A. To what extent have you been able to facilitate interpersonal relationships between the members?
- B. What seems to be the nature and quality of your relationship with each member?

C. To what extent were you able to help members to support each other?

5. Use of Categories of Intervention.

A. To what extent did you use appropriately the major skills of intervention such as support, structuring, exploration, education, clarification, confrontation and interpretation?

6. Effective Use of Group Structure and Interactional Processes.

A. How successful were you in helping members to participate in the group's decisions and activities?

B. To what extent were you alert to opportunities to give individuals and the group as much power as possible to make choices, within their capacities?

C. How successful were you in dealing with problems in the functioning of the group, such as difficulties in communication, resistance, dysfunctional member roles, instability of membership, interpersonal and group conflict, or malfunctioning problem-solving processes?

D. How and to what extent, did you help the members to translate learning from the group experience to their lives outside the group?

7. Evaluation of Service and Termination.

A. How many dropouts were there? For what reasons did these occur?

B. To what extent were you able to help members to evaluate the group experience and progress made?

C. To what extent did you adequately prepare group members for termination?

(Taken from Northern & Kurland's Social Work with Groups, 3rd Ed. 2001)

APPENDIX E
Prep-Group
Participant Feedback Survey (NO NAMES PLEASE)

1. Did the first group meeting (the preparation session) help you get ready for the rest of the group meetings?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain: _____

2. Do you feel that you knew what to expect from the group after the preparation session?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain: _____

3. Did the preparation session help motivate you to return to the rest of the group sessions?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain: _____

4. Was it helpful for you to meet with the peer mentor on the first day of group?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain: _____

5. What feelings were you left with after the preparation session?

Explain: _____

6. What was the most helpful thing about the preparation session?
(What did you like the most?)

7. What was least helpful thing about the preparation session?
(What did you not like?)

8. Do you think it is a good idea for this program to keep using the preparation session?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain:

APPENDIX F
Prep-Group
Participant Feedback Survey - Part a (NO NAMES PLEASE)

- 1) Do you feel that you know what to expect from the rest of the group sessions (do you feel well-prepared)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain: _____

- 2) How do you feel about today's session?

- 3) What did you like the most?

- 4) What did you like the least?

APPENDIX F
Prep - Group
Participant Feedback Survey - Part b (NO NAMES PLEASE)

1. Did the first group meeting (the preparation session) help you get ready for the rest of the group meetings?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain: _____

2. Do you feel that you knew what to expect from the group after the preparation session?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain: _____

3. Did the preparation session help motivate you to return to the rest of the group sessions?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain: _____

4. Was it helpful for you to meet with the peer mentor on the first day of group?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain: _____

5. Do you think it is a good idea for this program to keep using the preparation session?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Explain:

APPENDIX G
An Informal Evaluation of the Preparation Group
(For Social Service Providers)

1) **CONTENT**

a) What do you think about the choice of content (topics) for the pre-group?

b) What would you like to see stay the same? (Strengths of the pre-group)

c) What would you like to see changed? (Weaknesses of the pre-group)

2) **LENGTH**

a) What do you think about the length of time provided for the pre-group
(3 hrs)?

3) FACILITATION

- a) What do you think about the student's co-facilitation of the pre-group?

- b) What do you think the student needs to work on in order to enhance her facilitation skills? (What are her weaknesses)

4) PEER MENTOR

- a) What do you think about the use of the peer mentor within the pre-group?

5) OBSERVATIONS OF THE GROUP PARTICIPANTS

- a) Based on observation only, how do you think the group participant's felt about the pre-group session?

6) RECCOMENDATIONS

- a) Do have any overall recommendations/suggestions for the pre-group program?
