

**THE PARTNER ABUSE INTENSIVE GROUP PROGRAM:
A COMMUNITY-BASED PROCESS GROUP FOR
DOMESTICALLY VIOLENT MEN**

BY

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A Practicum
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

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ABSTRACT

The Partner Abuse Intensive Group Program: A community-based process group for domestically violent men.

The Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG) program is a long-term process group for men who have been convicted of domestic violence offences in Winnipeg, Manitoba. In the practicum, a 28 session closed group was facilitated in a community setting by two male and one female (the student) co-facilitators. One program innovation was the inclusion of men formerly convicted of domestic offences, as peer mentors.

The participants reported that the most valuable parts of the program were the Autobiography and Healthy Relationship exercises. Group members were provided with practical information on how to change their abusive behaviours and assisted to see that abuse can also include psychological and sexual components. The men were challenged to examine their beliefs that support violent and abusive behaviour and encouraged to become accountable to those they have hurt through their use of violence and abuse.

The experience of facilitating a long-term group developed the student's knowledge of the domestic violence literature and her skills as a facilitator. The practicum provided many opportunities to practice methods of encouraging and challenging the participants' beliefs and attitudes. The student also increased her knowledge and level of expertise in participating in group processes and utilizing a theoretical model, specifically the Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG) program.

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throughout the practicum. Most importantly, they demonstrate compassion, creativity and empathy in their work - human qualities that all of us strive to maintain.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Aim(s) of the intervention

The purpose of this long-term domestic violence intervention program was to work intensively with High-Risk men who have been convicted of domestic violence related offences. Unlike many short-term groups, the implementation of the Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG) was not primarily education focused but rather, provided a learning forum for the participants, all of whom had been convicted of at least one domestic related charge. This long-term group provided the opportunity for the men to discuss their relationships, beliefs about abuse, healthy sexual behavior, family of origin, socialization, strategies for preventing violence and the effects of violence on victims, children and themselves. The Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG) program was participatory – there was an expectation that all group members share their experiences and beliefs within the group setting. These discussions generated ideas that encouraged the men to challenge their own and others' thinking and to experiment with alternative ways of dealing with their life experiences and circumstances.

Objectives for the Partner Abuse Intensive Group program were as follows:

- Group members are provided with practical information on how to change their abusive behaviors.
- Participants are assisted in understanding that their acts of violence are means of controlling their partners.
- Group members are encouraged to see that abuse can include psychological and sexual components, as well as physical violence.
- The men are challenged to examine their beliefs that support violent and abusive behavior and to see that these beliefs are reinforced by our society.
- Participants are encouraged to become accountable to those they have hurt through their use of violence and abuse.

Educational benefits to the student

The student found that the experience of completing this practicum gave her an enhanced understanding of the current literature in the field of domestic violence, particularly as it relates to providing long-term intervention to partner abusers.

I was able to summarize the literature and attempted to integrate that knowledge in the implementation of the practicum. Furthermore, the enhanced knowledge of the domestic violence literature will aid me in my ongoing practice as a social worker working with violent and abusive men.

The experience of facilitating a long-term group developed my skills as a facilitator, particularly with this challenging client group. Both group participants and co-facilitators have provided feedback on an ongoing basis. The process of implementing the practicum gave me many opportunities to practice and reflect on methods of encouraging and challenging the participants' beliefs and attitudes about abuse, relationships and their own behavior.

I increased my knowledge and level of expertise in participating in group processes and utilizing a theoretical model (PAIG). The experience of facilitating this particular model was challenging at times, as the curriculum in the Partner Abuse Intensive Group program was significant. Further, the co-facilitators and I found it difficult at times to keep the participants moving forward through the topics set out in the PAIG manual, due to a number of disruptions which will be described further in Chapter Four – Student Reflections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Present state of knowledge regarding the client problem(s);

There is a great deal of literature available concerning the global crisis of men's abuse against women. Detailed research of the prevalence of domestic violence has increased in the past ten to fifteen years and become very specific in terms of the typology of batterers, knowledge about men's attitudes and beliefs with regard to their intimate relationships, and the effect on victims in these abusive relationships. The purpose of this literature review is to briefly review the present state of knowledge about domestic violence and describe current intervention practices; specifically, the effectiveness of group interventions with abusive men.

The history of domestic violence is a lengthy one. While global male domination and assumed superiority over women is well documented, the degree to which men have physically assaulted and psychologically controlled their intimate partners was not adequately acknowledged and recognized as abusive until the latter part of the 20th century. Men's control over their intimate partners has been legally sanctioned for thousands of years, as part of the institutions of traditional marriage and religion as well as an assumption of global economic practices. Dobash & Dobash (1979) state that while it is nearly impossible to be specific about the exact time in history when the practice of men's abuse against women began, there is no time in written history where there were not references to the

subordinate and subjugated status of women around the world. They set out that almost all of the writings about women throughout history have described them only in relation to their roles as “wife, mother, daughter, lover, whore and saint” and that women’s unique status made them an ‘appropriate’ victim of marital violence. Both legal and religious institutions have placed women’s rightful place as in the home, despite many examples of women throughout history assuming meaningful roles outside the family. The entrenched belief, held in all cultures around the world, that the appropriate place for women is as subordinate to men’s authority and control, has contributed greatly to the global problem of domestic violence, or more accurately, men’s violence against women.

The Roman Age was marked by male hierarchy in the family and the establishment of patriarchy as a form of societal organization. Men were already recognized as the heads of families and had the legal right to punish their wives in any way they saw fit (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The authors note that the concept of women being viewed as property or chattel of their fathers and husbands continued into the medieval period, where women were routinely exchanged as commodities in order to increase the feudal lord’s wealth or status. English Common Law shows that there was an expectation that men maintain control over their ‘property’, using violence if necessary, including against wives and children (Funk, ??). Even as recently as eighty years ago, the fact that Canadian women did not have the legal right to vote in this country is an

illustration of the entrenchment of a societal belief in men's place as the superior gender, the rightful decision-makers in society. Funk (1993) states that "Patriarchy is a system in which men create the definitions of power, the ways to maintain power, and the avenues for obtaining power in all of its forms." He goes on to note that examples of men's power can be found in all of society's institutions including, the political, economic, militaristic, educational, religious, scientific and industrial spheres and that patriarchy has placed these hierarchical differences where those associated with maleness have the highest value. Taylor (1991) states, "there are two important dimensions to the patriarchal message: (1) woman's place is in the private world of the home; and (2) her position in the public world of work is secondary to that of men."

Sonkin, Martin & Walker (1985) point out that even when it was no longer legally permissible for husbands to beat their wives, "tacit permission still remains". They state that this view of male dominance and control is embedded not only in men but also in the response systems of society. In Canada, laws which allowed women to divorce their husbands on the grounds of cruelty did not come into force until 1969, during a period when women in the developed world were beginning to fight for their rights to be considered as independent and equal members of society. Adams (2000) states, "Battering is a problem with roots deeply embedded in sexism and patriarchy."

The rise of the women's movement and a growing recognition of the patriarchal nature of society contributed greatly to the increasing sense of urgency in identifying and dealing with men's violence against women in North America. By the late 1970's, both provision of service for abused women and counseling for abusive men was starting to take place in Canada and the United States (Taylor, 1991, Tolman & Edleson, 1995). During the past several decades, the view that men's abusive behavior against women was a 'private matter' condoned by society has changed, to viewing domestic violence as "criminal, pathological, and unacceptable" (Russell, 1994). Furthermore, the fact that domestic violence is now viewed as criminal in our society has changed the way in which this social problem is dealt with by our public institutions. In the 1970's, feminists began to work toward the amelioration of domestic violence by advocating on behalf of the victims. They began to set up rape crisis centres and started a shelter movement for women who were the victims of abuse by the men with whom they were intimately involved (Sonkin, Martin & Walker, 1985). These advocates for battered women began to demand that the police change their policies with regard to domestic violence. The discretion once held by individual police officers to decline to lay charges, was being questioned as an opportunity for further violence to erupt after the police left the scene of the incident requiring police intervention (Tolman & Edleson, 1995).

Canadian statistics indicate that while the overall five-year rate of men and women who report physical violence in their intimate relationships is quite similar (7% and 8%, respectively), violence directed against women is of a more serious

and frequent nature (Statistics Canada, 2000). In the majority of cases, women were more likely than men to suffer more severe forms of violence and repeated victimizations. Furthermore, women were three times more likely to report being physically injured as a result of domestic violence. In both the United States and Great Britain, studies have had similar results. The 1995-96 National Violence Against Women survey in the U.S. showed that women experience significantly more partner violence than do men (25% versus 8%, respectively). Arias, Dankwort, Douglas, Dutton and Stein (2002) state that approximately 2.1 million women are physically assaulted and/or raped every year in the United States and 1.5 million of these assaults are perpetrated by their intimate partners. They further report American statistics revealing that women are "two to three times more likely than men to report that they had been pushed, shoved or grabbed" and seven to fourteen times more likely to report that intimate partners had beaten them up, choked them, threatened or actually assaulted them with weapons, or attempted to drown them (Arias, Dankwort, Douglas, Dutton and Stein, 2002). British statistics show that women were twice as likely as men to have been injured by a partner in the past year and three times more likely to suffer frightening threats (National Violence Against Women survey, 1995-96 and British Crime Survey, 1999 in Statistics Canada, 2000).

Most of the reported cases involve men physically abusing or threatening their intimate partners, wives, girlfriends, and past partners. What the Statistics Canada figures did not capture in their definition of spousal violence in the 2000

study, is the frequency of emotional and psychological abuse that is often not reported or in fact, not legally defined as criminal offences. Tolman & Edleson (1995) state that in almost all cases, psychological abuse accompanies physical violence and offer the view that "Theoretically, psychological maltreatment can be viewed as functionally equivalent to physical abuse: both may function to establish dominance and control over another person."

Finding an accurate definition of what is meant by "violence against women" has also been controversial. The definitions in the literature to describe the phenomenon of domestic violence are varied. Stordeur & Stille (1989) state that legal definitions of wife or partner abuse, focus exclusively on physically assaultive acts that lead to visible injuries, although the word "abuse" can in fact, describe a number of assaultive and non-assaultive acts, which are nonetheless, injurious. While some authors and many government institutions still refer to "domestic" or "family" violence; others, especially feminist writers, have argued that "wife" or "women" abuse and "male battering" are more accurate descriptions, since the lethality of women's violence against men is quite low. However, documentation of women's violence against male intimate partners has been increasing in recent years.

Although men convicted of domestic violence related charges are normally charged with some form of physical violence or uttering threats of violence against their partners, there is significant research that confirms there are many

other forms of abuse which are being perpetrated against a significant number of women by their past or present partners including controlling behavior, stalking, harassment and many forms of psychological abuse which were perceived by these women as threatening or harmful.

Theoretical explanations of the reasons why some men are abusive to the women in their lives have been debated since the late 1970's. Traditional approaches to understanding violence such as fear of abandonment, poor impulse control and depression have been described in the Insight Model (Adams, 1988). Treatment approaches include helping the abuser to understand his past experiences and the effects those experiences have had on him, in an effort toward developing new approaches to deal with his current relationships. Adams challenges this model because it allows the client to place blame on his past experiences as a way of validating or justifying his abusive behavior.

Gondolf (1996) also found that behavioral therapies that are based on men's deficits have been found to be of limited usefulness. In fact, it is clear that many men who have experienced developmental trauma have not become abusive and that focusing on helping men develop their self-esteem may deflect the treatment away from the primary goal – stopping the violence. Furthermore, Russell (1994) notes that treating male deficits does not deal with the larger societal reasons that men have been encouraged to assume a dominant role in their relationships. Russell holds the view that most current models of treatment

for abusive men, based on the concept of “deficits” are likely of limited effectiveness because they focus on reducing physical violence by use of behavioral methods such as “time outs” which do not address the participants underlying beliefs about themselves, women and relationships.

Russell (1994) has written extensively on domestic violence and been involved in the development of a group treatment approach for abusive men. She has posited the view that it is not until batterers are prepared to examine the value and belief systems that guide their decision-making within their personal relationships, that their abusive behavior can change. She states that beliefs regarding the self and relationships are central to the way intimate relationships are structured and that these beliefs guide abusive men to behave in destructive ways. She further notes that beliefs are built within a cultural context, that human beings are influenced by, and therefore adapt to, prevailing social customs and prescriptions. In our patriarchal culture, it is not surprising that a number of men assume values that support a view of their “centrality, superiority and deservedness”. Furthermore, the domestic violence literature confirms that violence in the family is cyclical. Boys and young men who witness their fathers’ battering are likely to repeat the behavior in their own relationships. Girls who see their mothers battered without taking action are more likely to become victims. According to Arias, Dankwort, Douglas, Dutton and Stein (2002), domestic violence is culturally reinforced in this way.

Cognitive-Behavioral and Psycho-Educational Models are the theories that have guided the majority of treatment programs for domestic violence in North America in the last two decades. These programs focus on the violence itself and start with the view that violence is a learned behavior that is self-reinforcing but can be “un-learned” (Sonkin, Martin & Walker, 1985). Cognitive-behavioral and psycho-educational models of treatment try to identify the benefits derived by abusive behavior as well as focus on helping the client to see the costs associated with the achievement of those benefits. The men are encouraged to try new behaviors for resolving conflict within their personal relationships such as recognizing their triggers for abuse, gaining an awareness of victim empathy and practicing practical avoidance techniques such as “time-outs”, where the client agrees to leave the situation that is potentially explosive. The central tenet of these approaches is that the abusive person is fundamentally responsible for the violence and that he must be held accountable for that behavior.

Feminist models of understanding domestic violence have, for some time, taken the view that men’s violence against women is an active method for maintaining power and control within relationships (Anderson, 1997). Stordeur & Stille (1989) state that partner abuse is neither the result of intrapersonal problems in an individual man, nor the result of dysfunctional dynamics within intimate relationships. They argue for a perspective that is shared by many practitioners now working in the field of domestic violence – men’s violence against women is directly linked to the power differentials defined by gender. In fact, the authors

believe that the characteristics of abusive men, the need for power and control, are present in all men in our culture. It is the extremes of these characteristics for dominance and control that distinguishes which men become violent and subsequently, in conflict with the criminal justice system. Anderson (1997) argues that "Gender interacts with structures of race, marital status, and socioeconomic status to influence power within relationships and propensities for domestic violence".

Intervention in a feminist context means challenging men's violence against women in all its forms – physical, psychological, verbal and sexual. The safety of the victim is at the center of feminist approaches for combating domestic violence, though many of these programs make use of the cognitive-behavioral and psycho-educational techniques used in other models. Feminist treatment programs have the fundamental principle that men have to be held accountable for their violence (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh & Lewis, 2000). Tolman & Edleson (1995) state that many recent batterer treatment programs incorporate a gendered analysis in the intervention and recognize partner abuse as a tool of male power and control over women. In the majority of these programs, priority is given to the issue of male sex role socialization and how it influences men's abusive behaviors and beliefs.

Most recently, narrative therapy approaches to both individual and group work with domestically violent men have been undertaken, although there has been

criticism of this technique. Augusta-Scott and Dankwort (2002) put forward the view that narrative therapy can be used effectively in conjunction with feminist-based programs and they argue that there are significant advantages in employing this method of intervention. They recognize that traditional therapy with this client population has generally been viewed with skepticism; as counter-productive because there is a concern that a therapeutic approach to domestic violence may dismiss or minimize societal factors including patriarchy, that shape human behavior. Furthermore, the authors acknowledge that the link between therapy and pathology has been questioned, as it may suggest that the causes of men's violence are to be found in psychological deficits, rather than in examining the intentions and the need for power and control that lie behind men's abusive behavior.

However, Augusta-Scott and Dankwort state that it is possible for a narrative therapeutic approach to endorse feminist principles while employing techniques that depart from the cognitive-behavior and psycho-educational methods of many batterer intervention programs. The premise is that although a narrative therapy approach acknowledges abusive men's need for and use of, power and control in harmful ways, it also assumes that they also have a desire for non-abusive, loving relationships. The authors forward the opinion that this assumption is helpful in encouraging the men to examine their abusive beliefs and behaviors. Jenkins (1990) asserts that the challenge in therapy is to derive an approach that will engage abusive men in a way that facilitates them to take responsibility for

their violence and participate in changing this behavior. Finally, the narrative therapy approach is premised on the idea that helping the participants to find the intervention personally meaningful is a necessary prerequisite for participating fully in a challenging change process (Augusta-Scott & Dankwort, 2002).

Method of Intervention

By the mid-1980's, treatment programs for violent men were beginning to take shape in North America (Gondolf, 1985) and three significant developments had begun to take place which saw a surge in batterer counseling across Canada and the United States (Hendrickson-Gracie, 2001). Women's advocates put pressure on the court system to recognize violence against women as a legitimate concern. "Zero-tolerance" policies were adopted in many American states and Canadian provinces, requiring police to arrest in cases of probable violence. Thirdly, changes in the probation programs of many justice systems in both countries started to include counseling as a part of community-based dispositions for men convicted of partner abuse.

As the literature above sets out, creating an environment where men can be challenged appropriately and receive both feedback and support from facilitators and other group participants, is judged to be one of the most effective ways of confronting the values, attitudes and beliefs held by those engaged in abusive behaviors. Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh and Lewis (2000) state, "Confrontational

group work is the preferred technology for seeking personal change". Adams (2000) sets out that within the group setting, supportive encouragement is also necessary but can be counter-productive without confrontation and challenging because encouragement alone can reinforce abusive men's self-centered expectations and behaviors. Further, he notes that confrontation must come not only from facilitators but also from other members of the group in order to be effective. Adams states that if the challenging comes only from the group facilitators, members fall into a "passive role" and fail to internalize the values of the group (2000). Jennings (1990) states, "The group experience is ideal for developing empathy because it is an opportunity to be exposed to alternative perspectives; to see the utility of effective communication in action; and to gain insight into one's own abusiveness as recognized in the behavior of other group members."

The narrative therapy approach to group work guides facilitators to help clients reconsider their past destructive and violent pattern of behavior and develop new, more healthy ways of dealing with their intimate relationships (Augusta-Scott & Dankwort, 2002). Jenkins (1990) states that it is essential to attempt to understand abusive men's explanations for their abusive behavior and violence in order to gain their participation and cooperation in therapy. Some authors believe that short term intervention models designed to 'stop' men's violence against women are problematic in their philosophy and place exorbitant demands on abusive men to make certain immediate changes. A supportive relapse-

prevention approach recognizes the deep-seated nature of domestic violence and appreciates its profound connection to childhood abuse experiences (Jennings, 1990).

As the number of domestic violence convictions has risen sharply in the past ten years, more and more jurisdictions in North America are including mandatory counseling or treatment programs in sentencing practices. In fact, since 1992, the provincial Probation Service of the Department of Justice in Manitoba has been offering a short-term psycho-educational group for all clients convicted of a domestic violence charge. This short-term program has elements in the curriculum that are very similar to other programs being offered in jurisdictions across Canada, the United States and Great Britain.

Group processes have been widely used in the implementation of domestic violence intervention programs in the past twenty years. It is generally believed that in this atmosphere, beliefs can be challenged by any and all of the participants in the group. Furthermore, that support can be offered from a variety of perspectives. Russell states that a group setting provides a number of sources for input and provides an atmosphere in which taboos can be broken. She further suggests that within a group there is the possibility of trying on the development of new beliefs that is essential in changing the attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by abusive men (1994). Gondolf (1986) noted that many men are distrustful of conventional counseling and that the group process

can help break down a sense of isolation and help members gain a feeling of confidence and self-control. Bennett and Williams (n.d.) assert that the goals for batterer intervention programs include justice and accountability, victim safety and rehabilitation and behavioral changes such as skill building, attitude change and emotional development. Tolman & Edleson (1995) emphasize that for them, the primary goal of batterer intervention is an end to the violent behavior, not the improvement of intimate relationships. In fact, they note that in some cases, a successful outcome of treatment may increase the likelihood of separation or divorce for some couples (Tolman & Edleson, 1995).

The use of a Female/Male co-facilitation model for domestic violence intervention programs, as is the common practice with Manitoba Justice, has not been the subject of significant research to date. However, using both female and male facilitators ensures that both gender perspectives about men's attitudes and behaviors are represented (Adams, 2000). Nosko & Wallace (1997), state that the importance of studying this element of the group process arises out of the fact that mixed gender co-facilitation is very commonly used in batterer intervention programs and worthy of further evaluation. They put forward the view that the development of the leadership team directly impacts on the dynamics of the treatment group and can contribute to the re-socialization of group members. The authors argue that gender is pivotal in influencing co-leadership and group process and furthermore, that a failure to achieve resolution of gender issues among the facilitators will "confound and cripple the

treatment process.” The need to model equalitarian female-male interactions is imperative in domestic violence intervention programs, precisely because of the traditional and unequal male/female value system held by most, if not all, participants.

Co-facilitators must model healthy female/male behavior in order to challenge abusers' tendency to blame and resent women for their life circumstances and violent behavior. Adams (2000) remarks that especially at the beginning of the group process, participants will frequently display disrespectful behavior disproportionately to the female facilitator, including belligerence and sexual interest. Female facilitators are frequently interrupted, ignored and challenged. Nosko & Wallace (1997) note that group members will frequently ascribe a lower status to the female co-facilitator, who will also be expected to carry out what they term the “socio-expressive” functions. These functions include a greater demonstration of empathy, interpersonal sensitivity and tactfulness. The male co-facilitator will on the other hand, be ascribed superior status by group members and be expected to carry out the “cognitive and problem-solving” functions in group. The authors point out that co-facilitators need to equalize the power in the group by agreeing to share all the duties of group leadership. They describe the need for the female facilitator to assume the more active role in some exercises, while the male facilitator concentrate on addressing emotions such as shame and fear that may arise in the group discussion.

Other examples of role-modeling an egalitarian relationship include having the male co-facilitator make the coffee or having the female co-facilitator assume half the teaching responsibilities. The authors state that the ability of the co-facilitator team to “act as a cohesive unit bound together by common values regarding their gender behaviors” is essential to the resolution of conflict amongst the group members regarding appropriate and healthy male/female interactions. Adams (2000) states that using a mixed gender co-facilitation model also encourages male facilitators to share leadership, solve problems, negotiate time and cooperate with women.

The length of intervention has also been the subject of some research, in terms of whether longer, more comprehensive programs are more effective in reducing incidents of domestic violence among participants. Gondolf (1999) sites several American studies conducted in the early 1990’s that compared batterer intervention systems and their relative effectiveness. Those studies found that the re-assault rates were quite similar across the groups, regardless of the treatment approach or duration of program. Gondolf then undertook his own comparison of four intervention programs with the objective of examining the impact of differences in court referral, program duration and extent of services on re-assault rates (1999). His results confirmed the earlier studies in that there was weak evidence of substantial outcome differences across the four intervention programs, regardless of the length and comprehensiveness of approach. However, his study found that the rate of severe and repeated re-

assault was substantially lower in the participants who completed the most comprehensive program. Possible reasons for this finding included the inclusion of alcohol treatment in the most comprehensive program and the relatively short time for follow up (15 months) which did not adequately allow for documenting the long-term rate of re-assault.

Gondolf noted that all four programs were well-established groups that had similar fundamentals. All programs required that batterers be held accountable for their abuse, that rationalizations are exposed, that the violence is identified as a means of power and control, and that the battering behavior not be allowed to be attributed to stress or substance abuse. All of these programs collaborated with victim's services and their respective criminal justice systems. He theorizes that although individual components of batterer intervention programs may not in themselves, influence program outcome, these components may interact with other factors, such as delays between court and program intake. He concludes by conceding that his results appear to reinforce the argument for brief therapy and managed care and that short-term, didactic programs may be the most efficient system of dealing with these clients (Gondolf, 1999). Edleson (1995) also cites a study conducted at the Duluth Domestic Abuse Project, which concluded that 12 session programs achieved outcomes similar to 32 session programs.

Bennett & Williams (n.d.) conclude that there is little evidence at present supporting the effectiveness of one batterer intervention program approach over another. However, they note that despite the lack of evidence to support greater effectiveness of long-term programming, there may be other reasons to support the ongoing implementation of such programs. If justice and accountability are inherent goals of batterer intervention programs, the authors suggestion that attendance in longer-term treatment programs may be an appropriate outcome for domestically violent clients.

The effectiveness of all domestic violence intervention programs is further complicated by other problems, most notably unemployment, substance abuse and mental disorders (Bennett & Williams, n.d.). They note that men with “these co-occurring problems are far more likely to drop out of a Batterer Intervention Program” and that although these risk factors are not the cause of men’s violence, their co-existence makes intervention more difficult and outcomes more negative. The authors go on to indicate that in a study of 404 abusive men in Broward Country, Florida, one of the key findings was further support for the “*stake in conformity* hypothesis: men most likely to re-offend are those who have the least to lose, as measured by education, marital status, home ownership, employment, income and length of residency.” The authors indicate that this finding has been made in a number of studies of violent men and is a significant barrier to effective batterer intervention programs.

The issue of dropout rates in batterer intervention programs is also important in evaluating the effectiveness of these programs. Edleson (1995) cites several American studies which indicate that as few as 50% of men who enter programs for abusive men, complete the intervention. Using re-arrest rates as a measure of success is also problematic, as statistics reveal that the proportion of arrest to victim-reported abuse was 1 in 35; that is, for every reported arrest, there were 35 assaultive actions (Dutton, et al., 1997 in Bennett & Williams, n.d.).

A review of recent domestic violence literature suggests that evaluating the outcomes of batterer programs remains imprecise. Edleson (1995) states that policy makers and service providers must first ask themselves, what does it mean for a program to "work"? He indicates that a variety of criteria have been used to evaluate the effectiveness of batterer intervention programs in the past, making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of these programs. He notes that the literature reveals a continuum of so-called success, where at one end, researchers noted positive change among the participants as a sufficient indicator of success while, at the other end, there are those who consider that success has not occurred until abusive men have changed to the point that they are prepared to take social action against a patriarchal society that supports domestic violence. The author goes on to discuss the difficulties with using *statistically significant* decreases in violent behavior as a means to evaluate program effectiveness. He reminds the reader that a decrease in abuse from 5 episodes of violence per week to 3 episodes per week, while statistically

significant, is hardly a demonstration of success, particularly in the lives of the victim.

Furthermore, while program participants may acquire a number of positive skills during the intervention, an evaluation of skill acquisition without a measurement of abusive behavior as an outcome, would not be appropriate for judging success of a program (Tolman & Edleson, 1995). Arias, Dankwort, Douglas, Dutton and Stein (2002) indicate that research evidence "suggests that there may not be significant differences in the outcomes among available treatment programs." Further, some research suggests that different types of domestically violent men respond differently to different types of interventions.

Edleson (1995) suggests that a demonstration of *practically significant* change is more appropriate and that using that criteria, the cessation of violent behavior is of critical importance in evaluating a program's usefulness. The author also challenges policy makers to think about the role that batterer intervention programs play in contributing to ameliorating the larger problem of unhealthy intimate relationships between men and women. He asks, "Where does the responsibility of batterers' programs end and a social movement to change all men's behaviors in intimate relationships begin?". The author asks whether it is reasonable to expect that programs for abusive men will transform those individuals while there are many men, who while not using physical violence, use a range of other abusive and inappropriate tactics of power and control to

maintain a superior position within their intimate relationships. Tolman & Edleson (1995) state that many policy makers and funders of domestic violence intervention programs are primarily interested in ending illegal and violent behavior, regardless of the degree to which the participants have changed their value and belief systems. Edleson (1995) suggested that it is very unlikely that short-term programs targeted at ending men's physical violence and criminal behavior will be an appropriate tool if, in future, leaders in our society are interested in bringing about desired social changes in all men's behavior toward women.

Peterman and Dixon (2001) state that an accurate assessment of batterers is essential in providing effective treatment. They examine the importance of "utilizing ethnically and culturally sensitive approaches" in the intake and assessment process for batterer intervention programs. Their conclusion is that assessments should include a review of past violence and criminal behavior, medical history and substance use, relationship and psychosocial issues and suicidal and homicidal tendencies. They also note the importance of recognizing specific cultural attitudes held by clients and avoiding stereotyping in the intake process as this can lead to biased assessments.

The literature appears to support the emerging idea that coordinated community efforts are necessary in reducing the incidence of domestic violence (Bennett & Williams, n.d., Tolman & Edleson, 1995). Using this approach, intervention

programs for violent men are used as a necessary but not singular, part of violence prevention within the community. Victim support, ongoing probation supervision and an automatic charging policy by police in cases where there is evidence of violence, would also be components of such a coordinated community response.

Bennett & Williams (n.d.) encourage experimentation in batterer intervention programs, citing that the literature does not yet indicate that one approach is necessarily better than another. They state, "Within the boundaries of safety and accountable practice, developing effective programs is more likely under conditions of supervised experimentation".

Russell (1994) reminds us that in times of rapid transformation, like the present, the possibility for change is more likely. In addition to the fact that women are less likely to be tolerant of abusive behavior with their intimate partners, society as a whole has taken steps to condemn and criminalize, acts of domestic violence. These changes, taken together, create a new, more egalitarian environment in which both men and women are negotiating their personal relationships. Tolman & Edleson (1995) state that even the modest and somewhat contradictory evaluations of effectiveness of batterer intervention are valuable. They suggest that there is a need for broader intervention and prevention techniques and that these will provide future data that will be valuable in seeking ways to end men's violence against women.

CHAPTER THREE - THE INTERVENTION

The Manitoba Situation

In Manitoba, the rate of domestic violence charges in the provincial court system rose rapidly between 1983 and 1993. In part, this increase resulted in the establishment of a specialized court process for domestic violence in 1990. Manitoba became the first jurisdiction in Canada to develop a Family Violence Court, which was composed of five components (Ursel, 2000). The province established a "zero tolerance" policy for the police, began a women's advocacy and child victim witness program, created a specialized prosecutorial unit of crown attorneys, designated special court rooms and finally, created an offence-specific unit of Probation Services to deliver court mandated programs.

Changes in the way this widespread social problem was dealt with in this province has had profound effects on access to education and treatment programs for men who are abusive to their partners. Ursel (2000) documented that the Manitoba model has shown a strong commitment to stopping domestic violence, in its policing, prosecution and rehabilitation methods. She indicated that 62% of all convicted offenders had supervised probation as one of their sentencing outcomes and that 68% of those who received a probation order were mandated to attend domestic violence programming. By 2002, the Winnipeg Domestic Violence Unit of Probation Services had between 1,500 and 1,700

active clients who were mostly male (Bacon & Bracken, 2002). In addition to providing on-going supervision and support, the Probation Service has a demonstrated commitment to providing education and treatment programming for these clients.

The Partner Abuse Short Term (PAST) program was developed in 1992, as part of the proactive response taken by the province in dealing with the problem of domestic violence at that time. Dorothy Pedlar wrote the Domestic Violence Review into the Administration of Justice in Manitoba Report in 1991. The report recommended that an educational program be developed for men who have abused their partners and that this program be a component of Probation Services. 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 (Bacon & Bracken, 2002).

The 24-hour PAST group program, delivered by both probation staff and private contractors in 12 sessions, was designed to be primarily educational in nature. The program provides participants with a foundation of knowledge about domestic violence, its link to the wider culture and the costs associated with continuing to act violently with their intimate partners. PAST also employs cognitive-behavioral approaches, in that it teaches men about negative "self-talk", the cycle of violence and "time-out" techniques of avoiding violence. It 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.

Although the PAST group has been provided to thousands of men in Manitoba for the past ten years, questions still remain about its effectiveness in stopping men's violence against women. The brief length of the program has been criticized as being inadequate to provide the amount of intervention that would be effective for abusive men. Other limitations of the program include its assumption of literacy skills, outdated resource materials and its adaptability for both Aboriginal and ethnic minority clients. Furthermore, the program has been delivered to a variety of men convicted of domestic offences, regardless of risk level. This has been a subject of some debate, as there is a belief that programming should be primarily based on the degree of risk clients pose to their partners and family members. In his 1997 Commission of Inquiry report following the murder/suicide of Rhonda Lavoie and Roy Lavoie in Manitoba, Justice Perry Shulman recommended that the PAST program be "evaluated on a comprehensive basis to determine its strengths and weaknesses and assess its long-term effect on offenders and victims".

In a recent report evaluating the Partner Abuse Short Term program, Bacon & Bracken (2002) reiterate that the domestic violence treatment research concludes there is some evidence that batterers' treatment programs are

moderately effective in reducing men's violence toward their partners. They state that the results of their evaluation indicates that the short term domestic violence education program has positive outcomes for many of the men who complete the program and they recommend its continuance with some modifications in its content and structure (Bacon and Bracken, 2002).

Partner Abuse Intensive Program (PAIG)

In January 1995, Roy Lavoie killed his wife Rhonda Lavoie and then committed suicide in what became a highly publicized case of domestic violence in Manitoba. The outcome of those events was the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry into the Deaths of Rhonda Lavoie & Roy Lavoie: A study of domestic violence and the justice system of Manitoba. In 1997, Justice Shulman published his report which concluded with 91 recommendations for the police, the Family Violence Court, the Women's Advocacy Program, Community and Youth Corrections (which oversees the probation service), provincial laws and lawyers, social service agencies and the community and public. Some of these recommendations have been implemented in the six years since Justice Shulman's report was released, including the creation of a second-stage or long-term treatment group for abusive men.

Justice Shulman (1997) noted that the Partner Abuse Short Term (PAST) program, already in use by Probation Services, was perhaps not enough,

especially for high risk offenders and “those who need, or request, further in-depth treatment while incarcerated or on probation”. He stated, “Court-mandated treatment in domestic violence cases is essential if the incidence of recidivism among offenders is to be reduced”. Justice Shulman encouraged the creation of a second-stage spousal abuse treatment program that would allow offenders the opportunity to explore in greater detail, their personal belief systems and circumstances, within a therapeutic setting.

As such, in 1998, the provincial Department of Justice undertook this recommendation and assigned a staff member of the Family Violence Unit of Probation Services to undertake the development of a second-stage group. Christopher Sunde, MSW, completed the assignment in August 1999 and the Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG) program was formed (Sunde, 2001). Shortly thereafter, in the fall of 1999 and the spring of 2000, three pilot programs of the Partner Abuse Intensive Group Program were held in the province: in Headingley Correctional Centre, the Central Probation office in Winnipeg and in rural Manitoba. I was one of three co-facilitators of the PAIG group that took place in Winnipeg between February and June 2000.

The experiences of facilitating the PAIG groups for the first time were different in each setting but there were many similarities across the province. All the groups were completed successfully in the sense that despite some participants

dropping out, there were a number of men who appeared to benefit from the experience of engaging in a comprehensive treatment group.

Recommendations regarding changes for future long-term groups were made by the facilitators but unfortunately, due to a reduction in funding for domestic violence programming in community settings, no further long-term groups were held outside of the institutional setting since that time. Therefore, it is timely that two and a half years later, in October 2002, another PAIG group was implemented in the City of Winnipeg. I view the implementation of the program, which formed the basis of my Practicum, as another important opportunity for high-risk men, convicted of domestic violence, to participate in a treatment group in a community environment.

Clients

The clients selected for the 2002-2003 Partner Abuse Intensive Group program (PAIG) were men convicted of at least one domestic violence related offence in Manitoba Provincial Court. They were all on a probation order /conditional sentence for domestic violence offence(s) at the time that the 2002 PAIG group was implemented. Originally, the objective was to offer the program only to men on probation who were assessed as High Risk, according to the provincial Secondary Risk Assessment for Partner Abuse. However, due to difficulty obtaining an adequate number of High Risk referrals, the facilitators opened the

group to both Medium and High Risk participants. Despite this change in the intake procedure for the group, only one participant assessed as Medium Risk on the provincial risk assessment instruments, completed the group. Six of the seven participants who completed the PAIG program were previously assessed as High Risk by their probation officers. All the participants had completed some form of educational short-term program for domestic violence and/or anger management either in the community or an institutional setting, prior to entering the PAIG program. The rationale for this decision was the desire to implement the model of a "process" or "treatment" group that went beyond the basic knowledge regarding domestic violence, frequently delivered in short term programs. The facilitators' belief was that the participants, having completed a short-term partner abuse program in the past year, would be familiar with a basic understanding of partner abuse and prevention techniques. This would allow for a brief review of the educational material at the beginning of the PAIG program (maximum of four sessions) before moving into the main elements of the curriculum. The short-term education programs that participants had completed in advance included Manitoba Corrections Partner Abuse Short Term group (PAST); the Mamawiwichitata open group, Tamarack's anger management program and similar programs offered in other settings.

Characteristics of the participants who completed the PAIG program were:

- Men between the ages of 27 and 39

- Ethnic background included Aboriginal/First Nations, mixed heritage and white
- Living arrangements ranged from rooming houses, temporary accommodations with friends or family, apartment living and living with the victim.
- Some participants had “no contact and communication” conditions placed on their probation orders, preventing them from contacting the victims of their offences. Others had left the relationship in which the domestic charges occurred. One participant’s former partner was deceased. A number of the men were in new relationships. Some of the men revealed that they had been abusive in more than one intimate relationship.
- A range of socio-economic groups was represented, with both employed and unemployed individuals. The predominant socio-economic group was men on social assistance or the working poor. One member of the group was in the military and one was a student.
- The educational background of the clients was primarily incomplete or completed high school education. One group member had completed job-related training after high school. Several clients had limited reading and writing skills.
- A majority of the participants indicated that they have had problems with alcohol abuse.

- 85% reported that they had physically abused their partners within the past year. There was a significant range of physical assault, from pushing, shoving and slapping to beatings that left cuts and bruises.

The group began on October 21, 2002 with 14 participants and was completed with 7 men on February 5, 2003. Most of the participants were mandatory clients in that they were compelled to complete the PAIG program as a condition of their current provincial probation order/conditional sentence. The consequences for failing to complete the group were varied and determined jointly by the supervising probation officers and the group facilitators. Despite these consequences, it was anticipated that there would be a number of participants who would not complete the group. Reasons for their inability to complete the PAIG program were varied. One participant attended approximately half of the sessions and then withdrew due to other life circumstances. Several men were removed from group by their supervising probation officers because they breached conditions of their probation orders including consumption of alcohol and contacting/communicating with their victims. Several men were asked not to return to group because they had excessive absences (3-4 valid absences from the 28 session program was the maximum allowed). One participant was a voluntary referral, who chose to withdraw after only one session. Finally, one group member was removed near the end of the group, because of ongoing behavioral issues during the program.

The facilitators expected that all participants be willing to verbally accept some measure of responsibility for their abusive behavior at the outset of the PAIG program. The facilitators' belief was that participants who refuse to take any responsibility for their violent and abusive behavior would interfere with the accountability and honesty being developed by other members of the group. However, as expected, all the men throughout the program made statements of denial, minimizing and justifying abusive behavior, although the occurrence of these statements decreased as the intervention continued.

Group participants had to be willing to attend two evening sessions (6 p.m. – 9 p.m.) per week for approximately 4 months (October 21, 2002 – February 5, 2003). They had to be able to read and write well enough to work independently on some written work. Clients considered not appropriate for the PAIG program were those who had significant emotional/mental health issues as well as those who had serious, untreated addictions to alcohol and/or drugs that would prevent them from participating reasonably. Other criteria established for limiting the group were that clients who had previously completed the PAIG group in the institution or community would not be accepted as well as those who had significantly chaotic lifestyles, which would prevent them from attending the group regularly. In fact, despite establishing these criteria prior to the commencement of the program, facilitators found that some participants had to be removed from the group for the above-stated reasons. A further discussion and evaluation of the criteria is included in Chapter 5 – Program Evaluation. The

criteria developed by the student for the current PAIG group are attached as Appendix A.

With regard to victim contact, the student developed a victim letter that was distributed to the supervising probation officers, prior to the start of the PAIG program. It was suggested that the probation officers contact current partners of group participants by mail. The purpose of this correspondence was to explain the purpose and process of the Partner Abuse Intensive Group program. The victims were invited to seek further information about the group, by contacting group facilitators directly. No victims contacted the facilitators requesting additional information about the PAIG program during the four month duration of the program. The victim letter is attached as Appendix B.

Setting

The setting for the PAIG program was the group room of a downtown Winnipeg probation office (470 Notre Dame Avenue). The space is a well-lit room on the second floor of the building, with relatively easy access in and out of the space onto the street. The room is comfortably large for approximately 15 participants and the facilitators. Audio-visual equipment is available for videos and easels for visual learning aids. Chairs were set up in a circle, with facilitators sitting amidst the participants around the room. There are washrooms located within the space as well as coffee supplies. The facilitators made a decision to offer snack food

during each session of the program, as a method of making the process more welcoming for the participants.

Personnel

The group was co-facilitated by three facilitators. Two co-facilitators, including myself, are staff of the Manitoba Department of Justice. The third facilitator is a social worker employed by the provincial Department of Family Services. There were two male facilitators and one female. The decision to use both male and female co-facilitators for the PAIG group is supported by the literature. David Adams (2000) states that in groups facilitated only by men, "it was difficult to assess men's progress...consistently, battering men exhibit different, more respectful behavior toward men than toward women". As the literature suggested, it became clear throughout the program that having a female co-facilitator allowed the attitudes of group members towards women to be revealed more accurately.

Two of the three facilitators are Probation Officers with the Domestic Violence Unit of Probation Services. All of the facilitators have been working in the field of domestic violence for at least 5 years. One of the facilitators has also had experience facilitating long-term domestic violence programming within an institutional setting. All three of the facilitators have run the PAIG program at least once in the past, including myself.

The facilitators chose to involve four former domestic violence clients as “peer mentors” in the PAIG program. This innovation in the delivery of the community-based PAIG program reflected the facilitators’ belief that involving former PAIG participants would be a benefit to group members in beginning to accept responsibility for their violent and abusive behavior. All of the peer mentors had previously taken the PAIG program, either in the community or an institutional setting. At the outset of the program, all of them were continuing with programming for their abusive and addictive behaviors at various community agencies in Winnipeg. My conclusions about the experience and value of using peer mentors to enhance the delivery of the PAIG program are mixed. Further discussion of their contribution to the process is included in subsequent chapters, specifically Chapter 5 – Program Evaluation.

Procedures

The procedures used in the group process are contained within the parameters of the Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG) program, which includes a comprehensive manual for facilitators’ reference. The program contains an outline of the topics to be covered over the recommended 26 sessions and provides suggestions to the facilitators about how to engage the clients with the material.

The themes and approximate time lines set out in advance of the intervention by the facilitators, using the PAIG manual as a guide, were as follows:

- 2 Pre-Group sessions (3 hours each)
- Introductory session – housekeeping, group rules (1 session)
- PAST material review (max. 4 sessions)
 - Topics include: self talk, warning signs of violence, personal plan for non-violence, cycle of violence, types of abuse, socialization
- Autobiography, using peer mentors (4 sessions)
- Responsibility and Shame (1 session)
- Victim Empathy, (2 sessions)
- Most Violent Incident, Letter of Responsibility, using peer mentors (4 sessions)
- Respectful Relationships, Healthy Male Sexuality (4 sessions)
- Effect on Children (1 session)
- Maintenance Plan, using peer mentors (3 sessions)
- Completion, celebration (1 session)

Using the above as a guide, it was expected that the actual content of the PAIG program would be largely driven by the experiences, beliefs and ideas of the participants. In fact, while the facilitators and peer mentors questioned and challenged many of the beliefs and behaviors presented by the participants throughout the program, participants themselves also challenged one another in

discussing non-abusive, appropriate and healthy ways of engaging with their partners and families as alternatives to their violent behavior.

It is worth noting that the intended timeline was not implemented exactly as shown. Chapter Four – Student Reflections provides information on the actual experience of delivering the PAIG program with this group of clients.

Recording

Implementation of Procedures

I used several tools to assist in monitoring the clinical experience of co-facilitating the PAIG program for the purposes of this practicum.

- The content of the program themes was largely contained in the existing PAIG manual. In cases where the topics diverged from existing documentation, the student ensured that these themes were adequately outlined in the journaling process. Additional material developed by the student and the other facilitators including the criteria for the PAIG group, the victim letter and the guidelines for the Autobiography and Most Violent Incident exercises are included in the appendices.

- I met with the two co-facilitators and peer mentors both before and after each session of the program to plan the sessions, clarify course material, review participation of the group members and discuss challenges in the group. All three co-facilitators delivered course material throughout the program with relevant additions by peer mentors.
- I maintained a weekly journal throughout the practicum.
- I received both written and verbal feedback from the group participants, co-facilitators and peer mentors. These comments are referred to in subsequent chapters including Chapter 5 – Program Evaluation.
- I met with the Area Director, High Risk Domestic Violence Unit, Probation services as well as the Associate Area Director responsible for domestic violence group programming within Manitoba Probation Services, periodically throughout the practicum to review the group process and issues that surfaced during the 15 weeks of the PAIG group.

Progress of Clients

Client progress and evaluation was measured in the following ways.

- Participant attitudes and behavior in group was monitored.
- Facilitators assessed the willingness of participants to take responsibility for their abusive behavior as well as their efforts to participate honestly in group discussions.
- Participants had a number of homework assignments throughout the group. These were evaluated for the level of effort put forth by the individual group member, keeping in mind literacy, level of education and other presenting issues. Take home assignments included a Personal Plan for Non-Violence, Autobiography, Support Map, Most Violent Incident, Victim Empathy letter and Maintenance Plan. The assignments are included in the Appendices.
- Attendance of group participants was monitored. Most group members missed at least 4 sessions of the PAIG program. Further information about attendance is included in Chapter 5 – Program Evaluation.

- Facilitators attempted to monitor incidents of inappropriate or criminal re-involvements and violence during the program. Some participants were removed from the program because of these behaviors.

CHAPTER 4 - STUDENT REFLECTIONS

Introduction to PAIG: Pre-Group, Sessions 1 & 2

Two pre-group sessions were held on October 21 and 23, 2002, as a means of ascertaining clients' appropriateness and willingness to participate in the Partner Abuse Intensive Group program. The objectives of these two sessions were as follows:

- Introductions of facilitators, peer mentors and participants
- Outline the rationale and philosophy of the program
- Establish goals and expectations for participants
- Establish ground rules, set by the facilitators, about attendance, housekeeping details, behavior and consequences
- Establish group rules, set by the participants, about behavior, process, and respectful behavior
- Completion of the Pre-Test Questionnaire for evaluation purposes
- View the video "A Roomful of Men", which outlined the process/treatment group model for domestic violence

The co-facilitators and myself shared responsibility for introductions of the facilitators as well as peer mentors at the beginning of the first session. As part

of my introduction, I advised group members that I was a probation officer in the Family Violence unit of Probation Services, that I had co-facilitated another PAIG program in 2000 and explained that I was completing a Master of Social Work degree, of which the practicum was a part. Following the facilitator introductions, participants, who were seated in a large circle, were asked to introduce themselves, which they did. Finally, the peer mentors introduced themselves and stated their objectives for being part of the PAIG program again, in a new role. The rationale and philosophy of the program was explained and again, all three co-facilitators shared responsibility for this activity. The goals of the program as well as housekeeping details were set out for participants and questions about our expectations in terms of attendance and under what conditions they might be charged with a Breach of Probation were answered. The tone of the first session was quite lighthearted and in some cases, the men knew each other from jail, which contributed to relaxing the atmosphere. In several cases, the participants also knew at least one of the co-facilitators or peer mentors. Although I had met one participant during an intake interview and knew one peer mentor from a previous group, I did not know any of the group members prior to the first session of the program.

Although the first session was a positive one, I was somewhat overwhelmed and nervous. The large number of participants (12) who attended on the first night, as well as the four peer mentor and three facilitators made for a crowded room and I felt somewhat uncomfortable as the only woman present. One of the co-

facilitators commented that he felt nervous and that admission seemed to lessen the tension for everyone present.

In large part, the objectives set out above were met during the two pre-group sessions. However, there was not enough time to allow participants to establish their own group rules or distribute the Pre-Test questionnaire. These exercises were put forward to the next session. As the group started with 12 participants (2 participants did not attend on the first evening and 3 did not return for the second session), it was sometimes difficult to maintain order during these first two sessions. While my journal notes indicate that the first session was very positive, the second session revealed the resistance many group members held to being mandated to attend the PAIG program. A large number of participants objected to being forced to attend the group and offered reasons why they ought not to be there. Many comments were made about their innocence and the inappropriateness of the provincial "zero tolerance" policy on domestic violence. Typical statements of minimization and rationalization included: "*She should be here*", "*the zero tolerance system is set up against men*", "*I was wrongfully convicted*", and "*both of us were responsible for the violence*". In contrast to the first session, I noticed a fairly high level of discomfort during the second evening in the program.

Facilitators reiterated their role and expectations for the group. During the second session, participants had their first opportunity to accept responsibility for

their violent behavior and to indicate what they hoped they could change about themselves through the group process. For the most part, I observed that participants were not prepared to admit to responsibility for their violent and abusive behavior during the second session. However, toward the end of the evening, one participant did disclose some details of his current situation and also admitted his violent behavior towards his partner. This disclosure appeared to be powerful for all participants, as they listened intently to his description of the events and circumstances.

During the two pre-group sessions, I first noted the benefit of having the peer mentors participating in group. They were able to articulate their prior, positive experience in the PAIG program and the struggles they have had with addictions, anger management and in past and current relationships. In general, it appeared as though the group participants were open to these comments as they did not make any negative comments or display any negative attitudes towards the peer mentors. However, there was some discussion around peer mentors' attendance at program. Some group members indicated that they didn't think it was appropriate for peer mentors to come and go from the group; that they ought to make the same commitment as group members to the process. At that point, the co-facilitators reminded group members of the differences in expectations for the peer mentors and that while we hoped they could participate fully, they did not have the same expectations as a result of their court orders, as regular group members.

My journal notes of the second pre-group session reveal that I found it to be very intense and draining. Maintaining respectful listening was difficult and it had become quite evident that while some group members were motivated to work on their own issues, others were still very much in denial about their abusive behaviors and unwilling to openly acknowledge their need for the PAIG program. By the end of the evening, I felt frustrated by the change in attitude from the first to the second session. Even at this early stage in the program, it appeared that the group might be setting up as an “us versus them” experience.

My learning goals for the pre-group sessions were to help in providing a positive, safe and warm environment in which the PAIG group could be conducted. I also wanted to be part of ensuring that the men understood the expectations of the program, including the importance of their honest participation as essential to the group process. At the end of the first two sessions, I was unconvinced that either of the two above goals had been achieved.

PAST Review: Sessions 1 - 6

Sessions 1 – 5 of the regular program (October 28 – November 13, 2002) were to be devoted to an introduction to the PAIG program (session 1) and a review of educational material about domestic violence that is also covered in the Partner Abuse Short Term (PAST) program (sessions 2-5). All PAIG participants had

previously taken some form of educational programming on domestic violence in the past year, through Probation Services, in jail or through other community-based agencies. The facilitator's expectations were that the salient portions of the PAST material could be reviewed in four sessions. Topics to be covered included:

- Positive and Negative self-talk
- Warning signs of violence
- Cycle of violence
- Types of abuse
- Defense mechanisms
- Personal plan for non-violence

However, this section of the PAIG program, intended to be five sessions, was extended by 1 additional session (from October 28 – November 18, 2002). Several exercises, which should have been completed during the pre-group sessions, had yet to be undertaken. The first and second session of the PAIG program (after the two pre-group sessions) were devoted to a lengthy check-in (more than one hour during session 3), the establishment of group rules by the participants and completion of the Pre-Test questionnaire for evaluation purposes. I distributed the Pre-Test questionnaire and explained that it was part of my practicum and would be used in my report of the experience of facilitating the PAIG program. Group members agreed to complete the questionnaire and in

several cases, requested individual assistance in answering some questions. The completion of this assignment proved to be a rather lengthy process as some participants had trouble comprehending the meaning of some questions and/or had difficulty applying the questions to their present situations.

The next exercise undertaken was the establishment of group rules by the participants for themselves. I observed, as the conversation unfolded, how difficult it was for them to set their own rules in relation to attendance, program start and end times and confidentiality. While some members had ideas about what were reasonable expectations, others appeared to become quite rigid in understanding the purpose of the rules and focused primarily on the enforcement of these rules. Some of the comments included: *"Who decides if the rules are broken?"* *"What are the consequences if someone breaks the rules?"*

Facilitators intervened with suggestions throughout this discussion but tried to leave the decision-making about these rules to the group members as much as possible. I was conscious that a great deal of time was being used during this exercise and that other items on the agenda were going to have to be pushed back.

Toward the end of the second session, facilitators were able to begin the PAST review. Small groups were established to generate types of abuse (physical, verbal, psychological, sexual and financial) and examples for each type. Co-facilitators and peer mentors joined each group to encourage group members to

contribute examples of the types of abuse. These groups reported back to the larger group and I noted a high level of participation from both groups. Each group established a recorder and presenter easily and the exercise was a productive one. Although a number of participants continued to articulate blaming statements about their victims and rationalized their abusive behavior, the overall tone of session 2 was much more positive.

Sessions 3 and 4 continued with 10 and 13 participants respectively. One member had missed 2 consecutive sessions but returned on session 3. At this early stage of the program, one participant had already missed two sessions without explanation. One member came to the group with his children, to advise facilitators that he did not have childcare arrangements for that session. He was advised to return to group on the following evening.

The program continued with a review of the cycle of violence in small groups. Each group took an aspect of the cycle (Tension-building, Violent Episode and Remorse phase) and brainstormed examples of behaviors they had used during each phase of the cycle. I joined the group that was discussing the Remorse Phase, and the members came up with a variety of behaviors they had exhibited during this phase of the cycle including, *"buying her roses"*, *"making her dinner"*, *"saying sorry"*. The groups then charted these behaviors for the larger group on a diagram. Three peer mentors were in attendance during these sessions and made significant contributions. However, I noted that sometimes the peer

mentors were contributing more ideas than the participants, which was a potential problem. It was important from my perspective as a facilitator that the group members were engaged in the material and participating as fully as appropriate for each man. As facilitators, we discussed this issue in the debriefing period following these sessions and agreed to speak to the peer mentors privately about their primary role as encouragers to other group members.

As a student, I wondered whether the use of peer mentors might have negative effects in program that had not been anticipated. As it was the first time that peer mentors had been involved in the PAIG program, it was a learning experience for everyone. At this early point in the program, one peer mentor had withdrawn from PAIG, and two others had already missed several sessions. Although in theory, the idea of using peer mentors as encouragers seemed like a novel and creative way to engage program participants, it was not clear to me at this point in the program whether using peer mentors would be an asset in practice.

Defense mechanisms were also introduced during these sessions. A flip chart was used to illustrate a time at which members might have used defense mechanisms as a way to manage a difficult or stressful situation. Examples of these behaviors were charted as group members contributed ideas about the kinds of behaviors used by violent men to deflect and deny their abusive behaviors. I immediately noted that the language used to describe the defensive

behaviors, such as *justifying*, *minimizing* and *rationalizing* was, in some cases, difficult for group members to grasp. The co-facilitators then simplified the concepts into more common words like *blaming*, *denying*, and *making excuses* and linked them to actual behaviors, which seemed to make more sense for some participants. When this exercise was completed, I concluded that it had been a mixed success, as many participants were still having significant difficulty taking responsibility for their own violent and abusive behaviors and instead, used hypothetical examples. Further, they appeared to be distracted by the definitions of the defense mechanisms, rather than being able to apply them to their own intentions and actions.

A discussion of warning signs was held in session 5. The flip chart was used to develop a list of examples of physical body signs, behaviors, mental images, negative self-talk and situations that contribute to violent episodes. The exercise went well and all group members were involved in contributing examples. The facilitators encouraged group members to add examples that were true for them, rather than abstract possibilities. This suggestion sometimes made the exercise more difficult but I concluded that the completed list was a relatively accurate reflection of warning signs of violence that were reflective of the participants' actual behavior.

Another exercise involved the idea of whether participants were 'actors' or 'reactors' in their intimate relationships and life circumstances. This exercise

occurred spontaneously and is not included in the PAIG curriculum. A lengthy discussion took place about whether participants had choices in choosing behaviors as a non-violent 'actor' during an argument with their partners or, whether they chose to be victims of 'reacting' with abusive or violent behavior. As opposed to the defense mechanism discussion, which was quite abstract, the participants appeared to understand and respond positively to the idea of choosing to be 'actors': that they could make non-violent choices in difficult circumstances.

From this, the program moved on to an examination of the Awareness Wheel – another tool in helping the participants to see the links between situations and their abusive behavior. The stages of the Awareness Wheel: situations – perceptions – interpretations - emotions - intentions and behaviors were explained by the facilitators and discussed at some length. Although the student's journal reflects that some participants seemed to have difficulty linking all of the stages in the Awareness Wheel to their situations, the exercise was a positive one.

Once again, the facilitators' desire to complete the PAST review expeditiously was sidelined by several behavioral issues during sessions 4 and 5. One group member indicated that it was his belief that the facilitators were not interested in hearing about the abusive behavior of the participants' partners. Other group members agreed with these statements and discussion ensued about the

purpose of the PAIG program and participants' commitment to working on their own behavior. As a result, it was difficult to return to the educational material in a timely manner. Another member of the group had been particularly disruptive from the beginning of the program and demanded a significant amount of the facilitators' attention. Other group members have found these discussions to be quite humorous, which also distracted from the completion of the PAST material in the time allotted. My journal indicated that facilitators were experiencing some frustration in not being about to complete the review material as quickly as originally intended.

Significant discussion during these sessions was devoted to group attendance. Only three weeks into the program, there had already been a considerable number of absences by some participants. Facilitators articulated their concern about attendance, the importance of participating fully and the consequences of failing to attend, to the group members. A discussion took place about the number of permitted absences that would be accepted and the facilitators shared their reluctance to have to determine the validity of various group members' explanations. Despite facilitators' reluctance to be specific about the number of allowed absences, ultimately it was established that 3 absences would be the maximum allowed. In order to allow the facilitators some discretion, participants were told that any absences beyond three could result in termination from the program, depending on the reasons.

Two of the four peer mentors had also missed several sessions of the PAIG program at this early stage. Although it was previously established with group members that peer mentors did not have the same conditions as participants to attend all sessions of the program, some group members made an issue about the absences of several peer mentors. They questioned why the peer mentors (who had openly admitted to be still working on their abusive and addictive behaviors) should not be held to the same standard of attendance. This created some difficulty for the facilitators and again I questioned the clarity of the role for peer mentors as well as their ability to participate in a facilitating capacity, given their own life issues. More information on the use of peer mentors in the PAIG program is included in Chapter 5 – Program Evaluation.

The last session devoted to the PAST review (session 6) looked at 'time-outs' and developing a 'personal plan for non-violence' for each participant. Time-outs are a central component of the PAST program and were developed to assist men in planning for non-violent behavior during arguments with their partners. The premise is to help participants understand their own escalation of emotions and to recognize their unique warning signs of violence. The time out is meant to be discussed in advance with group members' partners and to be used if a man feels at risk of behaving violently. Each participant was encouraged to develop a plan as to where he would go during a time out, what he would do, how to assess his warning signs for violence and how to return home after taking a time-out. This exercise was quite uncomplicated for both the participants and the

facilitators, as most of the men had experience in developing a time out plan in previous programming. My journal reflected that the men know this material very well and questions whether the facilitators could have worked through this section more quickly.

The core 'educational' components of the PAIG program were completed on November 18, 2002 after six sessions. At the end of this section of the program, it was clear that despite the participants' basic knowledge about domestic violence, it remained difficult and time-consuming to move through the educational components of group into the "treatment" phase on the planned timeline. In fact, two pre-group and six regular sessions were completed before we were able to move into the first exercise beyond the PAST review section of the PAIG program.

The next exercise for the participants was a take home assignment on their autobiography and this was explained to the participants in detail on November 18, 2002. The purpose of this assignment was to allow group members to have an opportunity to write, reflect and orally present their own life circumstances to the larger group. The next section sets out in detail the experience of implementing the autobiography exercise.

Autobiography: Sessions 7 – 14

The domestic violence literature indicates that it is often important for abusive men to have an opportunity to share their own experiences as victims, frequently as children raised in violent, abusive or neglectful homes. As Stordeur and Stille (1989) state, "Talking aloud about their own experiences and hearing other men speak of theirs often elicits powerful emotional responses." The authors go on to note that many abusive men have minimized or denied that their family of origin was violent or abusive and instead, talk about "discipline" or "strict child-rearing". Their research suggests that in allowing group members to tell their often-painful life stories, powerful and confusing emotions are brought to the surface. Helping group members deal with those painful memories non-abusively, is a goal of the Autobiography exercise. The Autobiography encouraged the participants to consider the intergenerational cycle of violence in which their parents, themselves and their children are a part. As facilitators, we were hopeful that the process would help group members to develop empathy for their own children's experience as victims of their abuse, as they recall the difficult and often violent, circumstances in which they were raised. Furthermore, for some men, this may have been the first time they revealed some of the traumatic details of their childhoods, which the domestic violence research indicates, can be a liberating experience.

Having worked with violent men both as a probation officer and a group facilitator for a number of years, my experience has confirmed the domestic violence research that asserts that until abusive men have an opportunity to fully express their own experiences as victims, they often have a difficult time accepting responsibility for their own violence. Instead, they frequently become mired in discussing their own victimization, which I believed could prove to be problematic in the PAIG program as we moved through the topics of the program. Although the original PAIG program did not include a session on family of origin and the manual does not include any reference material on this topic, the facilitators chose to include the Autobiography exercise. The Autobiography has been a part of the PAIG program delivered in the institutional setting for several years and we considered it to be an essential part of the program.

In both the Autobiography and Most Violent Incident/Victim Empathy exercises, the facilitators employed a narrative therapy technique that required each participant to tell his own story with the aid of pre-circulated questions (Appendix C). Augusta-Scott and Dankwort (2002) suggest that it is possible to use men's own stories as a way for men to name and counter injustice. They suggest that a narrative process "invites" participation and can be developed in a group setting in which participants are motivated out of positive self-interest to examine their own abusive behavior. The authors indicate that the purpose of this kind of intervention is to "kindle the man's desire to change himself in order to facilitate identifying and then following a new personal "blueprint" free of violence".

Despite the fact that attendance in the PAIG program was mandatory for most participants and that completion of all the exercises was required, the facilitators shared the view that attempting to create a safe and supportive environment was very important. We wanted to insure that, to the extent possible, participants could share their life stories and episodes of violence openly. My view was that creating this atmosphere would make it much more likely that group members would be forthcoming. Furthermore, in keeping with findings of narrative therapy work with abusive men, it seemed likely that in creating a safe environment, there would be less potential for confrontations and disputes between facilitators and the participants, which in many cases leads to decreased communication and participation from group members.

The Autobiography assignment, to be completed at home, was delivered at a point in the PAIG program when participants had been attending for approximately one month. By this time, there was some level of comfort, both between the men and with the co-facilitators and peer mentors. Written instructions were handed out and explained carefully to the group members, including some one-on-one explanations, where necessary. The men were encouraged to use the questions as a guide in writing out their autobiography but to tell their story in their own words, with as much detail as they felt comfortable revealing. Some of the suggested questions included: *"What was your relationship with your family like, when you were growing up?"*, *"How were you*

disciplined?”, “*What are some of the memories that you do not like to think about?*”, “*What are some of the memories that make you laugh or smile when you think about them?*”, “*What were some of the events that made you feel proud of how you handled the situation?*”. These questions were designed to encourage the presenters to go beyond the chronological story of their childhood and to give the listeners a deeper understanding of their childhood and adolescent experiences.

Listeners were also given instructions about the kind of questions that they might put to the presenter, after hearing their story (Autobiography Guidelines for Listeners, Appendix D). These guidelines included suggestions such as: asking questions for clarification, trying to identify parts of the story which most affected them, looking for portions of the story that they could identify with and challenging aspects of the presentation if they could contrast it to a personal situation or experience of their own. Respectful listening was expected – in that participants were asked not to interrupt the speaker, not to leave the circle or in any way, distract from the presenter.

Unfortunately, I was not in group on the first night of the Autobiography exercise. As a result, I missed the first presentation, which apparently was very emotional for several group members. The co-facilitators related that some men were in tears after listening to a particularly graphic description of one participant’s abusive childhood. After that session, one participant shared that he did not

think he could share his own life story with the group because it was too personal and too tragic. Unfortunately, this participant did not complete the Autobiography exercise because he left the program due to other issues. One particularly moving presentation occurred when another group member described in significant detail, his memories of a chaotic and abusive childhood, including ongoing alcoholic abuse and weekly fighting in his home by adult family members. He described his family as being *"the toughest family in the neighborhood"* and spoke at some length about his deep anger at his mother for not having been able to protect him and his siblings from the abuse. His story evoked a strong emotional reaction from almost all group members who listened intently and asked respectful and careful questions when asked to do so.

There was a significant difference in the length and amount of detail contained in each autobiography, depending on the presenters. One participant took a very literal interpretation of the exercise, answering each question on the Guideline sheet, while others deviated substantially from the suggested questions in their responses. One group member did not complete the assignment on his own, despite being encouraged to ask for individual help on several occasions. In this case, facilitators decided to have that group member complete the assignment during group time, with one of the peer mentors assisting him to write it. This proved to be a workable, though not ideal, solution as we had previously indicated that all group members had an obligation to complete every assignment or could not continue in the program.

During the course of the sessions devoted to Autobiography, participants heard about serious acts of violence and abuse, suicide, child sexual abuse and the death of several participants' family members. For the most part, group members appeared to listen very carefully and asked questions respectfully. Almost without exception, participants seemed to appreciate the difficulty that some participants had in completing and sharing the exercise. The types of questions asked by group members ranged considerably, and in one particular case, a group member was challenged for not providing enough detail and depth in his autobiography. Participants were beginning to challenge one another in an appropriate way, which was an intended part of the exercise.

The Autobiography exercise extended from session 7 to 14. During most sessions, there was only time to hear two or three presentations, because of the length of the stories and the number of questions from other group members, peer mentors and facilitators. Three peer mentors also shared their life stories during these sessions and their contributions were an aid to the facilitators, as one peer mentor volunteered to present his autobiography on the first session devoted to this sensitive topic area. The other two peer mentors were ready to present their autobiographies when called upon to do so, which was helpful because on several evenings when regular group members were scheduled to present, they were not ready to do so. Furthermore, the peer mentor

autobiographies had a richness of content and detail, which seemed to be useful for other group members still in the preparation process.

As a learning experience, observing and participating in the autobiography exercise was an important opportunity for me as a student developing skills in the field of domestic violence treatment. It appeared as though the implementation of the Autobiography exercise was the first significant turning point for the group. While the group size had decreased from 14 to 9 members by the time this segment of the program was completed, the Autobiography exercise seemed to provide a forum for the remaining participants members to begin to develop relationships with each other, start to share their life experiences honestly and develop respect for other men in the group.

My reflections at the end of the Autobiography section were that it had been a very emotional experience for most of the men and significant for the group as a whole. I concluded that in large part, the exercise had achieved its objectives of giving the men an opportunity to get in touch with their own victimization, consider the impact of violence on children and, share their personal stories with the larger group. Another outcome that I observed was that the participants were forced to re-examine their childhoods and those of other group members as neglectful and abusive. This led to expressions of both lingering anger and profound sadness and grief. Statements from the men included *"wow, that must have been rough, man"* and *"I can really relate to how hard that must have been*

for you". Links between their childhood experiences and those being experienced by their own children was apparent and my conclusion was that this had been an appropriate exercise to start the treatment portion of the PAIG program. It appeared to help the participants develop empathy towards their victims, in a non-threatening way.

One aspect of both the Autobiography and the Most Violent Incident exercises, which should be reconsidered in future, is planning for the order in which participants share their stories. In an effort to invite the men to participate when they were ready to do so, we chose to ask for volunteers, rather than assign specific dates for completion of the assignment. This caused delays in the presentations in some cases, as men forgot to bring their completed assignment to group or admitted that they had not completed it on the date they had agreed to.

A related and recurrent issue being raised for me was the struggle for facilitators to be compassionate and supportive to group members while at the same time, hold the men accountable for their participation. There seemed to be a series of issues where the facilitators struggled with how "strict" we needed to be; to ensure that assignments were completed, participation was on topic, disruptive behavior addressed and that the rules of the group observed.

Responsibility, Shame and Building Victim Empathy: Sessions 15 & 16

The purpose of these two sessions of the PAIG program was to help the participants begin to build victim empathy. In preparation of the upcoming sessions on their Most Violent Incident and the Victim Empathy letter, it was necessary to lay the groundwork of recognizing the feelings of shame associated with participants' violent behavior. Furthermore, the topics introduced in these sessions were meant to guide the men to recognize how shame can keep them trapped and prevent them from taking responsibility for their own violence and abuse. One of the goals of these sessions was to help the men to understand the importance of moving from shame to accepting responsibility for their own intentions and actions. Understanding empathy as the ability to share in another person's emotions, thoughts or feelings and, particularly in the case of domestic violence, to feel the pain of the victim, was another objective of these sessions.

The introductory discussion in the first session focused on encouraging the participants to recognize that abuse can take a variety of forms and is not limited to physical violence. The concept of emotional abuse was explored including the principle that although forms of emotional abuse can be subtle, they have far-reaching effects that can be just as damaging as physical violence. Facilitators were conscious of the importance of demystifying emotional abuse because the domestic violence research indicates that, even if abusive men stop their

physical violence, their use of emotional, mental and verbal abuse often continues.

A number of handouts were distributed, which illustrated the process of moving out of shame to taking responsibility. As part of this exercise, we viewed a vignette from the film *"Tactics of Power and Control: In our Best Interest"* that is used in the PAST program. This vignette portrays a situation where the male uses tactics of verbal and emotional abuse, to gain power and control over his partner. The discussion following the film revealed that some group members were able to see a number of abusive behaviors displayed by the man, while others had more difficulty relating to the vignette, and admitted that they had behaved similarly on many occasions. We encouraged the participants to break the scenario down into segments – *"What did they see the man doing?" "What did they think his intentions were?" "What were his beliefs about the relationship and his rights versus hers?"* Finally, we asked the men to try to identify the effects of this scenario – for the man and the woman. All the group members and peer mentors contributed to this discussion, which yielded a variety of creative explanations for the man's emotionally abusive behavior, as well as other possible choices available to him.

My reflections on this portion of the session were that it was somewhat useful as a teaching aid. Some men were able to easily see the forms of emotional abuse in the vignette and immediately began to apply the ideas to their own situations.

Others did not relate to the video vignette and appeared to have difficulty understanding the subtleties of emotional abuse in this example. Perhaps spending more time on this section, including watching several more vignettes with a variety of examples of emotionally abusive behavior would have been helpful.

Participants were then asked to complete a Control Log, a written exercise that focused on emotional abuse, (Appendix E). The Control Log asks each man to document an incident, where he used abusive behavior to control his partner. Questions on the Control Log include: *"What did you want to have happen in the situation?"*, *"What feelings were you having at the time?"*, *"In what ways did you minimize or deny your actions or blame her?"*. Using the Control Log, group members were asked to describe a time when they were emotionally abusive, who would have been effected and how. The concept of using defense mechanisms was reviewed, to help the men to acknowledge engaging in justifying, minimizing and blaming activities during the abusive incident. Another written exercise, Building Victim Empathy (Appendix F), was also distributed, which asked the men to indicate what their partner might have been feeling and thinking prior to, during and after the violence. Time was given in the session for the completion of one of these exercises, while the other was a take-home assignment. In some cases, both facilitators and peer mentors were involved in one-to-one assistance, helping group members to understand the questions and our expectations for completion of the assignment.

My opinion on the success of the Control Log and Building Victim Empathy assignments was that it was a mixed success. Some participants seemed to put a significant amount of effort into their assignments and confirmed a thorough understanding of the effects of emotional abuse. Others did not give enough detail to demonstrate to facilitators that they were aware of the effects of their use of emotional abuse on their partners. Again, I wondered whether more time was needed for individual work with the men in completing the exercise or if there might be some other activities that could have been more effective for this portion of the program?

During these sessions on Responsibility, Shame and Building Victim Empathy, the group watched a segment of the television program *Dateline*, which highlighted the issue of sexual harassment. The focus of the documentary was on men using sexualized gestures and language toward women on the street and in public places. The film asked questions about men's rationale for making flirtatious 'cat calls' to women they did not know and discussed women's reactions to these kind of encounters. Following the film, we held an open discussion and invited group members to voice their opinions on what they had observed in the film.

Although not surprised, I was dismayed by the group reaction to this film.

Although we were at the halfway point in the program and had discussed a range

of abusive behaviors with the participants on numerous occasions, most of the group members saw little wrong with the examples of sexual harassment shown in the film. A lively discussion ensued between group members, peer mentors and facilitators and some participants showed significant defensiveness about the behaviors depicted in the video. The issue of women's safety was added to the discussion and while most men indicated that they did not want to scare women, they were unable to see how their actions of calling out or flirting with women in public, might be reason for women to be fearful. As the only female in the group, the men did appear to be interested in whether I would find these kind of behaviors unwelcome, harassing or frightening. However, despite my opinion that I would find these interactions uncomfortable, some participants insisted that the women that they knew would have enjoyed the attention of public flirting. One group member indicated that he was going to talk to his female friends to find out whether they found these exchanges unwelcome.

Finally, we concluded the section on Responsibility, Shame and Building Victim Empathy by watching the film *"Bridging the River of Silence"*. This film tells the story of a number of abused women and their thoughts on their relationships with violent men. In particular, the film highlights the story of one woman going through the domestic violence court process. Discussion following the video revealed much about the participants' belief systems and where they were in the change process. Most of the participants were sympathetic to the women's situations, recognized the victims pain of living in abusive relationships. They

also seemed to understand how victims can be re-traumatized by the slow criminal justice system. Also, group members appeared to comprehend the fear that the women continued to have after the end of their relationships about the potentially dangerous reactions of their ex-partners. However, one group member made several comments about the legal circumstances of the abuser, and how he might have negotiated the criminal justice system more effectively to reduce his sentence. His comments reflected that he identified very strongly with the abuser and left me wondering whether this group member was able to feel empathy towards the victims portrayed in the film.

My reflections about the use of this film were that it was a valuable addition to the sessions on Responsibility, Shame and Building Victim Empathy. It provided a realistic portrayal of the range of circumstances in which domestic violence occurs and gave the men, perhaps for the first time, first hand experiences of the victims perspectives. Most of the group members appeared moved by the victim's stories and some found links between these stories and their own circumstances. One participant spoke at some length about his concerns about his former partner's current living situation, her needs and those of his children, since he has been removed from their home. However, I noted that the ability for group members to develop empathy towards their victims appears to be a slow one, perhaps because of their very strong need to defend their previous behavior. Nevertheless, throughout these sessions, group member's remarks

suggested that they were beginning to understand the devastating effects of their violence on their partners and children.

At this halfway point of the PAIG program, the attendance of two of the three peer mentors was becoming a concern. Although they did not have the same obligation as group members to attend all sessions of the program, the facilitators' expectation was that the peer mentors would participate fully. While both these peer mentors had personal and family reasons for their absences, their inconsistent attendance were a concern for facilitators, particularly in relation to how this might effect other group members.

Victim Empathy and Most Violent Incident: Sessions 17 - 21

Reviewing in detail, participants' abusive behavior was part of the PAIG curriculum throughout the program and specifically, during the "Most Violent Incident" exercise. The use of this technique is supported by the domestic violence literature which indicates that reconstructing violent incidents is important in increasing men's awareness of their own intentions and motivations (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh & Lewis, 2000). As in the Autobiography exercise, facilitators chose the use a of narrative therapy approach for the Victim Empathy and Most Violent Incident assignments, one which invited the men to share the details of their most violent episode with an intimate partner. The participant instructions stated that the purpose of the assignment was for them to have an

opportunity to take responsibility and be held accountable for their violence with their intimate partner. Further, the Most Violent Incident assignment (Appendix G) makes clear that in taking responsibility and retelling the story honestly and openly to the group, participants will be able to see that they made choices, that the violence did not “just happen”. Finally, the guidelines prepared the men for the likelihood that they might feel a sense of shame in writing and sharing their most violent episode. They were encouraged to seek support from other group members and facilitators and to be willing to seek appropriate self-care if necessary.

The primary objective of the Most Violent Incident exercise was to help the participants ‘own’ their behavior during their most violent episode and indeed, during other incidents of abusive behavior. As with Autobiography, group members did the assignment at home, using pre-circulated questions to guide them in detailing the incident. Some of the questions posed were: *“How long was your tension-building phase?”* *“What were you thinking and saying during this period that increased your stress?”* *“What was your mood just prior to the situation that led to the violence?”* Group members were instructed to reconstruct the episode without blaming the victim, projecting responsibility onto their partners, or justifying or excusing the abuse. It was also hoped that the exercise would help the men to identify the cues of escalation that preceded the violence as well as to recognize his intention to commit the violence. The exercise was designed to assist group members to identify both the costs and

benefits of the abuse as well as provide an opportunity to honestly convey his feelings about his violence to the rest of the group. Finally, participants were asked to consider how they might have acted differently in the situation.

The second part of the assignment, instructed group members to write a letter that their victim might have written them, after the violent events (Appendix G). Although they were reminded that we could never really know what the victim might be feeling and thinking, it would be helpful to try to imagine what she might say, if she wrote a letter to the participant, at the end of the relationship. The guidelines suggested that the men try to *“put themselves into the victim’s shoes”* and that in so doing, they might not only be able to understand what she was thinking, but also, what she might have been feeling at the time.

In the Most Violent Incident and Victim Empathy exercises, facilitators, peer mentors and other group members used respectful listening techniques during the presentations and asked clarifying questions of the presenter, rather than using confrontation as a means to guide the men to accept responsibility for their own behavior (Guidelines for Listeners, Appendix H). Listeners were encouraged to listen for defense mechanisms in the presentations and to raise those with the presenter. Finally, the group was reminded of the difficulty of the assignment if it is done honestly and with real effort. They were encouraged to support other group members during their presentation, for having the courage to take responsibility for their violence.

My reflections about the men's participation in the Most Violent Incident and Victim Empathy assignment are that it appeared to be quite difficult for all participants to undertake the task. Their questions to facilitators before the assignment revealed their reluctance to tell the whole story, particularly without assigning blame to their partners. It was difficult to find group members who were willing to be first to present in this exercise, which had not been an issue with Autobiography. Even at this midway point in the program, some participants raised the issue of their partner's responsibility in provoking their violent behavior and expressed that it would be difficult for them to write about the incident without including her role in contributing to their violence. However, I sensed that there was a reluctant understanding of the task and believe that there had been enough prior preparation to allow the men to complete the assignment without resorting to defense mechanisms such as justifying, minimizing and denying their abuse.

The experience of carrying out the Most Violent Incident and Victim Empathy exercises revealed many of the same issues that had emerged in the Autobiography assignment. There were significant differences in the degree of detail, background provided and length of presentation across participants. Some group members had clearly put a great deal of time and thought into the exercise and the act of reliving the violence was extremely emotional for them. Several men were moved to tears during their presentation, and had to stop

reading momentarily to compose themselves. Others were more guarded, provided less detail about the context and the nature of the abuse and in one case, group members' questions to a presenter after the Most Violent Incident assignment suggested that they thought the incident described was not likely the most violent episode for that participant. One peer mentor also shared his most violent incident with the group. Some group members appeared to struggle with the task, relying on the guidelines heavily to reenact the incident. Literacy was an issue for these same participants, who had limited reading and writing skills. Finally, a number of participants revealed that they had been drinking at the time of their most violent incident and as such, their presentations included commentary that they had a difficult time remembering some specifics of the event.

As difficult and challenging as the Most Violent Incident and Victim Empathy assignments were for the participants, the completion of this section of the program was an important step in acknowledging responsibility and continuing their personal process of change. The exercises showed the importance of breaking the secret surrounding abuse and several participants commented on feeling a sense of relief after completing their presentation. Again, facilitators attempted to provide a safe environment in which the men could disclose their abusive behavior, by employing respectful listening and confining questions to those that clarified the story, supported the presenter or challenged aspects of the presentation that focused responsibility for the violence on the victim.

In this context of non-judgmental listening and questioning, facilitators focused further discussion on reasons why men would want to end their violent and abusive behaviors and how those same behaviors had not achieved the desired outcomes of having healthy, loving and non-abusive relationships with their intimate partners.

Healthy Male Sexuality, Socialization and Respectful Relationships:
Sessions – 22 & 23

The objectives of these later sessions of the program dealt with the general concept of respect within relationships. The specific goals were to work with the men in exploring the idea of respect and to assist them in identifying personal beliefs that may be negatively affecting their relationships and supporting disrespectful and abusive behavior. The group engaged in a variety of exercises to help the men understand the elements involved in creating a healthy relationship and, to recognize that perfect relationships do not exist. A recent documentary film, *Toughguise*, was used as a teaching aid to assist group members in considering how the entertainment and advertising industry has affected society to accept negative stereotypes about men and women and to recognize that they have been affected by their socialization. We utilized a flipchart exercise to encourage men to acknowledge and step away from stereotypical "male" qualities and instead consider the range of human qualities

that are possible. Finally, our goals in these sessions included a discussion of the differences between intimacy and sex.

The first exercise was a small group exercise, where the men were asked to name a person they respected, give some examples of the admirable qualities this person has, and how they treat them. They were also asked to name someone who respected them, and why. The responses were then charted on the flipchart and a larger group discussion was held, focusing on the qualities that demonstrate respect. Participants were then challenged about how these relationships compared with the way they treated their partner/victim. In all but one case, the examples the men used for people they respected were men, although they recognized that the characteristics of their relationships with these people were those that could be applied to all healthy relationships, including those with their intimate partners.

This led into a discussion about maintaining respect during arguments and the group developed some strategies for ways in which they might disagree with their partners without using abusive or violent behavior. One participant spoke at some length about ongoing arguments with his ex-partner over child visitation and the larger group brainstormed alternative ways he could conduct himself, even when dealing with someone who was treating him disrespectfully. Another group member raised the issue of honesty within relationships and challenged the facilitators about his belief that it was important to be entirely honest with his

partner in all situations. Interestingly, this discussion lead into the topic of women's body image and clothing, and whether men should be honest with their partners about their clothing choices. Group members made the suggestion that facilitators were asking the men to lie to their partners if they found tactful ways to talk about their appearance. It seemed difficult for the participants to see that they had choices other than total honesty at all times or lying to their partners. During this discussion, the facilitators tried to encourage the men to think about sensitivity and how they could talk with their partner honestly as well as with compassion and understanding. We also asked them to think about what might lie behind their partners' questions about her looks, and whether the stereotypical views of the importance of women's appearance might be contributing to women's insecurity about their bodies.

My reflections of this exercise are that it was somewhat effective in aiding the men to consider the concept of respect within their relationships. As had been in the case throughout the program, we had some participants contribute many more ideas to this activity, while others were virtually silent. One participant chose to use his eleven-year-old son as the example of the person he respected, which seemed a curious choice, though we had not set any limits on who they could select for this activity. Others used their employers or close friends, all of whom were male. A list of respectful human qualities was developed, as a place to begin further discussion on how group members might challenge their previously held beliefs and behaviors to move toward more respectful

interactions within their intimate relationships. Discussion also focused on the participants' lifestyle choices and how these choices affect their relationships. As many of the men had struggled with alcohol and drug addiction in the past, we discussed how these issues might be interfering with their ability to engage in meaningful, healthy relationships.

The group then watched a documentary video, *Toughguise*, which explores the North America media's portrayal of masculinity in film, advertising and music videos. This led to a lively discussion about the power of the media to influence our attitudes, beliefs and choices. This debate included the suggestion that as a culture, North Americans have become desensitized to violence and abuse, in part because of the media. Some group members were skeptical about the extent to which they had been influenced by mass media, while others were immediately struck by the power of advertising and popular culture in defining what it means to be a man in our society. Further discussions on where participants learned their beliefs and values ensued.

Another flipchart exercise was implemented, where I illustrated the stereotypical male qualities such as *independence*, *toughness* and *authoritarian* inside a box. I then used the area around the box to list a number of other desirable human qualities, such as *compassion*, *fairness*, *nurturing*, *good listener*, and *kind*. The men were asked to think about what it meant to be a real man. Did they feel comfortable in the box, or were they interested in trying on some of the other

characteristics that are not traditionally included in the stereotypical male image? This exercise generated a lot of discussion from group members, peer mentors and facilitators and seemed to be quite effective with group members. For some, there seemed to be a pivotal realization – that there were influences beyond their immediate lives, which may be having a negative effect on the way they understand their masculinity.

My reflections on this segment of the sessions on Healthy Sexuality, Socialization and Respectful Relationships are that it was very effective. The film illustrated many of the concepts we had been talking about throughout the program and because *Toughguise* was a recent documentary, it seemed to hold the men's attention more effectively than other older videos we had used in other sessions. The discussion after the film was very dynamic and group members seemed genuinely interested in the subject of socialization. I also noted that as the program had progressed, there had been a substantial change in the attitude of most group members. The group had been reduced to eight members by this point, and the participants had gotten to know the facilitators, peer mentors and each other fairly well. I noticed that the contributions of a number of group members were more honest, direct and meaningful. They were able to challenge each other respectfully and a sense of group identity had emerged.

The last segment of these sessions dealt with healthy male sexuality. During this segment, we asked the men to brainstorm names for the penis and for sex. This

rapidly became a rather humorous exercise, as group members became quite silly and giddy when discussing this subject. One group member indicated that he felt uncomfortable talking about sex in front of the female facilitator. In reviewing the names that men use for the penis and sex, it was clear that many of the choices reveal a limited and stereotypical view of their own sexuality and that of their partners. During this exercise, some members contributed significantly while others were very quiet.

The men were then asked to contribute their ideas about the differences between intimacy and sex, which were listed on the flipchart. A wide range of ideas about intimacy was developed and thorough discussion took place about the myriad of ways in which intimacy can be achieved within healthy relationships. This appeared to be a very positive subject for the men, as we were able to generate a long list of examples of both sexual and non-sexual ways in which they could foster intimacy in their personal relationships.

Following these sessions, facilitators made the decision to remove one participant from the program. Despite the fact that the participant had attended all of the sessions to date, he had repeatedly displayed disruptive and occasionally, disrespectful behavior. Facilitators had spoken privately with the participant once and on a number of occasions; his behavior had been raised with the larger group, as a means of addressing the behavior directly while it was occurring. However, there had been no significant positive change in this

participant's attitude throughout the program and facilitators concluded that the disruptions were having a negative effect on the group as a whole.

My reflections about this incident are that although it was necessary to remove this group member and all three facilitators shared the decision-making, it was disappointing. It was unfortunate that this participant, despite his attendance, had not been willing or able to internalize the content of the program in a meaningful way. Again, the struggle for the facilitators to be patient and supportive was weighed against the interests of the larger group to continue to move forward honestly and openly. In this case, we concluded that it was important that both the participant in question and other group members realize that there would be consequences for the choices he made throughout the program. Nevertheless, removing this group member from the program was a difficult decision at this late stage of the intervention.

Victim Impact on Children: Session 24

This segment of the PAIG program was one of the last sessions for the group. While we had hoped to have more time to devote to the issue of the impact of domestic violence on children, only one session was specifically provided for this important topic. However, it is important to note that the impact of men's violence on their victims, both adult and children, had been a recurrent theme throughout the intervention. Prior discussions about the effects of violence and

abuse on children had revealed that children learn by example and that witnessing abuse can be just as harmful as experiencing the violence. There was recognition in the group that children who live in abusive homes are much more likely to become violent and in the case of women, more likely to find themselves in relationships with abusive men. Many of the effects of violence on children had already been discussed during the Autobiography exercise, where the participants acknowledged the feelings of powerlessness in their own childhood experiences. They had shared the ways they dealt with those feelings of frustration and fear, including their own use of abusive behavior on younger siblings and, turning to drugs and alcohol during their teenage years.

To begin this session on the impact of men's violence on children, the group viewed a portion of the video "*The Trouble with Evan*", a documentary by the CBC program *The Fifth Estate*. The film follows a family with two parents and two young children, and focuses particularly on the parenting techniques used with the eleven-year-old boy, Evan. Evan is demonstrating difficulties at home and at school, including stealing money, smoking cigarettes and fighting with other children. The documentary examines a true story of abuse within one family, with the use of small video cameras that the family allowed in the house over a period of months. The portion of the film that we observed, provided the participants with a view of the dynamics of abuse from the inside. Group members had the opportunity to watch extremely troubling interactions between the young boy and his parents, particularly the father.

After watching the film, a large group discussion was held, during which the men were asked to contribute ideas about what they saw in the film. Many of them immediately identified with the child, Evan, stating that he was made a scapegoat for all of the problems within the family. Other participants were willing to admit that not only could they relate to Evan's perspective as a child, but also to the techniques used by the father. One participant said that he had a very difficult time watching the film because he recognized himself in the father and knew that he had treated his children in similar abusive ways.

Facilitators prompted the men to think about the father's motives for his abusive behaviors. Some of the questions we posed to the group included: *"What was the father trying to accomplish?" "Was he taking out his frustrations on his son?"*, *"Were there other ways the family could have dealt with Evan's troubling behavior?"*. All the participants agreed that the parenting techniques used by the parents, particularly the father, were damaging to the child and likely to result in more problems for Evan in the future. Some participants predicted that Evan was bound to come into contact with the criminal justice system before he turned eighteen and others suggested that the results of his abusive childhood would likely have lifelong effects. One group member commented on the tone of voice used by the father and admitted that he had used a similar authoritarian tone with his own children on many occasions. All the men appeared to understand the dynamics of the inappropriate use of power and control by the father and some

participants suggested other ways that the family might have dealt with the problems. This portion of the discussion was important, as the men struggled to find alternative, healthy ways in which the family could have dealt with parenting a child displaying inappropriate behaviors.

The exercise seemed to be constructive, although troubling, for most group members. Their comments suggested that they were able to identify both with the victim and the abuser, which allayed a concern that the facilitators had in planning to use the documentary as a teaching aid during this session on Victim Impact on Children. We had hoped that the men would not only identify with the victim's perspective, but also with the abusive behaviors displayed by the father. Prior experience by one of the facilitators with using this film had indicated that sometimes group members seemed only to be able to relate to the child's victimization, not with the abusive behaviors of the father. In trying to ensure that PAIG participants concentrated on the parent's behavior, we prepared the men in advance, asking them to take special note of the body language, statements and other behaviors demonstrated by the parents.

In my view, the discussion following the film revealed that participants in this PAIG group were able to see both the victim's and the abusers' perspectives and in some cases, they clearly stated that they could see themselves in the actions of the father. However, although some participants continued to make many constructive comments in the discussion, I noticed that some participants were

quiet and contributing less. I wondered whether this change in intensity might be related to program termination, as there were only two sessions left in the PAIG group.

Maintenance Plans and Termination: Sessions 25 & 26

These last two sessions of the PAIG program were intended to support the participants in completing their Maintenance Plans, gather program evaluation information and prepare for group termination.

The Maintenance Plan was designed to review some of the basic strategies for non-violence that had been emphasized during the program. The maintenance plan included the Personal Plan for Non-Violence, as well as the Time-Out Plan and the Support Map. We also asked group members to share their six-month and one-year personal goals, in the form of a letter to themselves. Program facilitators agreed to mail these letters back to group members six months after program termination. On the last evening of group, we reviewed the completed maintenance plans and distributed both the post-test questionnaire as well as the participants' evaluation of the PAIG program (Appendix L). The last session concluded with a celebration and open group discussion with participants sharing their thoughts and perspectives on the group experience. The discussion also focused on other community resources available to group members if they were interested in continuing in counseling or treatment.

The Maintenance Plan was a take-home assignment for group members, to be reviewed in the group and then circulated to the supervising probation officer for each participant, after the conclusion of the program. The purpose of the plan was to encourage the men to reflect on their experiences in the program and to begin to articulate their strategies for remaining violence-free in the future. Some of the questions in the Maintenance Plan included: *"How good was your participation during group meetings?"* *"How will you remain violence-free after finishing the program?"*, and *"How will you work toward relating to your current or future partner more fairly?"*. These questions were designed to help the men review their participation in the 28-session program and begin to formulate plans for avoiding future violence.

Also included in the package were the Personal Plan for Nonviolence (Appendix I), which asked group members to identify their warning signs in terms of the kinds of situations which are likely to lead to escalation, behaviors that they know are typical for them prior to a violent episode and what thoughts and feelings they need to be conscious of, in order to avoid acting abusively. The Time-Out Plan (Appendix J), asks the participants where they will go during a time out, who they will speak to, what their self-talk will be and how they will assess their warning signs prior to returning home. Another part of the package, the Support Map (Appendix K) asked participants to identify people in their lives who can act as supports for them in a diversity of situations, including a variety of financial,

emotional and practical circumstances. This exercise had first been distributed much earlier in the PAIG program and group members were asked at that time to begin to identify who their supports were. Our hope was that over time, participants would add to their list of people who would be willing to assist them, so that they would now be able to identify a range of supports available to them at the conclusion of the PAIG program. This exercise was particularly important because facilitators were concerned that many of the participants had few healthy relationships that they could rely on in difficult circumstances. Finally, the maintenance plan included an exercise which instructed group members to articulate their six-month goals.

My reflections of the maintenance plan exercise were that it was only somewhat effective. The effort put forward by the men at this late stage in the program, seemed to be diminishing. Although several group members put significant effort into their plans, others seemed to have completed it at the last minute and without much thought. As facilitators, we had hoped that this last assignment would be rich in detail of the men's understanding of the practical tools they will use in order to avoid violent episodes in the future. However, in general, the quality of their written work did not always reflect that they had internalized all of the program material and were seriously attempting to undertake new and non-violent ways of resolving the problems in their personal relationships. Furthermore, the Personal Goals assignment brought some strong protests from some group members who resisted the idea of writing a letter to themselves.

One participant said that he did not want to write down any goals because he was quite sure that he would not achieve them and would be disappointed when he received the letter. Another man expressed concern that he would be reminded of his previous behavior if he completed the exercise and he did not wish to be reminded, after the program was over. Although several men did complete the assignment, facilitators did not insist that the other group members complete this portion of the maintenance plan, as we did not have adequate time to address their resistance at this late stage in the program.

I wondered whether group members believed it was redundant to repeat the same assignments that they had done earlier in the program? Perhaps we should have developed a new tool that used different methods of asking them to articulate the skills we had discussed and practiced throughout the program. I also wondered whether the fact that we were reaching termination was significant in why group members seemed less willing to engage fully in the assignment. In any event, the maintenance plan did not seem to connect with the participants as fully as I would have hoped.

Our last activities with the PAIG group members involved completion of the post-test questionnaire, which required some one-on-one assistance with some of the participants, as had the pre-test questionnaire. These post-test responses have been compared to participants' answers on the pre-test and the results are summarized in Chapter 5 - Program Evaluation. Group members were also

asked to complete an evaluation of the program and the facilitators; summarized in the evaluation chapter and included in the appendices as Appendix L. Finally, the last session ended with a discussion of other community resources available for men who wished to continue working on their own abuse and relationship issues. Facilitators strongly encouraged the men to contact both Clinic and the Men's Resource Centre, two community agencies in Winnipeg which deal with domestic violence, abuse and men's issues.

My reflections of the last evening of the program were that there was a sense of accomplishment for the seven men who had completed the program. All of them expressed positive feelings about the program, the facilitators and the one peer mentor who had participated throughout the program. Several men commented that they had learned a great deal which would be helpful for them in present and future relationships. One participant brought a letter to group on the last night, expressing his thanks to the facilitators for the assistance he received throughout the PAIG program. While we strongly encouraged the group members to take advantage of other resources in the community, several members commented that they didn't think they needed it but were prepared to make use of those services at a future time, if necessary.

The co-facilitators and one peer mentor who had participated throughout the program shared our congratulations with the men for their commitment to completing the program. Facilitators also reiterated our belief that the group had

only scratched the surface of the work needed to develop and maintain healthy, non-violent relationships. We wished the men well and encouraged them to continue the work they began in the PAIG program through several community agencies in Winnipeg.

CHAPTER FIVE – PROGRAM EVALUATION

Group Members' Evaluation

Participants in the PAIG program completed an evaluation of the program (Appendix L) during the last session. Group members were asked their opinion on course leaders' preparedness, communication and support skills. Questions regarding the length of the PAIG program and material covered were also included. The evaluation forms provided space for group members to provide comments on what they found most and least helpful about the program and what changes they would suggest for future programs.

Most respondents indicated that they found the program to be quite helpful and shared that they found the facilitators' support to be real. One group member said that he felt trust in the group. Another participant articulated that he found the group to be extremely important for him in terms of coming to understand himself better, while another indicated that the group helped him to come to terms with his violent behavior. Most group members said that the program was about the right length and that course material was appropriate. One group member indicated that he thought facilitators were too lenient about attendance and the completion of assignments. Sections of the program, which were repeatedly singled out by participants as most relevant to the men, included Autobiography, Time Outs and Healthy Relationships. Several group members

indicated that the videos were out of date and one respondent said that the videos were the least helpful part of the program.

With regard to facilitators' preparedness and skill, almost all of the comments suggested that group members saw the facilitators as well-prepared and skilled communicators. One respondent said that he thought the facilitators were quite patient and clear in their expectations. However, one participant indicated that he thought we could have been better prepared in the Autobiography section and shared that while facilitators encouraged group participation, he did not like being put on the spot. Several men commented that they did not feel judged by the facilitators.

In terms of suggestions for future programming, one group member stated that he would like to see an abused woman visit the group to explain her feelings and present circumstances to the men. Several other participants indicated that they would like to see the program adhere to its intended timelines more effectively. One participant said that he would recommend smaller groups for future programs. Finally, a number of men commented on the food as being a positive part of the group experience.

Co-facilitators' Evaluation of the Student

Both co-facilitators and one peer mentor provided written feedback regarding my contribution to the PAIG program at its conclusion. Overall, the facilitators made positive comments regarding my facilitation skills and use of self in the process. They also highlighted my availability to provide support to group members, facilitators and peer mentors and my ability to respectfully hold participants accountable for their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in group. In general, the co-facilitators remarks indicated that we were a complimentary team, able to provide support to one another and solve problems cooperatively throughout the PAIG program.

The peer mentor indicated that he found my attitude to be "hopeful and encouraging" throughout group and for him, the most important aspect of my participation was my ability to be non-judgmental to group members, despite their violent history and unstable situations. He also shared that my perspective as a female was invaluable to the group process.

One co-facilitator gave me constructive criticism about my vocabulary, which at times was too advanced for some group members. This was something I attempted to be mindful of during the program but nonetheless, at times I struggled with finding appropriate ways of explaining ideas in ways that were

understandable to all group members. This is an area for ongoing improvement, especially in working with this clientele.

Student's Assessment of the Practicum

I have chosen to evaluate the Practicum experience both generally and by select topics. The issues described in some detail below were chosen because they were either innovations to the PAIG program and therefore required special attention or, because they created challenges in the planning and delivery of the program.

Overall, I am pleased with the learning I obtained through my participation in the planning and implementation of the PAIG program. My assessment of the program itself is that it met its goals and objectives of providing a long-term intensive treatment program for domestically violent men in a community setting. Despite the fact that the group began with 14 participants and decreased in size to 7, I believe that it provided valuable treatment and education for the participants who completed the program. Evaluations from the participants as well as co-facilitators' feedback, contribute to my view that the intervention was useful in challenging abusive beliefs and values and provided healthy perspectives and a variety of strategies to assist group members in remaining nonviolent in the future.

However, it is difficult to accurately assess the outcomes of the PAIG program in terms of its direct effect on reducing or eliminating the violent behaviors of the participants. According to the literature, the most common way of assessing the outcomes of domestic violence intervention programs is through an assessment of recidivism at the six-month, one year and eighteen month points following the end of the program. As this Practicum report was written immediately following the completion of the program, no such statistics are available. Furthermore, using recidivism rates to evaluate program success had been criticized in the literature as failing to accurately reflect participants' real rate of violent behaviors. In fact, we know that many violent incidents are not reported to police and many of the episodes that are reported, do not end up in criminal convictions.

Another method of determining whether there has been a reduction in violent behavior by men who have completed domestic violence intervention is by follow-up reports with the victims and partners of program participants. In the case of this PAIG program, none of the victims who received letters from their probation officers at the beginning of the program have made contact with program facilitators and as such, we have not gained any information from these collateral contacts, either during or following the intervention.

Below, I have highlighted several aspects of the program that require specific attention in the evaluation process.

Peer Mentors

The decision to include volunteer peer mentors in the PAIG program was an innovation for Manitoba Probation Services. I am not aware of any other program for domestically violent men in the province that has included former clients of the domestic violence unit of Probation Services in the complete delivery of a long-term intervention group. The following is my assessment of the experience of using peer mentors in the PAIG program.

I believe that including peer mentors in the PAIG program was potentially very valuable. One of the four peer mentors who originally started the program made significant contributions throughout the process. In addition to contributing to the group process from a facilitator's point of view, he was also able to add comments, reflections and questions based on his own experience as a man who had been abusive in past relationships. This perspective appeared to be very powerful and relevant for group members and added an element of honesty to many group discussions that would have been absent without his presence. I would strongly encourage inviting peer mentors with this level of commitment and skill level to participate in future groups with this clientele. I am of the view that this peer mentor's participation was at the same level as that of the three co-facilitators and his unique perspective as a former client of Manitoba Probation Services added considerably to the program. I believe that resources should be

made available to provide an honorarium to peer mentors who make this level of contribution.

However, I have also have concerns about using volunteer peer mentors. Of the four peer mentors who originally attended the pre-group sessions, one did not participate in the program at all. Two other peer mentors participated throughout the program but had significant periods of time where they did not attend regularly. This created potential for several problems. One problem is that irregular attendance may result in a lack of awareness of some group dynamics and as such, peer mentors may be less effective in their participation.

Furthermore, a lack of commitment on the part of the peer mentors, may indicate to group members that they do not need to make a commitment to attending regularly and participating fully in the program.

Another concern about the addition of peer mentors to domestic violence intervention programs is the question of evaluating their ability to make healthy contributions and commitment to the process, given other issues in their lives. Two of the three participating peer mentors had previous problems with alcohol and drug abuse and these were ongoing pressures for them throughout group. Other life circumstances including problems with housing, employment and current relationship and childcare issues were issues for several of the peer mentors and can have negative effects on their ability to participate fully in intensive programming of this kind. Furthermore, it would be counterproductive

to set up these volunteers for failure. Volunteer peer mentors are interested in giving back to the community, to helping other abusive men put an end to their violence. Their interest is to be commended but group organizers have a responsibility to ensure that the group experience is appropriate for both peer mentors and group members.

The above concerns point to the need for a very thorough and careful screening process for peer mentors. In addition to ensuring that peer mentors hold positive attitudes about women and are committed to non-violence, other factors must be considered such as their life issues, appropriateness for working with men struggling with violence and abuse issues and, their ability to make a commitment to the process. Manitoba Probation Services is currently developing criteria for the use of peer mentors in future programming with this group of clientele.

Participant Selection and Assessment

The planning for the implementation of the PAIG program in a community-based setting in Winnipeg began six months prior to the program commencement date. However, in this case it proved difficult to obtain a suitable number of appropriate clients (12-16) for the intervention, despite the high number of domestic violence clients on probation in Winnipeg at that time (approximately 1500). The process used in obtaining referrals included three in-person meetings with Probation

Officers in Winnipeg Probation Services to explain the program. A series of email communication was also used, which included the criteria for the program and the referral process. Despite the fact that staff knew the start date for the program well in advance, it remained problematic to obtain appropriate referrals and in fact, the program was delayed by three weeks, in order to ensure that the intervention would begin with a sufficient number of participants.

The problems associated with obtaining an adequate number of client referrals may be attributed to some of the following factors. One, the first written notices of the PAIG program was sent out to Probation Officers in June 2002, when many staff take summer vacations. Also, because this was the first time that the program has been held in the community in two and a half years, there may have been a lack of familiarity with the intervention itself. Additionally, there has been a significant increase and change in the staff of the Domestic Violence Unit of Winnipeg Probation Services and some new staff may not have had the opportunity to develop familiarity with their own clients, in order to identify appropriate candidates for the PAIG program. Also, it may be that Probation Officers do not yet view the long-term program as a viable mandatory programming alternative for their clients, because they have traditionally been directed to refer all domestic violence clients to the short term PAST program. Finally, the significant length of the PAIG program and the limiting criteria for appropriate clients (the target group had originally been identified as High-Risk clients, see Appendix A) may have contributed to the relatively low number of

referrals to the group. Despite these difficulties, the PAIG program did begin with 14 participants, all of whom appeared at the outset to be appropriate for the intervention.

However, within a few sessions of the start of the program, it was evident to facilitators that several of the participants would be unlikely to complete the intervention successfully. Untreated addiction and mental health concerns as well as an unwillingness to accept any responsibility for their violent behavior were issues with which several men presented, despite the fact that the program criteria had specifically indicated that clients in these categories would not be appropriate for the group. In fact, all of the participants who presented with the above-noted issues did not complete the PAIG program. Decisions to remove participants from the program were complicated for facilitators, for a variety of reasons. Some of the participants had conditions on their court orders, which required completion of domestic violence programming, and their removal from the program meant a breach of those conditions, resulting in a new criminal charge for that participant. Facilitators were reluctant to remove participants early in the intervention because we were hopeful that there would be improvement over time by these group members.

We were also conscious of the need to retain a reasonable number of men in the group because a diversity of opinions, values and beliefs is essential for group work of this kind. Furthermore, facilitators recognized it was important to the

management of Probation Services, that a reasonable number of participants complete the program, in order to justify the significant resources required for implementing long-term groups. Finally, facilitators were also concerned about the potential demoralization among remaining participants if the number of group fell sharply throughout the intervention. However, we were aware of the importance of considering the needs of the overall group, which ultimately had to override the needs of any individual group member.

Decision-making about which participants should be removed from group, at what point in the intervention and with what consequences, was made jointly between facilitators and the Probation Officers supervising these clients. These decisions were made after discussion about these group members' participation and suitability for the program. My reflections about the selection process for participants, are that greater efforts must be made with probation officers to encourage more referrals to the PAIG program and that more time be devoted to careful screening of group members in advance of the intervention.

Structure of the Intervention

The structure of the existing PAIG program requires some discussion. Although facilitators used the existing program manual as a guide, we deviated from its suggested curriculum in a number of places. In my view, the manual contains more content than can be reasonably completed in a 28-session program. As a

result, we chose to leave out a number of exercises throughout the program.

Furthermore, the suggested structure for PAIG does not include the Autobiography section, which formed an integral part of this program and in my opinion, was an essential component of the process we utilized with this clientele.

Future consideration might be given to increasing the length of the program, although this raises other questions about the possibility of finding appropriate group members who are willing to make an even greater time commitment. Also, a longer program would require more commitment from program facilitators.

Currently, probation officers who facilitate domestic violence intervention programs as part of their job responsibilities also have considerable other duties within the organization. Hiring facilitators for these interventions from outside Probation Services is also a possibility that was utilized in this PAIG program, although financial resources for programming of this kind have traditionally been scarce.

The significant amount of educational material contained in the current curriculum of the PAIG program was also an area of reflection. My understanding is that the original PAIG program was developed as an alternative to the Partner Abuse Short Term program, for men who required significant treatment and had not previously received any education about domestic violence. As such, the educational component suggested in the PAIG manual

forms a significant portion of the program. In our program, six sessions at the beginning of group were required to review the PAST material. My view is that most of the men in this group already had a basic understanding of this material, as we had specifically requested in the program criteria that participants had completed the PAST (or a similar) program within one year prior to beginning PAIG. In hindsight, I believe that it is possible to further reduce the amount of time given to this review, in the interest of moving into the treatment process more expediently. All of the concepts raised in the PAST review are frequently explained and discussed throughout the PAIG program and the decision to devote six sessions to the PAST review made it difficult for facilitators to fully explore other important sections of the program later in the group process such as Respectful Relationships and Healthy Male Sexuality. I believe that consideration should be given to reducing or eliminating the number of sessions given specifically to the review of material covered in the Partner Abuse Short Term program, particularly if the participants have already completed a short-term educational program in the past.

The choice to use three facilitators for this PAIG program was important, in my opinion. There were several occasions where one of the three co-facilitators could not be in attendance for a session and the decision to utilize three facilitators made it possible for the program to proceed even if one person was absent. Furthermore, the insights generated from three facilitators allowed for alternative points of view and rich discussion many times throughout the

program. On a related subject, the decision to use both male and female facilitators was an important choice in my opinion. Having the female perspective represented in these interventions is supported in the domestic violence literature as an essential element of doing group work with this clientele. My experience as the female co-facilitator in this program certainly confirms the need to include both male and female perspectives in all programming of this kind.

Educational benefits to student

The experience of completing this Practicum has given me an enhanced understanding of the current literature in the field of domestic violence; particularly as it relates to providing group intervention to partner abusers. I was able to integrate that knowledge in the implementation of the Practicum in a number of areas including the use of a narrative therapy approach in the Autobiography and Most Violent Incident sessions. The domestic violence literature informed my overall participation as a facilitator in the program, in terms of guiding my contributions towards encouraging men to challenge their unhealthy and abusive beliefs about women and relationships and replace them with more respectful values and behaviors.

My knowledge and level of expertise in participating in group processes and utilizing a theoretical model (PAIG) was enhanced through the Practicum

experience. I believe that the skills I developed using this particular theoretical framework improved throughout the intervention, for a variety of reasons. First, because it was the second time that I co-facilitated the PAIG program, I was more comfortable with the curriculum and associated timelines. Having a second opportunity to utilize the program material, allowed me to be flexible as a facilitator, more spontaneous in the sections of the program that I presented and, to contribute appropriately during other sections. Using the PAIG model assisted in preventing the group from getting too far "off-topic", which was an important task for the facilitators. My learning was also enhanced by decision-making about aspects of the program we chose not to present, even though they were contained in the program manual. As the PAIG manual is a comprehensive document, there were a number of times that facilitators had to choose between several elements. Participating in decision-making around the order and content of curriculum was an important part of my learning.

The experience of facilitating a long-term group has developed my skills as a facilitator, particularly with this challenging client group. Both group participants and co-facilitators have provided feedback to me on an ongoing basis.

The challenges and questions from group members during the program about program content, structure and facilitators' style were constant reminders about the methods by which facilitators deliver the material. Several times I received direct feedback from group members about my facilitation style and this was useful in my learning. Another important aspect of my learning focused on

listening to, and observing the other two co-facilitators and peer mentors who participated throughout the program. Working with an experienced team also contributed to my facilitation skills, as they frequently found innovative ways to describe a concept, plan an exercise or challenge a participant. Observing their skills with this particular client group was an important part of my learning.

Evaluation Procedures

Group members provided written feedback on their assessment of the PAIG program during the final session. In addition to their evaluation of the program and the facilitators, group members also completed a pre-test questionnaire at the beginning of the program and a post-test questionnaire at the end of the intervention.

Evaluation Instruments

Group members were provided with an evaluation form for the PAIG program on the last night of the group (Appendix L). The Participant Evaluation included questions on course content, the three facilitators, group structure and additional resources provided (guest speakers, videos etc). Co-facilitators have also provided their written feedback on my facilitation skills. The Pre and Post -Test Questionnaires were distributed. These questionnaires examined group

members' values and beliefs about relationships and domestic violence. A comparison of the results is included below.

Results of Evaluation

The Pre-Test and Post-Test Questionnaires allowed a general assessment of the participant's attitudes about domestic violence both at the beginning and end of the program. Those beliefs have been summarized and compared below.

To begin, it is important to state that the participants had significant difficulty completing the questionnaires on their own. Most of the group members had trouble understanding the intent of some of the questions, perhaps because of the wording. As such, facilitators and peer mentors provided assistance to group members in completing the pre and post-test questionnaires. Because of these difficulties in comprehension, it is unclear how accurate some of the responses are on the pre and post-test Questionnaires.

In general, all of the participant's attitudes about domestic violence, abuse and relationships with women improved to some extent on the Post-Test Questionnaire. A number of men indicated that by the end of the group, they felt less need to have others know how tough they were and were more willing to back down from a physical fight. Their attitudes about women improved and most participants indicated on the post-test that they thought women would make

a good boss 'frequently' as opposed to 'sometimes'. Many of the men's attitudes about the arrest of domestic violence offenders changed in a positive direction on the post-test questionnaire, when they indicated that arrest is the appropriate response in cases of domestic violence. Some men reported a significant decline in their emotional abuse such as threatening behaviors, name calling, checking up on their partner and jealousy issues. They also reported a decrease in their physical violence such as shoving, pushing and slapping their partners at the end of the intervention. All the participants indicated on the post-test questionnaire that they wanted to change the way they treat their partners and stated that they believe the program helped them to improve the way they treated their partners. Several men indicated that they are ashamed of how they have treated women in the past.

However, despite these positive results, it is very difficult to objectively and accurately assess the long-term impact of the program on the behavior and beliefs of the clients. Recidivism is only one method of tracking whether the PAIG program had a positive effect on the clients and this cannot be evaluated until some time after the end of group. Furthermore, no ongoing contact has been kept with the victims, who would be able to provide another source of information about group participants' behavior following the intervention.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this practicum was to provide the student with an opportunity to study the literature in an area of clinical practice and to apply a theoretical model to a clinical setting. The area of practice was selected by the student because of her interest and prior experience in this field. The clinical setting selected was Manitoba Probation Services because of its advanced work in the field of domestic violence, its accommodating environment and the availability of appropriate clients for this type of intervention. The literature review supports the implementation of the PAIG program, which was developed in 1999 as an alternative to short term domestic violence programming in the province.

The long-term domestic violence intervention program was developed to work intensively with High-Risk men who have been convicted of domestic violence related offences. The Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG) program provided a learning forum for the participants, all of whom had been convicted of domestic related offences. This long-term group provided the opportunity for participants to discuss their relationships, beliefs about abuse, healthy sexual behavior, family of origin, socialization, strategies for preventing violence and the effects of violence on victims, children and themselves. The in-group exercises, take-home assignments and group discussions generated ideas that encouraged the men to challenge their own and others' thinking and to experiment with

alternative and healthy ways of dealing with their life experiences and circumstances.

Co-facilitators, including the student, were satisfied with the outcomes of the program, despite the fact that there was an attrition of 50% of group members. Although it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this kind of programming, the following objectives were met:

- Group members were provided with practical information on how to change their abusive behaviors.
- Participants were assisted in understanding that their acts of violence are means of controlling their partners.
- Group members were encouraged to see that abuse can include psychological and sexual components, as well as physical violence.
- The men were challenged to examine their beliefs that support violent and abusive behavior and to see that these beliefs are reinforced by our society.
- Participants were encouraged to become accountable to those they have hurt through their use of violence and abuse.

The participant evaluations confirmed that group members found the PAIG program to be educational and the strategies helpful in terms of ending their violent behaviors with their partners. They also stated that the structure and length of the program was appropriate.

The learning goals established by the student were accomplished through the completion of this practicum. The literature review enabled the student to better understand the complexities of domestic violence and the range and philosophy of a variety of treatment approaches. Utilizing the theoretical PAIG model was part of the student's learning and enhanced her familiarity with this particular intervention. The co-facilitation model utilized in the PAIG program was very rewarding, and included the innovation of including peer mentors in the group process for the first time in a long-term program.

Finally, the practicum experience gave the student an opportunity to consider recommendations for future programming with this challenging groups of clients. The significant number of domestic violence clients on probation in Manitoba, gives rise to the ongoing need for treatment in this area. Although the literature has documented that it is difficult to accurately assess the outcomes and effectiveness of group interventions for abusive men, there is a recognition that they are a worthwhile component as part of a community strategy to prevent domestic violence. Furthermore, that there is a need for more long-term

treatment groups and follow-up programs for domestically violent men in community settings.

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APPENDIX A

Criteria for Partner Abuse Intensive (PAIG) Group October 28, 2002 – February 5, 2003

The purpose of this long-term domestic violence group is to work intensively with High-Risk men who have been convicted of domestic violence related offences. Unlike the short-term group PAST, the Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG) will not be primarily education focused but rather, provide a forum for the participants to discuss their relationships, beliefs about abuse, healthy sexual behavior, family of origin, socialization, strategies for preventing violence and raising awareness of the effects of violence on victims, children and the participants themselves. The group is intended to be participatory – there is an expectation that all group members will eventually share their experiences and beliefs within the group setting. This discussion is expected to generate ideas that encourage the men to challenge their own and others' thinking and to experiment with alternative ways of dealing with their life experiences and circumstances.

The following are a list of criteria to be used by supervising Probation Officers in selecting male clients for the long-term domestic violence group, scheduled to take place at the 470 Notre Dame offices from October 28, 2002 to February 5, 2003.

Group members should meet the following criteria. They should:

- ◆ Be presently on a probation order /conditional sentence for domestic violence offence(s) which does not expire before February, 2003
- ◆ Have been assessed as High Risk, according to the provincial Secondary Risk Assessment for Partner Abuse
- ◆ Have completed PAST in the past year
- ◆ Be willing to verbally accept some measure of responsibility for their abusive behavior. Responsibility may be minimal but complete 'deny-ers' are not appropriate for this group
- ◆ Be willing to attend two evening sessions (6 p.m. – 9 PM) per week for approximately 4 months
- ◆ Be able to read and write well enough to work independently on some written work

Clients who are not appropriate include those who:

- ◆ have significant emotional/mental health issues which would prevent them from participating reasonably in group
- ◆ have serious, untreated addictions to alcohol and/or drugs which would prevent them from participating reasonably in group
- ◆ have completed the long-term PAIG group in the institution or community
- ◆ have significantly chaotic lifestyles which would prevent them from attending the group regularly

Should the Program receive more appropriate referrals than space, priority will be given to those clients that are:

- ◆ **currently involved in a relationship**
- ◆ **have access to /supervision of their child/children**

Points to Remember:

- ◆ Facilitators will be responsible for keeping in touch with PO's if there are behavior or attendance issues. This will occur the next working day.
- ◆ Supervision of these clients can be suspended during the duration of the group providing they are attending regularly and facilitators are in a position to deal with ongoing issues
- ◆ Attendance at PAIG is mandatory – very few misses will be allowed before expulsion. Each absence will be dealt with on an individual basis.
- ◆ Potential breaches for failure to attend will be laid by the PO with a report from the facilitators
- ◆ There will be an in person interview between the client and the PAIG facilitators in September
- ◆ There will be one pre-group session for all the clients referred in September – to review the expectations of group and answer questions from the men
- ◆ Facilitators will provide an attendance and progress summary upon completion of PAIG. Each participant will have completed a developed control plan that will be shared with the PO as part of the ongoing intervention work with the participant when he returns to CCM supervision.

Check List for PO's:

- Have you included the Probation Order and Police Report with this referral?
- Has the client accepted at least a minimal level of responsibility for his offences?
- Has the client completed PAST in the last year?
- Have you included a copy of his PAST evaluation?
- Is the client aware that the group runs two nights a week from October 2002 to January 2003?

- Is the client aware of whether he will be breached if he does not complete the group?
- Is the client aware of the objectives of the PAIG group and the expectation of verbal participation?
- Is the client prepared to meet with group facilitators prior to the group start date?
- Is the client currently in a relationship?
- Does the client have access to /supervision of his child/children?

Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG)

Referral Form

Date: _____ **File #** _____

Client Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: Home _____ **Work** _____

Referring PO: _____ **Phone #:** _____

Current Convictions for: _____

Length of Current Probation Order/Conditional Sentence:

Overview of past convictions/Probation Orders:

Is a copy of the current probation order/conditional sentence order included? Police reports? ___ Yes ___ No If no, please explain.

Lives with Victim ___ Yes ___ No If no, current relationship status?

No Contact Condition ___ Yes ___ No Additional information?

Victim's Name _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Employed? ___ Yes ___ No If yes, where and what are his hours of work?

Does the client have childcare or other responsibilities that might interfere with his attendance at group?

Motivation to Attend Group ___ High ___ Moderate ___ Resistant

Date PAST program completed: _____
Evaluation included?

Are there any other issues with this client that the facilitators should be advised about?

PAIG Facilitators Miriam Browne, Paul Starkewski and Allan Hendrickson-Gracie will be in contact with you to set up an interview with this client in late August or early September.

*** DO NOT RELEASE THIS PAGE TO THE CLIENT**

Partner Abuse Intensive Program (PAIG) Group

RATIONALE:

Violence is not acceptable. People get hurt physically and emotionally and this results in family breakup, legal problems, injury and sometimes, even death.

PHILOSOPHY:

- ◆ Violence is not acceptable
- ◆ We are responsible and accountable for our own behavior
- ◆ Abuse is a learned behavior. We choose how we behave and we can choose to change.
- ◆ Violence hurts people and because violence is a learned behavior, people can learn to change

GOALS:

To provide an opportunity for men to discuss their relationships, past history of violence and abuse and their beliefs about men and women. The program will allow the participants to share some of their personal/emotional issues and to learn from others in the group.

The group is participatory – everyone will be expected to share their past experiences and to listen to others.

LIMITATIONS (What the program isn't):

- ◆ It is not the purpose of the group to save relationships
- ◆ The program is not a 'cure'. It will provide an opportunity for learning about violence, abuse and changing abusive behavior
- ◆ The program cannot resolve other issues for the participants (i.e. housing, child access/visitation rights)

GROUP RULES:

- ◆ Do not attend group under the influence of alcohol or drugs (you will be asked to leave)
- ◆ No violence or threats of violence to facilitators or other group members
- ◆ No violence towards partners, children, other people, pets
- ◆ No absences that have not been approved in advance
- ◆ Assignments must be completed

- ◆ Respect other group members space (no touching, pointing etc)
- ◆ Personal information about other group members will not be shared outside of group
- ◆ Facilitator's must report child abuse, or if they believe that someone may be in danger.

I understand the information above and agree to the PAIG group rules.

I consent to participate in any evaluation procedures related to this program.

DECLARATION

I, _____,

Understand that, as a condition of my Supervised Probation Order, I am required to report as directed to my assigned Probation Officer. Consequently, I am to attend, participate in, and complete the Partner Abuse Intensive Program (PAIG).

Dates: Monday, October 28, 2002 to Wednesday, February 5, 2003

Times: 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., Mondays and Wednesdays (Except holidays)

Location: 470 Notre Dame Avenue

My failure to attend, participate and complete all sessions of this program may result in a Breach of Probation Charge.

Client's Signature

Probation Officer's Signature

Date Signed

- **COPY TO CLIENT**

APPENDIX B

VICTIM LETTER

October 28, 2002

Ms.

Dear Ms.

Mr. _____ has been placed on supervised probation as a result of an offence against you. One condition on his probation order is that he attend, participate and complete domestic violence counseling. Therefore, Mr. _____ will be attending the **PAIG (Partner Abuse Intensive Group) program** two evenings a week from October 28th, 2002 to February 5, 2003 at the 470 Notre Dame Avenue location of Probation Services.

The purpose of this long-term group is to work intensively with men who have been convicted of domestic violence related offences. Ideas that will be explored during the group include the principle that violence is not acceptable. People get hurt physically and emotionally and this results in family breakup, legal problems, injury and sometimes, even death. Also, the group will discuss the principle that we are all responsible and accountable for our own behavior. We choose how we behave and we can choose to change.

The Partner Abuse Intensive Group (PAIG) will provide an opportunity for the participants to discuss their relationships, beliefs about abuse, family of origin, socialization, healthy sexual behavior, strategies for preventing violence and raising awareness of the effects of violence on victims, children and the participants themselves. The group is intended to be participatory – there is an expectation that all group members will eventually share their experiences and beliefs within the group setting. This discussion is expected to generate ideas that encourage the men to challenge their own and others' thinking and to experiment with alternative ways of dealing with their life experiences and circumstances. It is not the purpose of the group to save relationships and it is

not a 'cure'. It will provide an opportunity for learning about violence, abuse and changing abusive behavior.

It is important that you remember that you are not responsible for ___'s behavior. The PAIG program is not designed to provide counseling for you as a victim. However, we know that it can be a frightening, confusing and helpless experience to be abused. This may be a difficult time to be involved in relationship with ___, as there may have been a breakdown in trust and communication. It can help to share these feelings with other people in similar situations or even with a counselor, so we have attached a list of resources available in the community.

If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to call facilitator Paul Klostermaier-Starkewski at 945-3082.

Sincerely,

PO

APPENDIX C**Autobiography Questions**

- ◆ Where did you grow up? With Whom (E.g. Mother and Father, Single parent, foster homes, etc)? What was your relationship with your family like?
- ◆ How did your parents/guardians get along? What are your memories of home while growing up? What messages did you get while growing up? How did you learn to express your emotions (In what way did you express them to others)?
- ◆ How were you disciplined? How were you praised? In what way is your parenting similar and/or different from the way you were raised by your parents/guardians?
- ◆ Now try to look back to some of the memories from your past that you do not like to think about. These are memories that you try to not think about but the only thing is that it still comes up in your mind. Why do you not like thinking about it? Describe the events as best as you can. What or who do you credit that helped you to "survive" (make it through) these event? Describe the feelings you get when this memory comes up. What does your body (body signs) do during this time? What is your behaviour when this memory comes up? Try to put a name/title to this event (e.g. "that horrible night"). How have these events affected your life and your look on life today?
- ◆ Look back to some of the memories from your past that you enjoy thinking about. These are those memories that make you laugh or smile whenever you think about it. Describe this event and what happened. What are the emotions that you feel when you think of these events? How do you react or respond behaviourally when

these memories come up? What are the body signs that are associated with these events? Try to put a name or title to these events. For example, "That wacky birthday". Now try to place a positive value/belief that you think best fits these events. For example, "It's ok to have fun and laugh with my family". Also describe how these events may have affected your life and your look on life today?

- ◆ Look back to the events where you still feel "proud" of what you did and/or how you handled a situation. Describe the events. Try to give a name or title to these events (for example, "I survived"). Also try to place some values to your behaviours (courage, determination). How did you respond to these "tough" situations? Remember that you are looking back to when you were a child/teenager. Some events may not seem as difficult now as they did back then. Again, how did these events affect you and is it still affecting you today?
- ◆ How did you leave home?
- ◆ How are you similar to your Dad and your Mom?
- ◆ How is your relationship with your parents/guardians today? How about your brothers and/or sisters?
- ◆ What is your present family situation?
- ◆ What are some of the stresses in your life today (Money, jobs, health, marriage, Addictions, etc)
- ◆ What generally do you do when you "go wrong" or when you feel down?
- ◆ What are some hobbies in your life?

APPENDIX D

Autobiography Guidelines –for facilitators

As each individual takes their turn to tell their life story the other group members are to respect this individual by listening and remaining quiet. No one is to walk around (to get coffee, use the phone, etc) while someone is presenting their autobiography. We also ask that people refrain from getting up to use the washroom unless absolutely necessary. Plenty of time will be given between each presentation as a break.

Once an autobiography is presented, the other group members take turns in responding to what they heard. We want group members to “personalize” their comments. A handout will be given to each of them to help in how they respond to what was just heard. This also helps the presenter see how their story has affected someone else and that they are not alone in some of their experiences. The facilitator’s job is to guide this so that the listener doesn’t turn his conversation into “You think your story is bad...listen to this”. It’s about acknowledging the similar experience. The person may need to speak about his events to help explain how he can relate. Give some freedom in this because the process assists in building relationships among the group members.

To help the presenter know whose turn it is to respond, the individual to the presenter’s immediate left will begin. Once he is finished, the presenter will

respond back. Once this is complete we then move to the next person to the left. This continues until we are at the person that is sitting immediately to the right of the presenter.

The Autobiography is about each individual sharing their story as they perceive and understand it. It is not the "audiences" place to challenge their story as being truthful or not. We as listeners can ask clarifying questions if we did not understand what was said or felt we did not hear it correctly. The idea of sharing an autobiography is not only for the individual sharing but also for the other group members. A challenge can only happen if the group members can personalize it to one of their own life experiences (e.g. – "You stated that you're too old to take training or go to school. I disagree with that because I'm 42 years old and I just completed my automotive training a month ago." – This was stated in our group that is currently running).

Once the presentation and "responses" are over with, the facilitators then ask the presenter how he is feeling now that he has shared what he has. He is to also give his feelings on how his story has affected the others in group. Facilitators also need to ask the presenter if there is anything they need right now or that can be done to help them.

DO NOT HAND THIS PAGE OUT.

Guidelines for Listeners

Reminder: Give the presenter your full attention. No talking, writing, drawing, shuffling through papers, using phone, or sleeping while someone is presenting. Please do not get up and walk around as someone is presenting. Also please avoid from going to the washroom while someone is presenting. Time will be given between presentation for group members to have a break.

Once an individual is finished presenting, each group member will be given a chance to respond. We want each person to focus their responses to the presenter on the following:

1. Ask questions if you didn't understand a part of the story or if you didn't hear it correctly. This is to help "make clear" any parts of the story for you.
2. How did this story affect you? Why?
3. What was the most moving part for you? Why?
4. What was the hardest part for you to listen to? Why?
5. Were there parts of the story that you could relate to and/or compare to? How?
6. Were there parts of the story that you could not relate and/or compare to? Why?

7. Group members can challenge the presenter on any part of the story but only if they can relate it to a personal experience of their own. The listener would have to share their personal experience as part of the challenge.

The presenter is to respond to each group member, focusing on:

- What is it like for you to hear your story affected another person.
- What comments by others affected you most? How and why did they affect you?

CONTROL LOG
Men's Education Groups

APPENDIX E

Name _____

Date _____

ACTIONS: Briefly describe the situation and the actions you used to control your partner (statements, gestures, tone of voice, physical contact, facial expressions).

INTENTS AND BELIEFS: What did you want to happen in this situation?

What beliefs do you have that support your actions and intents?

FEELINGS: What feelings were you having? _____

MINIMIZATION, DENIAL AND BLAME: In what ways did you minimize or deny your actions or blame her?

EFFECTS: What was the impact of your action?

you _____

her _____

others _____

PAST VIOLENCE: How did your past use of violence affect this situation?

NON-CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS: What could you have done differently?

APPENDIX F

A critically important part of intervention is to learn to feel empathy for the victim. Focus on understanding the effects of your behaviour on your victim. Try to put yourself in your victim's place. Write out your answers to the following questions:

1. What physical sensations do you think your victim experienced just before, during, and after your violent and abusive behaviour?

2. What do you think they thought just before, during, and after your violent and abusive behaviour?

3. What emotions do you think they felt just before, during, and after your violent and abusive behaviour?

4. What do you think your victims are now experiencing physically, emotionally, and mentally?

5. What do you think your victim may experience five years from now?

6. Think about either the Social Worker who helped your partner, or the police officer who was involved in your case. How do you think they felt physically, mentally, and emotionally when they interviewed you and your victim?

APPENDIX G

Taking Responsibility – Most Violent Incident

This part of the group is about taking responsibility and accountability for our abusive and violent behaviour(s). Completing this assignment makes clear that our abusive behaviour didn't "just happen". This exercise will be difficult to complete because it may bring up painful feelings and memories for you. Be aware of this. Give yourself more time for self-care and to talk with others to assist in dealing with these unpleasant memories and feelings. Sharing this exercise in group gives you some support as the participants and facilitators will be there with you as you relive and retell a part of your life that may have caused much shame in yourself.

The most violent incident that you write and present to the group needs to be one that occurred with a current or past partner, not with a stranger, friend or other family member. Remember that the more effort you put into this exercise, the more you get out of it.

Taking responsibility refers to talking of your actions and behaviours as choices you made, rather than, a result of not having any choice, which would then allow us to use our defence mechanisms. It was not about being "out of control". Using defence mechanisms takes away the responsibility that we need to accept in order to prevent ourselves from doing similar abusive actions again.

Tension Build-up

Start your incident by describing your behaviours that lead up to your violence. It may be helpful to describe your build up as it relates to the Tension Building Phase in the Cycle of Violence. Was it one day, one week or even one month of tension building? Give examples of what you were doing, thinking and saying during this period that contributed to increasing your stress instead of lowering it.

What was your "mood" just prior to the situation that led to the violence? How did your mood contribute to the mood of the relationship just prior to the situation that led to the violence?

Description of the Violence

This is where you describe, in detail, the abusive behaviour you did during your incident. Be as specific, concrete and open as possible. This includes all the

physical, emotional and sexual abuse that you did toward your partner during this incident.

Results of the Violence

When the incident was over, did you get your way? Did you feel relief from all the stress that you were feeling before the incident? What were the costs to you and your partner as a result of this incident?

Thinking back to this incident and even that of the relationship, what are some things you would have done differently? How would you have done them differently? How is this information going to help you in the future?

Writing a Letter from your Victim

Developing a clear understanding of how your victim was affected by your abusive behaviour is very important to your efforts toward positive change. If you can not only understand this but also "feel" this, then you have moved one step closer to changing your abusive behaviours. By truly knowing and feeling the hurt we have caused to those we love we would be less likely to do so again.

This exercise on victim empathy involves writing a letter. Your task is to "step into your victims shoes" and write the letter as if it was written from your (ex-) partner (victim) to you. In this letter your victim would be telling you how they were affected by your abuse throughout the relationship. It's not only about the most violent incident but also about all the "little things" that you did throughout the relationship that was abusive. Examples of "little things" are the lies, the cheating, the put downs, the accusations. We don't know for sure what they would say in the letter but knowing what we do about them we would have an idea what they would write. We may have to relate back to our own unpleasant experiences and memories to help us write on how our partner may feel/have felt as a result of our abusive behaviour.

The following may assist in writing this letter:

1. The letter is to be written as if it was your victim writing it to you.
2. Include some specific examples of your abusive behaviour and how they may have affected your victim. Talk of events and incidents that both of you would know about.
3. This exercise is to try and clearly understand how they felt as a result of your actions.

APPENDIX H

Guideline for Listeners

Similar to the Autobiography, the group will give feedback to the presenter.

This time though the focus is on the following:

1. Asking for clarification: If you did not understand or hear part of the story this where you ask for more details. This is where we make sure we understand what we just heard.
2. Areas of Challenge: This is where we give our opinion on ways we feel the presenter may have been using defence mechanisms to take away responsibility. Bringing up statements that blamed, minimized, avoided, denied and/or justified the presenter's behaviours.
3. Areas of Support: This is where we support the person for completing this challenging part of the group and is still continuing in their hopes for positive change in their lives. Make comments to the person's strengths on regard to this.

APPENDIX J

Plan for Non Violence

Rules for Time Out: Say "I need a time out"; Leave premises for minimum of one hour; then return; No alcohol, no drugs, no driving, no weapons; Go for a walk; Think about something calming; Check your warning signs before returning home; call home to see how your partner is feeling, return home if appropriate. Upon re-entry say you're back; Talk about issue(s) if both are willing; If things escalate again, take another time out.

1 During my time out I will go to: _____ To calm down

2 I will do: _____

3 I may talk with : _____

4 My self talk will be: _____

5 Before Returning I will: _____

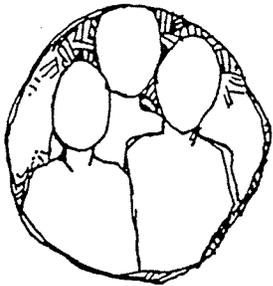
Crisis Line Phone # _____

Contract for Non Violence

I agree to use this personal plan. I understand that the agreement to be non violent applies to my behaviour towards: 1. My Partner; 2. Our Children; 3. All other people; 4. Pets

I also understand that it is necessary to inform _____ that I am using this plan for non violence, and I am waiving my right to confidentiality so that this task may be accomplished.

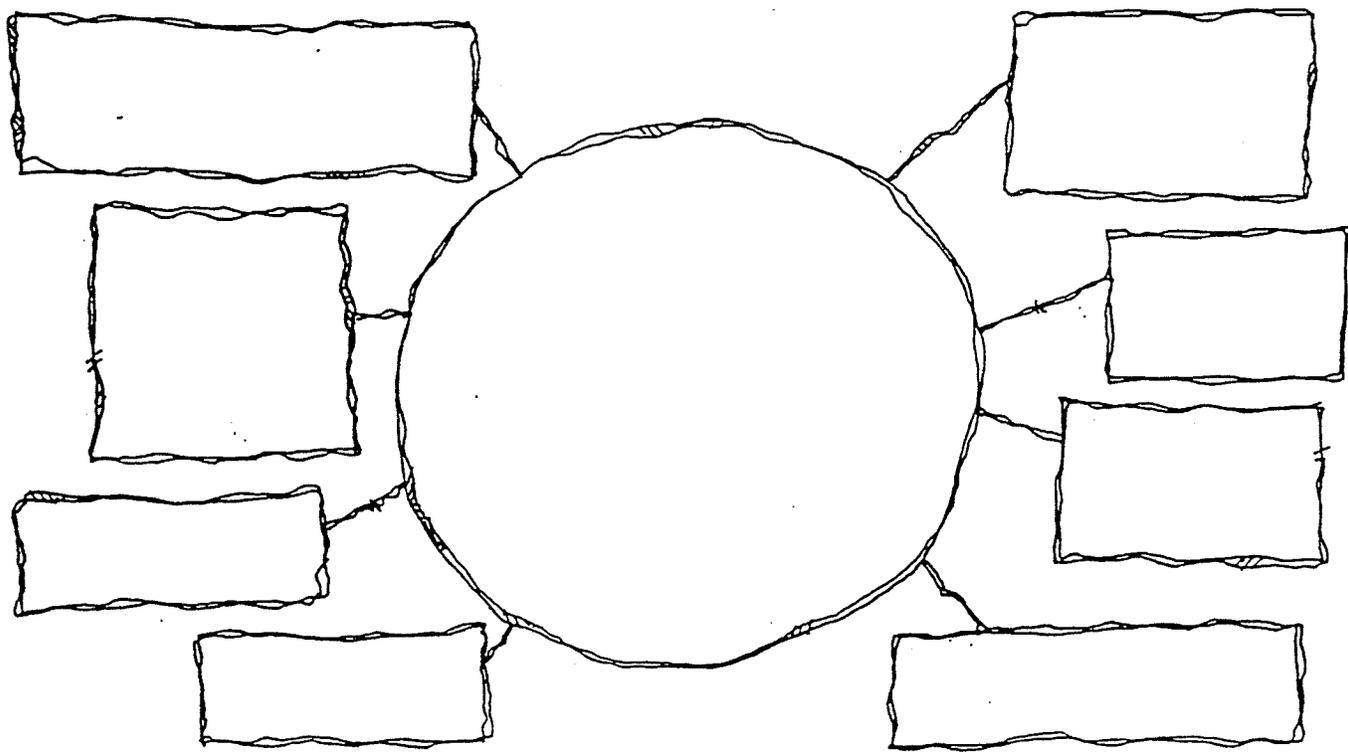
Signature: _____ Facilitator: _____ Date: _____



My Support Map

Although you may be thinking a lot about 'intimate' relationships, you may also want to take a look at some of the other relationships in your life. This is important, because sometimes we focus so intensely on one relationship that we lose sight of the importance of other relationships, like those with friends, family and other supportive people. Remember that no one relationship can ever meet all of your needs.

Below you can create a 'map' of your support system. In the center circle, put your name or attach a picture of yourself. In the boxes connected to you, write the names and telephone numbers of the people or organizations who are or could be a part of your support system. This means anyone you could call on for help or support in any area of your life from a serious personal problem, to health care, to financial help. Feel free to draw in extra boxes if necessary!



Examples of people and places you might have in your support system . . .

- Parents or siblings
- Your church, temple or place of worship
- A club or group you belong to
- Adult children
- Your spouse or partner
- Your co-workers or boss
- Extended family members
- Community center
- Other _____
- Close friends
- Crisis hotline
- Other _____
- Trusted neighbors
- Health clinic
- Other _____
- Your counselor
- Other _____

APPENDIX L**Partner Abuse Intensive Group program****Participant's Evaluation**

Please indicate your reaction by checking either Yes or No to the following statements. Space is provided for additional reactions under "Comments."

Course Content:

1. The goals and objectives of the program were clearly explained Yes No
 Comments _____

2. In my opinion, the program goals and 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 participation. 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 _____

General:

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 overall as:

Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor

My rating of the course leaders is:

_____ Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor
(name of leader)

_____ Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor
(name of leader)

_____ Excellent Good Satisfactory Poor
(name of leader)

I would recommend this program to others: Yes No

What was most helpful to you about the program?

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Why?

What was the least helpful to you about the program?

Why?

What changes would you suggest for future programs?
