STORIES OF CHANGE IN MEN WHO WERE VIOLENT AND ABUSIVE TO THEIR PARTNERS: A COLLABORATIVE NARRATIVE INQUIRY

by

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Abstract

Utilizing collaborative narrative inquiry, this study examines the process of change in men who were violent and abusive to their partners and children. The aim of this study is to explore violent offenders' meanings and experience in desisting from violence. The study attempts to deconstruct preconceptions of "change" from a dimensional ontological perspective to explore various dimensions of the experience of change. The results capture a concept of change in the individually unique form of stories in context that contain a series of transition and transformation processes in the lives of the men. The results are full of meaning and tell stories of their journeys that explain how violence and abuse intruded upon their lives, how they became oppressors themselves, how they struggled with hurting their families, and how they redeemed themselves from darkness. The meaning was coconstructed with stories of female victims of intimate violence and abuse at home and brings about a new meaning in desisting from violence and abuse, taking responsibility, and making amends. The reformed offenders’ change processes should not be considered limited only to confrontation and reinforcement but should also require engagement in a reflective process and internal transformation of an existential nature. More importantly, a meaning of change should be coconstructed with victims of intimate violence and abuse.
Preface

This dissertation is my original intellectual product. This research was conducted by me under the supervision of my research committee, Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, Dr. Marla Buchanan, and Dr. Marvin Westwood from the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. This study and procedures used in this research were approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of the University of British Columbia. The certificate number is H11-00169.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The research on the treatment of men who are violent and abusive to their partners is an important area of study to promote safety for families. Quantitative research has been a predominant approach in this area because it is believed that male offenders' self-reports are not often reliable due to the tendency to distort their perceptions of their offences (Murphy & Eckhardt, 2005) and due to the possibility of the self-reports’ being used against them in court (Kropp, Hart, Webster, & Eaves, 1995). A consensus on the definition of "successful outcome" (changed men) has not been agreed upon among researchers, and each treatment approach uses a variety of measures to assess degrees of improvement. This inconsistency causes enormous confusion among therapists as well as those men who need help.

This issue, however, is complicated by several fundamental problems. One of the problems is that the goal for intervention can be perceived differently between criminal justice and therapeutic approaches. For the former, the goal is to ensure public safety; it is "not about making troubled, antisocial, and violent men into 'nice guys'" (Gondolf, 2002, p. 37). The prediction and management of risk and the facilitation of behavioural change to avoid relapse are key aspects of work and, thus, various research studies often measure "successful outcome" by the rate of recidivism and police reports (e.g., Bonta, Wallace-Capretta, & Rooney, 2009). Recidivism is a criminal justice term meaning reconviction (Dutton, 1986), in which spousal violence and abuse are defined narrowly based on the criminal code (Gondolf, 2002). Therapeutic approaches, on the other hand, emphasize the process of internal change...
and pursue personal growth by facilitating greater self-understanding; by improving self-concept, these approaches help people make constructive choices (Rogers, 2007). The goal is defined as personal growth, and the focus is on nurturing their potential. To accomplishments this goal, an emphasis is placed on engagement with offenders through enhancing their motivation to change. To make matters more difficult, however, it is often the case that a treatment program is designed by people in the criminal justice system, which focuses on risk management, and then the program is facilitated by a therapist whose goal is personal growth. This mismatch among service providers is critical.

Defining change influences the direction and goals of intervention. Thus, in essence, the discrepancy in goals among service providers is a manifestation of the confusion concerning the concept of change. The current concept of change for men who are violent and abusive to their partners is predominantly based on a quantitative perspective, and findings from studies situated in this perspective may be shedding only partial light on the concept of change. The concept of dimensional ontology (Frankl, 1988), which propounds that a phenomenon and an object can be comprehended by integrating a perspective from multiple dimensions, could help with the mismatch problem. As explained by Frankl, the projection of an object can contradict another perspective depending on the angle of projection, and completely different objects can cast exactly the same shade. This potential variation in perspective indicates that a phenomenon like change may need to be viewed from a different dimension to cast a more holistic view of it. These are important points to explore.
Purpose of the Study

There are a few problems involved in considering treatment programs for men who are violent and abusive to their partners. First, the current concept of change is predominantly based on a quantitative perspective and negates men's personal accounts. This concept of change seems to be defined deductively and has not been fully researched inductively. According to Frankl's dimensional ontology, this focus limits integration of multiple dimensions of change, and so change can be misrepresented as a result. Second, the current process of change for violent offenders is often conceptualized as a process independent of victims. The programs are more concerned about levels of learning and behavioural change that the offenders gain, but treatment does not necessarily address meaningful change, which is accountable in relation to the particular victims to whom the offenders have caused harm.

Far from conceptualizing change in a quantitative way and as an independent process for the men, the present study took a social constructionist’s perspective. The research question was to explore the meaning and experience of process of change in those men who are violent and abusive to their partners by deconstructing the conventional knowledge of "change". By doing so, I, as the researcher, aimed to contribute additional information to adjoin another dimension in a concept of change. Adding another dimension requires a process of deconstruction of preconceptions of change "to take apart texts and see how they are constructed in such a way as to present particular images of people and their actions" (Burr, 1995, p. 164). This study explored men's change as a joint action between the men themselves and the
women and children who are suffering from the violence and abuse, and analysis in the study paid close attention to the language and metaphors with which the men constructed stories of their journey. This study is important in that it will contribute to the field by providing inductive information about the process of change and by examining the process of change through meaning, to help establish more holistic treatment programs for abusive men and improve risk-assessment strategies.

Definition of the Terms

*The men who were violent and abusive but made significant change.* This study considers desistance as an on-going process. It looks at the reflective, empathic, and motivational attitudes of the men toward their violent and abusive behaviours and offences, and how the process of desistance is manifested in their everyday lives. Desistance can be defined as "the voluntary termination of serious criminal participation" (Shover, 1996, p. 121). It is "the long-term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal offending" (Maruna, 2001, p. 26). In this study, "criminal offending" is expanded to male-to-female intimate violence and abuse, which may or may not be part of the criminal code of Canada.

To capture the men’s journey as a movement forward in their lives to desist violence, and to avoid simplistically using chronological information as a benchmark to limit to the preconception of a linear stage model, I used the very minimum abstinent time in the current research literature to be considered as making "substantial change," which is 6 months (e.g., Scott & Wolfe, 2000). This time frame is suggested as past research has indicated that men are most likely to reoffend within 6 months of
program intake and reduce the rate of reoffending afterwards (Gondolf, 2002; Scott & Wolfe, 2000). Furthermore, the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA; Kropp et al., 1995) needs to indicate their risk level as low at the time of participation in the study. In addition, as a manifestation of changed attitudes, the men also have to have completed at least one treatment program or a series of individual counselling sessions. Their changed attitudes, behaviours, and motivation for nonviolence living need to be observable by the people who live close to them (e.g., their partners, therapists, and probation officers).

Violence and abuse. In this study, violence and abuse are regarded in the context of intimate relationships between male and female partners. My study looked only at male-to-female violence and abuse. The partners are either in a common-law or married relationship, and the research looked at the violence and abuse that occurred in these relationships.

In the criminal justice system, only violence is considered a criminal offence. Violence can be defined as "the actual, attempted, or threatened physical harm of another person that is deliberate and non-consensual" (Webster, Douglas, Eaves, & Hart, as cited in Hart, 2001, p. 13). The acts can vary dependent on the severity of physical or psychological harm, the means of harming, and motivations that include implicit threats to induce fear of physical harm in others (Hart, 2001). With respect to violence and abuse in intimate relationships, physical and sexual violence and stalking can be included in a category of such a definition in the criminal code.

In this study, the definition of violence and abuse is based on that of the Department of Justice Canada (see Appendix A). The study’s definition also goes
beyond the criminal code’s to focus on six areas outlined by Stefanakis (2013): physical violence, sexual violence, psychological-emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, economic abuse, and destruction of property or pets (see Appendix B for descriptions of these six kinds of abuse and violence).

**Summary**

There is a significant gap in the concept of change between criminal justice approaches and counselling approaches to treating men who are violent or abusive toward their partners. The approaches are different in goals and intervention as they are based on different models of change processes. I designed this study intending to fill the gap between these concepts of process of change by following Frankl's (1988) dimensional ontology to add more dimension to this phenomenon. My study attempted to achieve two aims: deconstruct conventional knowledge of change and examine the process of change through joint action taking. Thus, a collaborative narrative inquiry (Arvay, 2003), which accommodates the potential to achieve such goals, was chosen as the best mode of investigation for this study.

In the following chapter, Chapter 2, I will provide a detailed literature review of the concept of change and issues of a significant gap between each approach. Based on this literature review, I conducted a qualitative study on the process of change in men who were violent and abusive to their partners by using a collaborative narrative methodology. I will provide the procedures and results of my study in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Finally, the results of this study will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review will provide an overview of current issues in the field of domestic violence intervention and a concept of change in the men who are violent and abusive to their partners. The review will also examine some other possibilities of looking at these important aspects of the change process in violent offenders, especially concerning the meaning of change, taking responsibility, and power.

Current Approaches in the Criminal Justice Field

Criminal justice approaches for male violent offenders. Criminal justice approaches aim to protect society and reduce the recidivism rate. The risk needs responsivity (RNR) model (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990) is known to be one of the most empirically established intervention models for criminal offenders (Andrews et al., 1990; Andrews & Dowden, 2005; Cullen & Gendreau, 2001; Gaes, Flanagan, Motiuk, & Stewart, 1999). The RNR model is based on comprehensive rehabilitation theory and three related but distinct theoretical models: the psychology of criminal conduct perspective, the general personality and social psychological perspective on criminal conduct, and the personal interpersonal community-reinforcement perspective (Ward & Maruna, 2007).

The RNR model is consistent with the three core principles of risk, needs, and responsivity in the correctional intervention model. The risk principle supports matching risk levels to levels of intervention; in other words, higher-risk offenders require more intensive and extensive intervention. The need principle states that intervention is required to focus on criminogenic needs, which are a subset of an offender’s risk level and which are dynamic risk factors associated with the
probability of recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Not adhering to criminogenic needs can increase recidivism (Andrews & Dowden, 2007). For example, providing an inappropriate service (e.g., nondirective "active listening") can increase recidivism among high-risk offenders (Andrews & Kiessling, 1980). The primary concern of the responsivity principle is delivering the program in a way consistent with the offenders’ abilities and the learning style, and the principle may be based on effective change strategies, such as behavioural, social, learning, and cognitive (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

In this context, the concern is having offenders fulfil the legal responsibilities of their charge and conviction, and the desired outcome is reducing the risk of reoffending (Gondolf, 2002). Management of current risk becomes important. Thus, a concept of relapse prevention becomes important in this approach. Learning one’s own high-risk situation and effective coping responses can lead to successful management of one’s own risks, and successful management of such risks can result in increasing self-efficacy (Brandon, Vidrine, & Litvin, 2007). Knowing risk and assessing the offenders' risk are critical focuses of the criminal justice system in protecting the safety of the public and promoting rehabilitation of offenders.

**Issues of change.** Program evaluation has been an important research topic in discussing a concept of change in correctional programs, and accordingly, much research has been conducted and discussed. The current literature indicates that about two-thirds of the men who completed treatment programs managed to avoid physical reassault of their partners over a long period of time, whereas one-third of men reassaulted their partners within 3 months of intake into the programs. Studies
have also shown that men who dropped out of treatment programs had a higher rate of reassault (Babcock, Green & Robbie, 2004; Scott, 2004; Scott & Stewart, 2004). Dutton, Bodnarchuk, Kropp, Hart, and Ogloff (1997) reported a 52% attrition rate and 21% rate of reoffence in men who dropped out of their programs and identified 18% rate of reoffence in men who completed the programs. These different results raise some questions about both effectiveness of the treatment programs and the research approaches for studying treatment efficacy.

Evaluation of treatment programs has found various results in effectiveness, but drawing comparisons is difficult because each program uses different therapeutic modalities and evaluation measurements. In this section, elements of treatment and their efficacy, such as issues of defining success or "recovery", issues of methodology, and issues of outcome and assessment will be examined.

**Issues of defining successful outcome.** In treatment programs for abusive men, there is no consensus in defining successful outcome or "recovery". Each theory perceives the cause of the violence and abuse differently and, therefore, the goals of the therapies are varied. For instance, the Duluth model perceives social inequality in power as one of the main causes of spousal abuse; consequently, learning equality is one of the key elements of its treatment (Pence & Paymar, 1993). The attachment model, on the other hand, perceives the issue of violence and abuse to be rooted in a history of poor attachment, which leads to unhealthy expectations in intimate relationships, and so the treatment focuses on reestablishing healthy attachment (Scott, 2004).

A successful outcome can be defined in multiple ways based on different
perspectives; hence, there are different ways of measuring outcomes. For instance, from a judicial perspective, the concern of court-mandated programs is having offenders fulfil the legal responsibilities of their charge and conviction, and the desired outcome is reducing the risk of reoffending (Gondolf, 2002). The Department of Justice of Canada defines spousal abuse as indicated in Appendix A. If abiding by the criminal code is perceived as a benchmark for successful treatment, the problem is that not all kinds of abuse are categorized as criminal offences. For example, psychological abuse can take a variety of forms, but criminal harassment—which includes threatening to harm others and stalking—are the only criminal offences in the psychological abuse category. Therefore, very common forms of psychological abuse, such as putting people down, making racial remarks, and controlling others, may not qualify as offences and result in a criminal conviction. Consequently, a man may be considered successfully treated because he does not reoffend based on the criminal categorization, but he may in fact still engage in hurtful psychological behaviour. Thus, when applying the criminal justice perspective, significant abusive action may be ignored when measuring successful recovery.

A number of other perspectives have been suggested by researchers. For example, some researchers believe cessation of spousal physical violence is an important success criterion and use it only as an indicator of efficacy of the treatment (Dutton et al., 1997; Edleson, 1996; Gondolf, 2002). Others have extended the criterion for success and use not only recidivism but also improvement of the men’s belief system as a marker. Scott and Stewart (2004) identified three key attitudes as
core indicators for change: attitude towards abuse, attitude towards women, and attitude towards treatment. Factor analysis revealed these three attitudes as significant in changing men’s violent and abusive behaviours. Other researchers concur that the level of self-awareness and decreased distortion of belief are indicators of successful recovery. Particularly men who are in denial and who minimize their violence and abuse toward women show less improvement (Scott & Wolfe, 2003; Taft, Murphy, King, Musser, & DeDeyn, 2003). Some other research studies have shown that men with patriarchal belief systems are more likely to engage in violence and abuse toward women (Mihalic & Elliott, 1997, Saunders, 1984; Scott & Stewart, 2003; Stith & Farley, 1993).

An oversight in Scott and Stewart’s study (2004) is that they assumed only the cognitive aspect of attitude without discussing the feeling attached to it. Triandis (1971) stated that attitude has three components of cognition: ideas and beliefs; the affective element, which charges ideas; and the behavioural element, which is a predisposition to action. He explained that the affective component of attitude feeds into belief and ideas and brings them into action. In other words, men who have successfully recovered should have improved their attitudes toward women, self, and treatment, show congruency in putting their beliefs into behaviours, and experience a positive feeling toward their beliefs and behaviours.

Qualitative research also gives some insight into the signs of recovery. Scott and Wolfe (2000) extracted themes from recovered men and discovered several significant indicators of change in abusive behaviours. Men who recovered displayed a great deal of openness and honesty about their past violence and abuse
and were able to take responsibility for their past abusiveness. The majority of the participants expressed that learning to recognize their own abusive behaviour was the first important component of treatment. The second element was the development of empathy, and a third contributing factor was reduced dependency on their partners. Finally, communication was another factor for change: The men found that learning skills for conflict resolution, warning signs of anger escalation, and ways to stop themselves at an early stage of anger escalation were helpful for them in generating change. These findings point to a common and seemingly powerful factor in recovery: developing awareness of self, others, and one’s own cognition and feeling.

**Issues of risk factors and causes.** Witnessing violence and abuse at home as a child is a potential cause for becoming violent and abusive, and it needs to be addressed in the treatment. Various researchers have revealed the negative emotional effects on children who witness parental violence and abuse (Avakame, 1998; Dutton, 1995; Frankel-Howard, 1989; Geffner, Rosenbaum, & Hughes, 1988; McCloskey, Southwick, Fernandez-Esquer, & Locke, 1995; O’Leary, 1988; Walker, 1986). This body of research has shown consistent evidence that children of battered women manifested various psychological disturbances, such as increasing anxieties, aggression, and high levels of behaviour issues and psychopathology. Rosenberg and Giberson (1991) also reported that when children’s witnessing of parental violence and abuse manifested itself in negative behaviourual changes such as increased aggressive behaviour, withdrawal, disrupted sleep, psychosomatic complaints, academic issues including lack of concentration, not being able to complete homework, and being frequently absent from school. This correlation

Witnessing abuse as children can also lead to issues of negative adult attachment patterns (Roberts & Noller, 1998). Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, and Bartholomew (1994) conducted research with 120 men who were in abusive relationships. Results indicated that fearful attachment showed a significant correlation with borderline personality, anger, trauma symptoms, and jealousy. Results also indicated that men who exhibited the fearful attachment pattern showed high levels of both chronic anxiety and anger. The researchers concluded that developing intimacy anxiety and anger are the central affective characteristics of the fearful attachment pattern. Furthermore, those adults who experienced such abandonment and betrayal while growing up may become extremely sensitive to attachment injuries in their current relationships. Attachment injuries (Johnson, 1998; Johnson, Makinen, & Millikin, 2001) are “a perceived abandonment, betrayal, or breach of trust in a critical moment of need for support expected of attachment figures” (Makinen & Johnson, 2006). These men who are violent and abusive may be sensitive to senses of abandonment and betrayal and their perceptions of their partners’ failures to respond to such emotional needs.

Personality disorder, also listed in SARA, is a prevalent issue in men who are abusive to their partners (Dutton, 1995, 1998; Gondolf, 2002). Hofeller (1982) indicated there are several predominant characteristics of abusive husbands, such as
extreme jealousy, domination, insecurity and low self-esteem, depression, charming and friendly behaviour with others, and personality shifts reminiscent of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. These characteristics are also reflected in the abusive men’s typology research. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) examined a wide variety of rational and deductive studies that came from clinical observation and theoretical speculation as well as empirical studies to identify three major descriptive types of offenders: family only, generally violent/antisocial, and dysphoric/borderline offenders. Holtzworth-Munroe (2000) revised their list to include four types of offenders: (a) family only (those who engage in the least violence and whose abusive behaviour is only toward family); (b) low level antisocial (those who show moderate antisociality and engage in moderate violence at home and outside); (c) dysphoric/borderline (those who show moderate to severe violence at home and outside, with the most affective distress); and (d) generally violent/antisocial (those who show the highest levels of violence at home and outside, with antisocial personality traits). These categories are determined by using the three Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III (MCMI-III) scales of antisocial, borderline, and dependency indicators (Millon, 1994), the Conflict Tactics Scale-Revised (CTS-2), frequency-weighted Physical Assault scale scores (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), and the measure of violence generality (Eckhardt, Holtzworth-Munroe, Norlander, Sibley, & Cahill, 2008). These typological categories consider severity of violence, generality of violence beyond intimate violence and abuse, and personality disorders. The typologies have been confirmed by other empirical studies (Hamberger, Lohr, Bonge, & Tolin, 1996).
Dutton et al. (1994) found significant borderline personality organization in husbands who abused their wives. Borderline personality organization is personality tendency characterized with having problems in building and maintaining intimate relationships (Dutton, 1995). They found a significant correlation between a fearful attachment and borderline personality organization and concluded that a fearful attachment could be the dominant trait in borderline personality. Individuals with borderline personality often experience identity diffusion and unsuccessfully attempt to stabilize through their primary relationships (Gunderson, 1984). Dutton et al. (1994) also stated that those who have borderline personality organization tend to project unacceptable and volatile impulses onto their intimate partners and attempt to split their partners into two conflicting images: ideal and devalued object. Intimate conflict and violence can be a result.

Based on the above review of the literature on risk factors and possible causes of violence and abuse, possible therapeutic foci for violent offenders should be in three areas: learning and demonstrating effective interpersonal skills, improving attitudes, and gaining more self-awareness. First, it is important for the violent offenders to learn and demonstrate new skills to build healthy relationships with others and their partners. The men need to learn and demonstrate better communication skills to share their thoughts and feelings constructively and to resolve conflict effectively. Second, the men need to show improvement in attitude toward abuse, women, and treatment. For attitude toward abuse, the men need to be able to accept their past violent and abusive behaviours fully, without denial and minimization. Regarding attitude toward women, the men need to be able to
recognize their patriarchal beliefs and learn equality. For attitude toward treatment, the men need to be congruent with treatment goals and work with facilitators collaboratively. Finally, the men need to gain more self-awareness about their violent and abusive behaviours, feelings, thoughts, and the issues that they might have. For instance, those men may be suffering from emotional difficulties as a result of witnessing violence at home when growing up, and such emotional difficulties may be affecting their current intimate relationships. The men also may need to disengage from any criminal and antisocial behaviour, and they need to learn how to prevent outbursts. This development of self-awareness may involve working to resolve any traumatic experiences of being abused as a child, witnessing violence and abuse at home while growing up, or any other related issues. Hence, it is critical for the men to be fully aware of their internal experiences.

This is a summary of past research highlighting some causes of abusive behaviour and corresponding indicators of recovery. Recovery means that offenders need to work on their issues and establish their own resolution to improve each of these vulnerabilities. In light of the findings of this research review, using recidivism, reassault, and reoffence alone as indicators may not be sufficient to assess successful recovery.

**Issues of outcome measurement.** In the field of intimate partner violence and abuse, risk is often defined as forms of violence and abuse that can occur at some time in the future (Dutton et al., 1997; Kropp, 2008). In a clinical setting, risk assessment entails consideration of imminence, forms of violence and abuse (e.g., emotional, physical, sexual), frequency,seriousness of the violence, and the
probability of occurrence. Therefore, the who, what, where, when, and how of violence and abuse need to be identified (Kropp, 2008; Mulvey & Lidz, 1995).

There are several competing theories for assessing the probability of the risk of future violence and abuse: unstructured clinical decision making, actuarial decision making, and structured professional judgement. The approach to assessment is based on these theoretical perspectives and goals.

Unstructured clinical decision making is an approach to risk assessment with no set guidelines or constraints for evaluation; the quality of the assessment relies on the clinicians’ experience and intuition (Kropp, 2008). Interestingly, professional judgments of risk have shown good criterion-related validity, a substantial correlation with scores of risk measurements, accurate predictions of recidivism, and clear discrimination between recidivists and nonrecidivists (Kropp & Hart, 2000; Kropp). Nonetheless, this model lacks consistency in procedures and guidelines, and the assessment results may vary among professionals.

In contrast, actuarial decision making focuses on the probability and prediction of future offences. It attempts to predict the probability of reoffence based on comparing the reference group with probabilistic estimates of offence in specific time lines (Kropp, 2008). The core of the assessment in actuarial decision making is prediction. Therefore, the assessment focuses on establishing interrater reliability, predictive validity, and cross-validation, so items are selected by using multiple regression. By way of comparison, in psychological test construction, items are selected by factor analysis and attempt to achieve internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and construct validity (Hilton et al., 2004). However, the
construct of this type of assessment is different from psychological tests, and the
practitioners need to be aware of this distinction to draw appropriate conclusions.
Assessment based on the actuarial approach appears to produce a modest correlation
with violence (Douglas, Cox, & Webster, 1999). The actuarial risk assessment
focuses heavily on the precision of prediction but shows less effectiveness in
prevention and management utilities. It is also flawed in that it does not consider
unique, unusual, or context-specific variables, and it excludes practitioners’ intuition
and discretions (Kropp, 2008).

Structured professional judgment, on the other hand, is a combination of the
clinical experiences of evaluators, as emphasized in the unstructured clinical
approach, and actuarial approaches to risk assessment (Douglas & Kropp, 2002; Hart,
1998; Kropp, 2008). It provides structured guidelines to assess more dynamic or
changeable risk factors and provides management strategies to prevent violence.
These guidelines are structured based on current theoretical, professional, and
empirical knowledge about violence, but they do not rely on algorithmic calculations
to make a risk decision. This approach allows evaluators to weigh, combine, and
balance these risk factors to make a decision (Kropp, 2008). It is also sensitive to
dynamic risk factors and allows therapists to deal with these risks in a flexible and
timely manner and, therefore, it is effective for risk management.

Based on these models of risk assessment, a variety of reliable and valid
assessment instruments have been developed to assess the risk of offence. The
Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA) is an actuarial instrument with
13 items (Hilton et al., 2004), and has adequate convergent validity and correlates
well with SARA (Kropp, 2008). The total score indicates the possible number, severity, and imminence of new assaults, and it can effectively discriminate between recidivists and nonrecidivists. However, it does not have items to indicate potential femicide and lacks cross-validation studies.

Based on very different assumptions, the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979) is designed to measure the choice of tactics to deal with conflict. It measures the use of reasoning (e.g., rational discussion and argument), verbal aggression (use of verbal and nonverbal acts, or threats to hurt others), and violence within the family (use of physical force on others) currently and in the past. These measurements correspond with the 8-level factor of the nuclear family role structure: husband-to-wife, wife-to-husband, father-to-child, child-to-father, mother-to-child, child-to-mother, child-to-sibling, and sibling-to-child. These scores can be combined to obtain four role-relationship scores of the conjugal, father-child, mother-child, and sibling relationships (Straus, 1979). One of the strengths of CTS is its use of information from both the offenders' and their partners' accounts. The value of these perspectives results from the tendency of men who are violent and abusive to have low self-awareness and predominant issues of denial and minimization of their actions (Scott, 2004). CTS can provide more accurate perceptions of the men’s behaviours.

Critics of CTS question its usefulness (Straus, 1992). For instance, it fails to consider the context in which violence and abuse occurs. In addition, values of men and women in the measure are weighed equally, but in reality, men have more physical power to cause more severe harm. Furthermore, CTS is prone to social
desirability factors: The men may complete these questionnaires in such a way to appear "good" to the researcher (Dutton, 1998). Dutton and Hemphill (1992) conducted a correlation study and reported that social desirability had a significant negative correlation with self-reports of verbal abuse, but it did not correlate with physical abuse reported by their partners.

SARA has been developed based on the structured professional judgment approach. It is not a test but a tool designed to make a more consistent, reliable, and valid decision with an assessors’ clinical experiences and other information. It has a high interrater reliability, especially in perceiving and identifying risk factors and validity (Kropp, Hart, Webster, & Eaves, 1995; Kropp & Hart, 2000), and it has been widely used in the field. SARA also effectively discriminates between offenders and nonoffenders ($t = 27.04$, $p < .0001$) and between recidivists and nonrecidivists ($r = .36, p < .0001$), as illustrated in Kropp and Hart’s (2000) study of 2,681 adult male offenders.

The purpose of each measurement is to attempt to assess the existence and severity of violence and abuse and to predict any future violence and abuse. These assessments can be used quite effectively to assess treatment outcomes and the level of risk, but the question still remains: What is the rationale for using each assessment? In other words, which assessment is most suitable to measure the outcome in efficacy studies, and what are the empirically reliable and valid ways to combine assessments to measure outcomes?

Dutton et al. (1997), for example, used the rate of postcontact criminal behaviour, total crimes, violent crimes, assault, and wife assault as indicators of
outcome and relied only on police reports. Dunford (2000), on the other hand, used two types of measures: demographic and outcome measures. The demographic measures assessed ethnicity, income, education, age, social status, and family size. The outcome measures consist of four indicators. The Episodic measure assesses both the perpetrators’ and victims’ accounts of incidents and frequencies of abuse at three levels: threat, physical assault, and physical injuries. The other three measures used were the Modified Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979), official police and court records, and the date of the first instance on which reassault occurred. However, the empirical rationale for combining these measures and determining how these combinations increase the accuracy of outcome are not clear.

Scott and Wolfe (2000) relied on more "subjective" measures of successful outcomes. They conducted a thematic analysis study of nine men who were abusive to their partners to examine how the men made a change from their abusive behaviours. As a requirement of participation and as an indicator of recovery, Scott and Wolfe recruited men who had completed a 20-week feminist-oriented group treatment program. Those men who successfully completed the program went through three steps of a screening process. First, the men needed to complete advanced programs from 14 weeks to 20 weeks. Second, they needed to maintain significant and lasting changes (for a minimum 6 months), which were determined by their primary counsellors and a phone interview. During the final screening, the researchers interviewed the men’s partners to verify that the men had not demonstrated physical and psychological violence and abuse for at least 6 months. In other words, Scott and Wolfe considered those men who fit into these categories as
successfully recovered.

The rationale for using and combining certain measures is not clear or consistent among the literature. One of the difficulties of outcome research is that each program has different goals, and outcome measures will need to be adjusted to measure what they are supposed to measure. As Gondolf (2002) wrote, "The role of the programs may not be a 'cure' in themselves but a reinforcing component to a coordinated community response" (p. 146). In other words, the successful outcome in efficacy studies may simply measure strength and stability of the reinforcements for violence and abuse prevention.

Scott and Wolfe (2000) also pointed out an interesting issue about the timing of assessment for successful outcomes. Gondolf’s (2002) multisite quasi-experimental 4-year follow-up study showed that men are most likely to reoffend within 6 months of program intake, and the rate of reoffence decreases afterwards. However, if one considers successful outcome and recovery of abusive men as two separate constructs, and if recovery is a stage process and continuum, then 6 months may not be an appropriate indicator for measurement. This scenario comes back to the issues of defining a successful recovery. Learning to refuse or avoid taking a drink, for instance, can be a part of a recovery process, but it does not mean a person has successfully and completely recovered from alcoholism. Likewise, an indication of no risk of violence and abuse does not necessarily mean that the men have successfully recovered.

***Issues of research methodology.*** In studies of treatment programs for men who are abusive to their partners, the research has been predominantly quantitative in
true experimental or quasi-experimental designs. The experimental design uses randomized sampling and has a tendency towards higher internal validity; it can compare with one or more control groups. Through these controls, the experimental approach can identify the efficacy of treatment programs (Gondolf, 2002). However, offenders tend to have low motivation for treatment. Because of these motivational issues, it is very difficult for participants in studies to comply with random assignments. Also, ethically, it is questionable for experimenters to offer unequal treatment to some groups simply for the sake of research (Gondolf, 2002). In addition, it is very difficult to purely assess program efficacy by experimental design alone, since treatment programs tend to involve confounding factors (e.g., issues of each participant’s level and impact of coercion to participate in the program versus degree of voluntary participation in the program, the facilitating approach and personal styles of engagement for the participants, etc.).

The quasi-experimental approach is a popular method for efficacy studies (Gondolf, 2002). In this design, researchers compare men who have completed treatment programs with men who have dropped out to see if there are any differences in treatment effects. Time-series design can also acquire multiple observations over time (Cook & Campbell, as cited in Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1992). One of the disadvantages of using a quasi-experimental design in treatment research is that researchers cannot effectively compare the group of treatment completion with the group of dropouts (Gondolf, 2002) because men who completed their programs and those who dropped out may differ in characteristics and motivation (Daly & Pelowski, 2000). Also, there are a variety of reasons for dropping out of the
programs (e.g., leaving the relationship, completing the probation order, suffering from severe personality disorders; Gondolf, 2002). In addition, quasi-experimental studies report lower recidivism for men who received treatment than for men who did not, but experimental studies often report no significant differences in the recidivism rate between sample groups (Scott, 2004).

One new development in efficacy studies of treatment programs for abusive men is the application of the Prochaska’s (1979) transtheoretical model (Eckhardt, Babcock, & Homack, 2004). His model proposes that individuals who successfully change their behaviour often proceed through five stages of change: precontemplative, contemplative, preparation, action, and maintenance (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992). This new development in research analyzes different processes of change depending on their particular stage. Scott and Wolfe (2003) conducted a study to examine the stages of change as a predictor of outcomes and reported that offenders at the precontemplation stage did not show a significant positive change in empathy, communication, or abusive behaviour, but men in the contemplation and action stages showed positive change in all of these areas. Since recovery is a process, the research method should capture the offenders’ change over time.

**Issues of Treatment Approaches**

**Discussion about treatment approaches.** Various treatment programs for men who are abusive to their partners have been developed. Historically in the field of domestic violence, the feminist approach has provided the initial intervention of domestic violence. The feminist perspective on intimate violence holds that men are
prone to be more violent and abusive because they are socially and culturally conditioned to be dominant and to regard women as their subordinates (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Feminist theories attribute violence and abuse against female intimate partners to the fundamental issues of unequally distributed power, culturally based gender relational patterns, and patriarchal social patterns (Adams, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Pressman, 1989). Feminist theorists assert that male domination and gender role socialization promote the learning of controlling behaviours in men, including domination and assuming privileges over women. These conceptions are believed to be a cause of wife abuse (Dutton, 1998). From this perspective, all men could potentially be dangerous to women and use force to subordinate and dominate them. Thus, the aim of intervention is to correct socialization and to promote equality between men and women in the society (Dutton, 1998). The feminist approach aims to restructure the patriarchal social context, to make a clear distinction between victims and aggressors, and to assist wives as victims (Margolin & Burman, 1993).

Researchers (Dutton, 1998; Kelly, 1997; Kwong, Bartholomew, & Dutton, 1999), however, have raised questions about feminist theory’s analysis of family violence. One of the main critiques is that feminist theory fails to explain the reasons why some men within the same society become violent and domineering while others do not, if its claim is that wife assault is a result of a systematic form of domination and social control (Dutton, 1998). Kelly (1997) also argued that the feminist literature neither discusses women’s aggressive actions nor acknowledges the fact that women can use verbal assaults as effectively as men do.
Feminist theories argue that the issue is proportion and lethality. For instance, the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), the community-based program for domestic violence prevention in Duluth, Minnesota, indicated that from early 1980s to the early 1990s, DAIP intervened with fewer than 100 women who had physically assaulted their male partners, and among these cases, only seven men could not leave the relationship by themselves (Pence & Paymar, 1993). These researchers acknowledged violence of women against men but concluded that "the factors differentiating the enormous social problem of men's violence against women from the violence of women against men are the number of cases and the severity and pattern of the violence used against the victims" (p. 6). They presumed that those women who are violent are generally already being abused by male intimate partners.

Kwong, Bartholomew, and Dutton (1999) argued with this viewpoint and stated that failure to acknowledge the possibility of women’s violence jeopardizes the opportunity for women to be provided with effective support so as to learn more constructive strategies to deal with the inevitable conflicts and frustrations in intimate relationships; furthermore, it does an injustice to men who are suffering from female violence.

Some recent studies make arguments focused on the relational context in which domestic violence occurs. Unlike feminist assumptions of gender inequality, this relational-context research has indicated that most people feel equal in power in their marriages (Coleman & Straus, 1990). More interestingly, studies have shown that women make more decisions in marital relationships in which their male partners
earn more money than the women themselves (Bartholomew, Cobb, & Dutton, 2012; Morin & Cohn, 2008). As a matter of fact, men who lack the material means to contribute to the intimate relationship or who experience difficulty maintaining equality within their intimate relationships are more prone to violence and have more conflicts with their female partners (Anderson, 1997).

Furthermore, recent studies have found evidence for a dyadic process model of partner violence and abuse that emphasizes relational context and its interaction rather than gender power inequality (Bartholomew et al., 2012; Capaldi & Owen, 2001; Ehrensaft, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2004; Moffitt, Robins, & Caspi, 2001). One of the studies discovered that the more severe form of abuse occurs when violence and abuse are practiced by both men and women (Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, & Saltzman, 2007).

Similarly, Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman, and Yerington's (2000) study of attachment and intimate partner violence showed interesting results. They found about 38% of emotionally distressed but nonviolent husbands were classified into one of the insecure attachment categories, whereas 23% of violent husbands were classified as securely attached. They highlighted the fact that "this is not to say that they have secure relationships with their wives" (p. 402). In other words, this result draws attention to the relational context of intimate relationships. The issue of domestic violence is not so much about the attachment styles that men have as how each man's and woman's attachment style interacts and reacts within their intimate relationships to create relational dynamics.

One of the most popular approaches in the criminal system is the risk
management approach, which is based on the risk assessment concept: the degree of offenders’ criminogenic thinking, skills, and lifestyle. It attempts to link dynamic factors as treatment needs (Wheeler, George, & Stoner, 2005) and considers these offences as a skill deficiency. The risk management approach focuses on first discovering each risk factor area, such as a problem behaviour, its context, and reinforcement for repeating the same maladaptive behaviours. Once these areas are identified, the men can learn to stop the behaviour and replace it to with a more constructive response (Wheeler et al., 2005). At this point, relapse prevention is very useful. Relapse prevention looks to “address the problem of relapse and to generate techniques for preventing or managing its occurrence” (Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2005, p. 1). The integrated approach can combine the problem and need targeting approach, the skills training and treatment module, the relapse prevention approach, and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) strategies (Wheeler et al., 2005).

Typology studies also provide possible approaches for facilitation of change. Gondolf (2002) suggested and matched six Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III (MCMI-III) profiling groups with treatment implications. These frameworks can be combined effectively with actual counselling and therapeutic approaches (e.g., CBT, feminist approach) to create treatment programs for abusive men.

**Efficacy study.** At the very core of issues of these efficacy studies of treatment for abusive men is weighing whether or not the treatment actually works. Davis and Taylor (1999) reported a treatment effect size of 0.41 and compared it to the effect of aspirin on heart attacks, which has a 0.068 effect size and constitutes a 4% reduction of heart attacks (Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1988).
(1999) concluded that the effect size for abusive men’s treatment is significant. Although effect size across psychotherapy is about $d = 0.85$ (Smith, Glass, & Miller, 1980) and provides benefits in 70% of cases (Rosenthal, 1995), given the motivation levels of the clients and issues of violence and aggression (Gondolf, 2001), the effect size for abusive men’s treatment programs may be smaller (Babcock et al., 2004).

As for specific treatment programs, the consensus seems to be that no one treatment approach is appropriate for all offenders (Hamberger et al., 1996), and the programs tend to be more eclectic. As a result, no studies of a pure form or signature approach have been conducted in the field (Babcock et al., 2004).

Babcock, Green, and Robie (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of efficacy studies of abusive men’s treatment programs. They examined 22 efficacy studies in both experimental and quasi-experimental designs in the Duluth model and CBT, and they reported that the effect size in both approaches were quite similar, with the Duluth model slightly higher ($d = 0.35$) than CBT ($d = 0.29$).

These efficacy studies often fail to consider delivery and facilitation of the programs, as well as change process issues. Taft et al. (2001) compared CBT and supportive therapy groups, though both used motivational interviewing technique (Miller & Rollnick, 1991), and reported improvement of attrition rates and strong effect sizes (Eckhardt et al., 2004). These improvements and effective sizes concur with research on the importance of engagement with the men (Jenkins, 1990; Stefanakis, 2008) more than the approach itself. However, it is also necessary to consider that many clinicians, researchers, and legal personnel know a number of abusive men who are resistant to treatment and highly unmotivated, and that without
very strong coercion, these abusive men would drop out of the programs they attended (Scott, 2004). Scott and Stewart (2004) found that strong indicators of change include the men having more trust in the treatment and facilitators, and their exhibiting goals more congruent with the therapeutic goals.

Scott and Wolfe (2004) also reported that men who have successfully completed treatment programs and demonstrated absence of violence in their lives have shown that they are more honest and open about their past abusiveness. These men also testified that learning through interaction with their facilitators and listening to other participants’ comments were helpful.

Both Scott and Stewart (2004) and Scott and Wolfe (2004) provided insight to understanding recovered men. These studies, however, give information about what changed in the men, but their reports do not provide information about the process of how the change occurred. These are crucial issues that require further investigation. One possible explanation is that what researchers consider engagement may not be; instead, engagement among the subgroups of abusive men forming a therapeutic alliance may mean something quite different for this clientele. For instance, Drapeau, Körner, Granger, Brunet, and Caspar (2005) conducted qualitative research on pedophile sexual abusers’ motivations for treatment and reported that some of the participants were suspicious of the treatment and would commit only after they tested the therapists by opposing and confronting them to make sure they were trustworthy, strong, and reliable. This response demonstrates that a certain subgroup of people may feel safer with a respectful, strict boundary. Also, certain men may need to mine their own inner strength and, in so doing, know that they can face their
challenge (H. Stefanakis, personal communication, November 1, 2008).

Quantitative and qualitative efficacy research has revealed several important elements of treatment programs. First, the men seem to recover through learning and processing. Therefore, the programs need to address educational components such as providing a definition of violence and abuse, building communication skills, practicing conflict resolution skills, promoting the equality of men and women, teaching about respectful relationships, and more. The program also must help men openly process their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours by establishing engagement with the men. Researchers need to investigate an extended meaning of engagement for violent and abusive men. Then, as a structure of the program, effective use of risk assessment should be integrated with typology to best match the clients’ needs and facilitation procedures.

This review of literature gives information about current treatment approaches for men who are violent and abusive to their partners. It examines the issues of conventional and operational definitions of successful outcomes and recovery, risk factors and causes, measurement, research methodology, and treatment evaluation. Past research has shown a critical period for reoffence and the timing to measure the possibility of recovery. Other research, however, has shown that violence and abuse are behavioural manifestations, and more risk factors and issues need to be processed. Focusing solely on incidences of violence and abuse as an indication of recovery, then, may be misleading. Successful recovery seems to be a process, but this process begins by ceasing any violence and abuse. Then, even if the men resent or are mandated to attend a treatment program, attending all the sessions becomes an
important step toward a successful recovery. Jenkins (1990) reminded treatment counsellors not to take responsibility for the men by trying to break down their denial but to invite them to challenge the barriers to taking responsibility for their violence and abuse.

**Deconstructing a Concept of Change**

**Meaning of change.** Offenders' change can be conceptualized beyond the criminal justice perspective. Taking a social constructionism perspective, change can be viewed as coconstructed between male offenders and female victims. The social constructionist perspective asserts that reality is constructed through social interactions (Crotty, 1998). It proposes that multiple realities can exist, and they are bound by context (e.g., culture, history, and society). Human beings are believed to be active participants in appropriating, manipulating, and constructing meaning collectively (Moghaddam, Erneling, Montero, & Lee, 2007). In this context, the joint relationship is crucial for constructing meaning. Human existence is this continuous conjoined interaction with material and organic realms, which generates human beings and meaningfulness (Polkinghorne, 1988). In this jointly engaged action, the meaning is not a result of action or reaction but occurs within the conjunctions and coordination of action-supplementary actions in relationships (Gergen, 1999). In other words, coconstructing meaning of change does not mean victims are responsible for offenders' change nor do the victims need to actively participate in men's change process. Instead, the forms and meaning of change in violent offenders needs to make sense and be meaningful for both male offenders and victims. The change cannot be an independent process for men without considering
their partners and children who are harmed by their actions.

The concept of change also needs to be conceptualized from multiple angles. This notion is based on Frankl's (1988) dimensional ontology. The process of change needs to be viewed beyond the early theories of development that tend to be prescribed from the laws of nature, which itself is simply an elaboration of enlargement, cycle, and horizontal stage theories with fixed sequence of chronological orders (Mahoney, 1991). This perspective does not intend to discard valuable contributions of early theories of change in men who use violence and abuse, but rather it attempts to provide more dimensions of the change phenomenon and integrate those dimensions into a more holistic view. In his constructivism therapy, Mahoney (2003) attempted to bridge and balance many calcified contrasts, particularly those between mind and body, head and heart, self and society, and science and spirituality by integrating valuable insights and contributions from major conceptual traditions in psychotherapy, such as behavioural, biological, cognitive, existential-humanistic, psychodynamic, systems, and transpersonal psychology.

**Taking responsibility.** Taking responsibility for violence and abuse is often one of the main foci of the treatment program (Gondolf, as cited in Saunders, 2001; Jenkins, 1990; Pence & Paymar, 1993). However, "taking responsibility" has multiple elements and perspectives. Establishing a definition for taking responsibility in violence and abuse is complex, as violence and abuse in intimate relationships involves various contexts: legal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.

**Legal context.** Violence and abuse is a crime, and thus taking responsibility has to be meaningful in a legal context. The court looks to determine the degree of
offenders’ responsibility and promote a sense of responsibility in offenders (Coates & Wade, 2004). The court looks critically at the characterizations of the offender and accounts of the crime and judges apportion of such responsibility for crimes (Coates & Wade, 2004). The court attempts to determine a level of responsibility, hold offenders of such crime accountable, achieve necessary restitution, protect safety of the public, and deter future crime. As Gardner and James (2012) wrote, "The theory behind this objective of sentencing is that encouraging an offender to acknowledge the harms done to the victims and to the community will reduce the likelihood of the offender committing crimes in the future" (p. 1).

Determining responsibility and carrying out appropriate sentencing are important as they promote the denouncement of unlawful conduct, deter the offender and other persons from committing offences, separate offenders from society when necessary, assist in rehabilitating offenders, and provide reparations for harm done to victims or to the community (Mewett & Nakatsuru, 2000). Punishment, however, is not for vengeance or retribution but to protect society and provide a moral and educative effect (Mewett & Nakatsuru, 2000). The Criminal Code of Canada concurs with this view (Government of Canada, 2014).

Since domestic violence is a crime and legal matter, taking responsibility in intimate relationship violence and abuse requires compliance with legal requirements that promote retribution and restitution for such harm, and public acknowledgement that the act is wrong and not acceptable. Taking responsibility becomes meaningful when offenders engage in the legal system. Thus, involving the larger system, including law enforcement, prosecution, and victims' support, holds offenders
accountable for violence and abuse.

Taking responsibility for violence and abuse in intimate relationships must be meaningful to both partners. In a legal context, taking responsibility can be limited to a specific act which is identified in the criminal code, but any abuse other than the criminal code, such as emotional, financial, and spiritual abuse, can be dismissed. Furthermore, even if offenders are dissatisfied with their sentencing and reluctantly serve their legal obligation, this may still be meaningful in the legal context of taking responsibility for their actions.

**Interpersonal context.** Taking responsibility for violence and abuse in intimate relationships exists also in an interpersonal context and has to be meaningful in such a context. This type of responsibility can often be manifested and discussed in therapeutic environments. It concerns not only what types of offence the men committed but also pursues reasons and causes for why the men behaved in such a way to seek prevention of future offences.

In this context, taking responsibility can occur at several layers of human experiences. First, taking responsibility can be understood and achieved cognitively. Taking responsibility as a cognitive activity can be understood with its target, its causal attribution, and its justification. When one is taking responsibility for an act, such an act needs to be specific. Individuals identify specifically what they are taking responsibility for. A main focus of taking responsibility in intimate violence treatment is often limited to acceptance and acknowledgement of the men's behaviours and actions and their effects on their intimate partners and children. To "be accountable means to acknowledge and take responsibility for one's actions"
It also requires the men to accept full responsibility for their abusive actions and acknowledge the existence and significance of the abuse (Jenkins, 1990). The perpetrators need to take responsibility for understanding fully the impact caused to their victims and for ceasing their violence and abuse (Jenkins, 1990).

When thinking about taking responsibility as a human cognitive activity, attribution is an important function to consider. In this sense, taking responsibility can be considered as "making internal, stable and intentional attributions for one's crimes" (Maruna & Mann, 2006, p. 166). Traditionally, various research studies have pointed out issues concerning lack of both taking responsibility for one's violent and abusive behaviours and acknowledging the impact of such acts by blaming, denying, and minimizing future offending (e.g., Cantos, Neiding, & O'Leary, 1993; Holtzworth-Munroe & Hutchinson, 1993; Murphy & Eckhardt, 2005; Shields & Hanneke, 1983). Holtzworth-Munroe and Hutchinson (1993) showed offenders' tendencies for displacing the cause of conflict onto negative intentions, partners' having selfish motivations, and partners’ blameworthiness. Other studies also showed tendencies of making excuses (accepting that the assault was wrong but denying personal responsibility) and justifications (accepting personal responsibility but denying that the act was wrong) for their behaviours (Dutton, 1986; Henderson & Hewstone, 1984). Thus, accurate causal and responsibility attributions need to achieve full acknowledgment and acceptance without distorting reality.

Furthermore, violence and abuse in intimate relationships has been viewed as a human rights issue wherein women are oppressed by men, and this power inequality
needs to be fully acknowledged and corrected, as is stressed in feminist theory. Thus, addressing the offenders' cognitive distortion and redirecting their responsibility have been critical as focuses of therapy. Therapists have challenged offenders to acknowledge their abusive behaviours and admit fully and expressively without any distortion that what they did was wrong.

Maruna and Mann (2006) further reviewed the issues of blame, denial, and minimization in regards to recidivism and therapeutic values and noted the need to tease out cognitive distortion with attitudes and true minimization of the perpetrators’ behaviours. Maruna and Mann indicated that post hoc excuses/cognitive distortions are often normal and healthy, and they can occur frequently in people’s lives as reactions to their behaviours. Externalizing blame can be explained by "the just world philosophy" by which human beings are all prone to interpret negative things that have happened to a person as deserved (Lerner, as cited in Beck, 1999; Maruna & Mann, 2006). Furthermore, making excuses and the causal attribution of behaviours to external causes can be an honest claim, as one’s behaviours can be caused by external factors and should not directly relate to risk of reoffence (e.g., Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Henning & Holdford, 2006).

Human beings are prone to overestimate the extent to which behaviours reflect an individual's traits and attitudes. These fundamental attribution errors, actor-observer bias, and correspondence bias are commonly seen in people’s day-to-day lives (Myers & Smith, 2007). These cognitive reactions serve their purpose to protect the self, and thus the "make them admit" approach can bring
shaming effects on men (Maruna & Mann, 2006). If denying, minimizing, and blaming are purely attempts to protect selfhood from feeling guilt and shame, these cognitive distortions can be a sign of one's conscience regarding problematic behaviours (Maruna & Mann, 2006). It is important not to encourage the reinforcement of biased views, explanations, excuses for violent behaviours, or dishonesty, but it is essential to listen to the offenders' explanations (Schneider & Wright, as cited in Maruna & Mann, 2006).

As Maruna and Mann (2006) emphasized, it is crucial to distinguish post hoc excuses and cognitive distortions from problematic attitudes. It is critical for therapists to "identify which rationalizations are the most toxic and separate these from the more neutral or even benign explanations offenders hold on to in order to maintain their self-esteem" (p. 170). Those destructive excuses that might promote reoffending are the ones that dehumanize and demean victims (Maruna & Mann, 2006).

Attitude is often confused with cognitive distortion (Eisikovits, Edleson, Guttman, & Sela-Amit, 1991). Cognitive distortion can be seen to "represent maladaptive ways of processing information and may become emblematic of a particular style of behaving or of certain clinical syndromes" (Reinecke & Freeman, 2003, p. 233). Attitude, on the other hand, is constructed usually with three or four beliefs (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). These attitudes are attached to emotions and values, and their attitudes are observable in their behaviours both verbally and nonverbally (Triandis, 1971).

Problematic attitudes toward women, violence, and treatment are important
risk factors for future violence (Andres & Bonta, 2006; Eisikovits et al., 1991; Scott & Stewart, 2004). Andrews and Bonta (2006) identified antisocial cognition as one of the criminogenic needs that consists of variables including attitudes (e.g., negative and antagonistic attitudes against the justice system and law enforcement), values, beliefs (e.g., crime can fulfill its own needs), a range of rationalizations that crime committed is justifiable (e.g., dehumanizing and demeaning the victim as they deserved it and they were worthless), and the identification of oneself more in a crowd of people who affirm in criminal activities. (e.g., identify oneself as a criminal who does not fit to the "normal" group of people in the society; Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

SARA (Kropp et al., 1995) also identifies three attitudes that support or condone spousal assault: patriarchy (male prerogative), misogyny, and the use of violence to resolve conflicts as one of the risk items. Other research has also identified that men who have patriarchal belief systems are more likely to engage in violence and abuse toward women (Mihalic & Elliott, 1997, Saunders, 1984; Scott & Stewart, 2004; Stith & Farley, 1993). Furthermore, Scott and Stewart (2004) also noted that having a positive belief and attitude toward the treatment is one of the contributing factors for better prognosis.

The Inventory of Beliefs about Wife Beating (IBWB; Saunders, Lynch, Grayson, & Linz, 1987) also identified five subscales of abusive men's problematic attitudes. The subscales showed a significant relationship between attitudes toward violence against women having traditional views of women's roles, the belief that physical violence is justifiable, and the belief that women are responsible for causing
violence (Saunders, et al., 1987). Scott and Stewart (2004) suggested that attitude toward violence and abuse is one of the important and necessary elements that men need to change and stated that minimization, denial, and externalizing blame need to be reduced to affect change. Men in denial who minimize their violence and abuse toward women particularly show less improvement (Scott & Wolfe, 2003; Taft, Murphy, King, Musser, & DeDeyn, 2003). Scott and Stewart’s (2004) implication is that having these men clearly admit their violent and abusive acts and take responsibility for their actions should be the goal of therapy.

As a summary, past research (e.g., Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Kropp et al., 1995; Saunders et al., 1987; Scott & Stewart, 2004) has indicated four major problematic attitudes in the men who are violent and abusive to their partners. The first attitude demonstrates a misogynistic and prejudice/discriminative outlook toward women. It consists of a patriarchal gender role belief and prejudice/discrimination against women. The second attitude is antisocial cognition identified by the criminogenic needs consisting of the attitudes, values, beliefs, and rationalizations that affirm criminal behaviours and dehumanization of victims (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). This type of attitude consists of a set of the beliefs related to justification and rationalization of the use of violence and blaming violence on victims. This attitude lacks the capacity for empathic understanding toward victims of such violence and abuse. The third attitude concerns intervention and consists of beliefs based on causal attribution and locus of responsibility used to make sense of who is responsible for violence and abuse and whether being forced to attend the program is fair and justifiable or not. These types of denial, minimization, and blaming can be
qualitatively different from cognitive distortion and need to be addressed.

**Intrapersonal context.** Taking responsibility also exists in intrapersonal experiences. Human beings need to be perceived as whole (Shaffer, 1978), and each individual is responsible for fulfilling self-actualization potential and capacities. Humans have a capacity for growth, self-understanding, acceptance, and a propensity to find their own solutions for change (Barrett-Lennard, 2007; Bozarth, 1998). The goal is to shift "from a rigid mode of experiencing self and world to one of greater openness and flexibility" (Raskin, Rogers, & Witty, 2008, p. 145). The focus is not to solve a problem but to grow as a person so that one can adapt in dealing with problems (Rogers, 1942, p. 28). Becoming "fully functioning people" means becoming fully aware of and being open to one’s own internal experiences as well as being able to live life fully in each moment, trust one’s own experiences and decision making capabilities, recognize individual needs and make free but appropriate choices, and live constructively and effectively by being creative (Engler, 1991). It requires promoting an internal locus of evaluation.

Those individuals who have an internal locus of evaluation are highly aware of their own experiences and feelings, and they are confident with them (Mearns & Thorne, 2007). Virginia Satir also encourages people to take responsibility for their internal experiences of feelings, perceptions, expectations, yearnings, and behaviours (Banmen & Maki-Banmen, 2006). The Satir model has four goals: raising self-esteem, becoming a positive choice maker, becoming responsible, and becoming congruent (Banmen & Maki-Banmen, 2006). The humanistic approach perceives that human beings are responsible for their personal growth by getting in touch with
internal experiences, being able to experience and tolerate the threat of incongruency, being able to self-reorganize previously distorted or denied experiences, and experiencing the self as a locus of evaluation (Bozarth, 1998).

From an existential perspective, human beings are fundamentally free but therein bound by a responsibility. As Brennan (2003) wrote, "[The] individual is free to define life’s direction through a continued succession of choices, but ...this freedom also gives the individual responsibility for the outcomes of personal decisions, so that freedom is a course of anguish and dread" (p. 280). Brennan noted that Sartre asserted that subjectivity has at once enormous privilege and condemnation in its freedom of making choices. Every time one makes a decision, one is responsible for the choices made. Taking responsibility means becoming the author of one’s life and “[t]o be aware of responsibility is to be aware of creating one’s own self, destiny, life predicament, feelings and, if such be the case, one’s own suffering” (Yalom, 1980, p. 218). Human beings strive to discover a concrete meaning of their own existence (Frankl, 1959/1984).

More importantly, human beings exist not within themselves but between people and the world around them (Cooper, 2003). Humanity’s existence is “fundamentally and primordially intertwined with the existences of others” (Cooper, 2003, p. 19). Thus, people are responsible for relationships with others. Levinas indicated that the otherness has meaning in a concrete ethical encountering moment of facing self with others (Cohen, 2006). Cohen (2006) wrote, "The 'otherness' of the other person arises precisely as the moral imperative that pierces the self with moral obligation, with service to the other" (p. xxvii). Transcendence is critical, and
transcendence and responsibility are inseparable. Transcendence is "the moral surplus of the other person, not the generosity of being" (Cohen, 2006, p. xxviii). Human existence is embodied, and through it people can engage and encounter their world (Cooper, 2003). They recognize the meaning in relation to their existence and identify human beings as in dialogical relationships with the world wherein people actively engage and influence the world around them; at the same time, people are passive, influenced by the world around them as well (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). In making choices, people are not only responsible for themselves but also for the rest of the world because they exist between the world (Cooper, 2003).

"Negative" feelings, such as guilt, anxiety, despair, dread, unsettledness, and a sense of absurdity, are simply responses to the reality of existence, but problems arise when people ignore these negative experiences and pretend that their lives are different from their realities (Cooper, 2003). Denial, minimization, and blaming to avoid experiencing guilt and anxiety are not simply cognitive distortions: These types of denial can deny authentic existence. People become authentic only when they commit themselves to their own life’s meaning and face these “negative” experiences (Cooper, 2003).

Taking responsibility from humanistic and existentialism points of view requires a focus on owning and honouring internal experiences and becoming authors of lives to make constructive choices. Banmen (2008) noted that "responsibility includes being in charge of one’s internal experiences, not only one’s behaviour. The main focus here is being responsible for one’s own internal experiences. This includes being in charge of them, managing them and enjoying them" (p. 5). Taking
responsibility is to choose life rather than to feel fearful and desperately avoid the emotional pain of facing one’s own shame and guilt.

Individuals are also responsible for their changes in future behaviour. Identifying many causal explanations and causal attribution of violence and abuse, such as past trauma, upbringing, and so forth, can encourage individuals to avert taking responsibility (Jenkins, 1990). This type of causal attribution can promote unhelpful solutions and encourage the paralysis of being victimized (Jenkins, 1990). Rather, Jenkins proposed that the focus should be on restraint and context. The model that Jenkins proposed is based on a theory of restraint or negative explanation (Bateson, 1972, 1980 as cited in Jenkins, 1990).

This theory of restraint is based on the assumption that "[a]buse perpetrators can be seen to hold values and beliefs which act as restraints to the acceptance of responsibility for abusive actions and the development of sensitive and respectful relationships with others" (Jenkins, 1990, p. 14). It constructs explanations for their violence and abusive behaviours and blue prints for relating to others (Jenkins, 1990). Instead, people need to engage in “creative processes in which we search for and clarify what is important for ourselves, our families, communities, cultures, environments, spirituality, and so on” (Jenkins, 2009, p. xii). It centers on questions of human beings’ desired modes of existence and the quality of relationships and life (Jenkins, 2009). Thus, it seeks how one might be, what one might be capable of, and what is possible (Jenkins, 2009). In other words, people are responsible for living fully and living expansively with their choices and possibilities.

White and Epston (1990) also stated that
while practices associated with the externalizing of problems enable persons to separate themselves and their relationships from such problems, these practices do not separate persons from responsibility for the extent to which they participate in the survival of the problem. (p. 65)

Externalizing problems does not displace responsibility; rather, it

(a) frees persons from problem-saturated descriptions of their lives and relationships, (b) encourages the generation or resurrection of alternative and more rewarding stories of lives and relationships, and (c) assists persons to identify and develop a new relationship with the problem. (p. 65)

Engaging in this activity can create a new sense of personal agency and responsibility for exploring new possibilities in their lives as a result. In the process, people may find new possibilities and capacities to intervene in their world. Taking responsibility can "hold participants responsible for solutions instead of problems" (Yee Lee, Sebold, & Uken, 2003, p. 13).

The review of the literature indicates that taking responsibility has various dimensions, and these meanings and their implications in treatment have not been fully discussed in the field of violent offenders’ intervention. The notion of taking responsibility is essential, as people who are affected by violence and abuse might desire such acknowledgment and resolution.

**Power.** Researchers have revealed the negative emotional effects that witnessing spousal violence and abuse can have on children (Avakame, 1998; Dutton, 1995; Frankel-Howard, 1989; Geffner et al., 1988; Rosenberg & Giberson, 1991; McCloskey et al., 1995; O’Leary, 1988; Roberts & Noller, 1998; Walker, 1986). They have conceptualized the transformation of innocent victims into perpetrators based on the effects of childhood trauma, attachment theory, and social learning theory, all of which are based on causal and correlational explanation. However, the
research has not been fully examined in relation to the qualitative information in their perceptions of meaning and power in such transformation.

Power is important to examine because a nature of violence and abuse is power created by fear, deception, coercion, pain, and exploitation of weaker individuals for one’s own benefit. The experience of abuse in children is disempowering, and "the dynamic of rendering the victim powerless - refers to the process in which the child's will, desires, and sense of efficacy are continually contravened" (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985, p. 3). This sense of powerlessness is exacerbated by the invasion of the children’s physical space against their wills and by the coercion and manipulation that offenders might use (Finkelhor & Browne, 1985).

The Duluth model and feminist theory also concern power and control, focusing on a discourse of gender and oppression. They emphasize collective power as created by society, culture, tradition, and histories.

Regardless of the kind of power, people hurt when they feel powerless against abuse, bullying, disrespect, fear, degradation, and humiliation by others who are more powerful than they were (Kivel, 1992). Using violence and abuse can be "a chance to counter our feeling of powerlessness by wielding power over someone else" (Kivel, 1992, p. 24). One study of 213 male adolescents incarcerated for violent crimes who had been exposed to family violence indicated a similar trend in which these participants believed more than others that being aggressive boosted their self-image (Spaccarell, Coatworth, & Bowden, as cited in Edleson, 1999).

For young children, witnessing violence at home is a powerless and fearful experience that has a great impact on them. DeBoard-Lucas and Grych (2011)
conducted a study with 34 children (ages 7 to 12) who observed domestic violence at home and reported that 37.5% of them felt scared that one or both parents would be hurt and felt concerned about the parents’ well-being, but only 6.3% of those children feared and felt concerned about their own safety. A quarter of them felt scared and not certain about what was going to happen. With regard to their thoughts about responsibility or blame for the violence, 56.3% of these children perceived their mother's partner was fully responsible for the incidences, and 31.3% of them recognized both the mother and her partner as responsible for the fights. These children reported only three types of emotions during the incidents, but 34% of them had a mix of these emotions: 50% of them experienced sadness, 47.1% of them felt angry, and 14.7% of them felt scared during the fight. This study indicated that those children had a sense of who was responsible for violence were deeply concerned about their parents’ well-being and experienced intense negative emotions but felt powerless to do anything about it.

People can also experience power physically as a force. As a natural law of physics, the harder one hits someone, the more serious the damage can be to the person hit. Violence does hurt people physically as well as emotionally, and such pain can be remembered even after a wound is healed. Some research has indicated reactions of anger and hostility, negative emotional reactions such as guilt and shame, or physical symptoms from anxiety and distresses (Anderson, Bach, & Griffith, 1981; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; DeFrancis, 1969) in children who have been sexually abused.

Power also exists in narrative form. The essence can be found in Epston’s
profound question, "Who has the storytelling rights to the story being told?" (as cited in Madigan, 2007, p. 138). Power can be found in the stories we tell each other about what is worth pursuing and what is not worth pursuing, what constitutes success or failure, who is 'in' and who is 'out,' and where we measure ourselves to be on this or that continuum of normality. (Botella, Herrero, Pacheco, & Corbella, 2004, pp. 138-139)

A thin description allows only "little space for people to articulate their own particular meanings of their actions and the context within which they occurred" (Morgan, 2000, p. 12). Morgan further indicated that selecting which stories are to be told is determined by "those with the power of definition in particular circumstances (e.g., parents and teachers in the lives of children, health professionals in the lives of those who consult them)" (p. 13). It is a power over other narratives that are dominated, pushed away, hidden, and humiliated. Foucault argued that power has constitutive effects, that the operation of power can construct "truths" that people live by, and such "truths" shape lives and relationships as a result (White & Epston, 1990). It is not so much about the secrecy of violence and abuse as the power that resides in certain narratives being dominant over others and the belief that the prevailing narrative is the norm and truth.

**Issues in gender.** Since my study is focused on male-to-female domestic violence issues, gender is important to discuss. Power, control, and how these values manifest in a relationship are rooted in gender. Success, power, competition, and restrictive emotionality are areas in which men demonstrate their masculinity, and any threats in these areas can also be perceived by men as threats to their self-esteem (O'Neil & Harway, 1997). Research also has indicated that these internalized gender roles can hinder men from seeking help (Robertson & Fitzgerald,
1992) because seeking help often implies vulnerability to exposing one's own weaknesses and thus implies submission to others (Mahalik, Good, & Englar-Carlson, 2003). These types of men's socializations by which men internalize certain values, attitudes, and behaviours concerning masculinity and femininity can promote devaluation of feminine values as inferior, inappropriate, and immature. This type of socialization can create gender role conflict in which one's concept of gender roles can negatively influence himself or others around him (O'Neil, 1981). Such traditional patterns of male gender role socialization can not only promote "values that are highly restraining for the development of respect and sensitivity in relationships and the acceptance of responsibility for abusive behaviour, by males" (Jenkins, 1990, p. 38), but also prevent them from proceeding in a change process (e.g., learning about and sharing their sensitive emotions openly to others).

Summary

The research review in this chapter indicated important facts supporting ideas that cognitive intervention and risk management approaches are necessary and noted a gap in the concept of change between criminal justice and therapeutic approaches in men who are violent and abusive. As indicated in the review, variations and complications exist within such approaches as well. Jenkins (2007) challenged researchers and counsellors to avoid looking into conventional knowledge of abusive men, processes of change, and causes of violence and abuse, which may restrain us and offenders from expansion. Thus, deconstructing change and examining it inductively is essential before putting concepts together. The next chapter will discuss the actual procedures for this study.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

As noted above, quantitative research has been a predominant approach for conducting research in the field of domestic violence, and conducting efficacy studies on treatment programs has been a challenging task partly due to the lack of consensus in the meaning of "successful outcome" (changed men). This issue is crucial to treatment: Without agreement on a common set of outcomes, researchers could not determine which treatments work. Criminal justice approaches, which focus on reduction of recidivism by risk management, and counselling/therapeutic approaches, which focus on personal growth, have different goals and implications regarding a concept of change in offenders and in relation to victims on whether to pursue retribution or restitution. The current evidence-based and criminal-justice approaches seem to seek out retribution rather than restitution as a goal (Jenkins, 2007). In this context, the programs tend to be concerned about the level of learning that offenders reach but do not address the offenders' change in relation to the victims they harm. Offenders and victims are considered as binary opposites, and change in the offenders is often considered independently from change in their victims.

My study by using the narrative inquiry method, which is based on the social constructionist perspective challenges the conventional knowledge of "change" and, thus, challenges the treatment goal for men who are violent and abusive to their partners. This study explored accounts of the journeys of change given by male offenders who have experienced substantial change. Its significance lies in its focus on examining the meaning of change not only from the perspective of offenders but
also from the perspective of jointly constructed meanings with their female partners. In other words, this study explored the meaning of change in relation to their families. In addition, this study paid special attention to the use of change-oriented language, metaphor, and stories. It attempted to capture the dynamic, on-going flow of constructed meaning of change for the male offenders of domestic violence. It is intended that this research will contribute to establish more holistic treatment programs for men to improve current intervention strategies, and thus improve treatment efficacy.

**Overview of Social Constructionism**

The research approach in this study was drawn from a social constructionist perspective and used the collaborative narrative inquiry research methodology proposed by Arvay (2003). Social constructionism has its roots in antiessentialism and relativism (Burr, 1995; Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2007). Social constructionists believe that multiple realities can exist and are bound by context (e.g., culture, history, and society). For instance, a stop sign does not derive meaning from the sign itself, but the meaning is constructed through social rules and customs (Polkinghorne, 2004). Social constructionism is relativistic in its ontology, as it recognizes that multiple realities exist (Burr, 1995).

Relativism in social constructionism, however, does not mean "anything goes;" it still asserts the relevance of a moral criterion (Gergen, 1985). However, it alerts one to one’s presumption that morality is contained within an individual’s freedom of choice and exists independently from culture and tradition in society (Gergen, 1999). Kantian deontology considers morality as based on reason rather
than tradition, intuition, or attitudes and perceives humans as rational beings who can discern good from evil in prescribing moral principles to themselves (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009). Social constructionists would argue that even the concept of "immorality" - evil versus good - needs to be socially and culturally deconstructed in society. Social constructionists challenge cultural imperialism, claiming that one culture cannot impose a universality of truths, reasons, and morals onto another.

Some social constructionists disagree with the notion of realism (Burr, 1995). Strong proponents of social constructionism have argued that knowledge is not a direct perception of reality, but rather that people construct their own reality in relation with others. Crotty (1998), on the other hand, has taken a realist stance on social constructionism, asserting that reality may be constructed through social interactions and there may be multiple realities, but they are real nonetheless. He asserted that the perspective on reality clearly contrasts with idealism, which denotes that reality exists only in one’s mind, while social constructionists contend reality is constructed in social contexts through relational consensus.

Social constructionism supports the idea that social practices and institutions or interactions and negotiations between relevant social groups produce knowledge (Gasper, as cited in Young & Collin, 2004) and that knowledge is sustained by social processes accompanied by social actions (Young & Collin, 2004). Social constructionists state that knowledge is historically and culturally specific, that language is a precondition of thoughts and social action, and that language constitutes reality. Thus, rules and norms are not causes of behaviour, but they initiate assumed actions by those people who make sense of their languages (Moghaddam, Erneling,
Therefore, externalization, a process of constructing a new narrative, can separate problems from people (Morgan, 2000). Thus, individuals are not perceived as the source of the problem but rather that the dominant story of the culture and society, which is incorporated by the individuals, is the target (Polkinghorne, 1988; White & Epston, 1990), and that externalization is a process of extracting and *rewriting* the story. This fundamental premise of social constructionism raises interesting issues about power. As Foucault asserted, people predominantly experience the constitutive effects of power by normalizing “truths.” These “truths,” then, construct or produce the power that, in turn, shapes lives and relationships (Foucault, as cited in White & Epston, 1990).

Social constructionists shift their focus from a cause-effect linear approach to active participation of human beings in the appropriating, manipulating, and manufacturing of meaning as people engage in a collective meaning-making processes (Moghaddam, et al., 2007). In this framework, Wittgenstein asserted the notion of “language games,” which involve a language-generated meaning of the world (Gergen, 1999). Words gain their meaning within context and rules. Wittgenstein took the stance that words do not have a direct reference to or relationship with the objects they represent; instead, meaning is formed by context, rules, and circumstances, and words in themselves do not contain essences (Polkinghorne, 1983). Gergen (1999) expanded on this concept with the example of chess, which requires two opponents, a chess board, and moving pieces of various sizes and shapes. Once the game of chess has begun, these pieces acquire a very important meaning. These moving pieces can even be identified as *kings* and
queens. Wittgenstein called these broader patterns of actions and objects *forms of life*. Without forms of life, the words, such as *checkmate*, do not mean anything. Thus, Gergen concluded that “[l]anguage, in this sense, is not a mirror of life, it is the doing of life itself” (p. 35).

Furthermore, social constructionism values a relationship in action, and this joint relationship is crucial for constructing meaning. Polkinghorne (1988) ascertained that the realm of meaning exists within the synthesis of human existence, which is a continuous conjoined interaction with material and organic realms, and that human beings are generated from and informed by meaningfulness. Gadamer also asserted in his work on hermeneutics that people all obtain a *horizon of understanding*, which is a collection of prejudgements or prejudices, and that this horizon of understanding is necessary to narrow down possible acceptable answers for the text or a person’s actions (Gergen, 1999). However, a horizon of understanding alone does not have meaning. People engaging in joint relationships or dialogic relationships can make fused horizons of understanding and, therefore, construct meaning.

In this jointly engaged action, meaning occurs within the conjunctions and coordination of action-supplementary actions in the relationship (Gergen, 1999). Gergen provided an example of a person who comes into a room extending his/her hand in an attempt to shake hands with the other people in the room. The other people can choose to shake his/her hand as a supplementary action, to completely ignore the hand, or to hug him/her instead. This supplementary action is necessary for the person’s extending of his/her hand to become meaningful; therefore, this
interaction coconstructs meaning. In addition, Gergen indicated that these relationships and human actions that generate meaning together are also historically dependent and future oriented.

The primary concern for social constructionists is how events, objects, and human actions and interactions create meaning (Moghaddam et al., 2007). Individuals are active participants in appropriating, manipulating, and manufacturing meaning. Moghaddam et al. further argued that “[t]he focus is no longer on assumed mental mechanisms within isolated individuals, but rather collective processes outside individual minds – on norms, rules, conventions, and, in short, cultural practices and meaning systems collectively shared and jointly upheld” (p. 191). As an example, Gergen (1999) indicated how much of the biblical saga and themes are rooted in Western culture and have shaped the idea of how people should raise their children. Moghaddam (2003) stated that individual and interpersonal psychological experiences emerge from collectively constructed experiences. Therefore, people’s understanding of the world is embedded in history and culture (Blustein, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004).

The Method of Collaborative Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is “the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experience (e.g., life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, and biographies) and reporting that kind of research” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 204). Narrative research focuses on studying individuals and their life experiences through their stories by chronologically putting the meaning of those experiences together (Creswell, 2007).
Expressed lived stories are data sources; Cresswell explained that studying them is the methodology that provides ways to analyze and understand these lived stories.

In narrative inquiry that draws from a social constructionist perspective, contrary to the perspective of logical positivists, language is not considered a simple expression of what an individual experiences. As Wittgenstein stated, all the observation statements are bound by language rules and social practices, and thus, they are not statements of truth (Polkinghorne, 1983). Language is perceived as the reality that it constructs, and people cannot predate language (Burr, 1995). It “provides us with a way of structuring our experience of ourselves and the world, and that the concepts we use do not pre-date language but are made possible by it” (p. 33).

In other words, through language people make sense and meaning of their experiences, and there are various ways of doing so. Contrary to the psychoanalytic tradition of perceiving certain emotions as innate functions and abilities in human beings, Burr noted, a social constructionist takes the view that language precedes human innate functions, and, with language, people can categorize and make meaning.

In narrative inquiry, narrative is treated as "a form of discourse that links events together across time, and, thus, it can display the temporal dimension of human existence" (Polkinghorne, 2004, p. 58). Arvay (2002) wrote, "Narrative is the linguistic form that we employ to make lived experience accessible and meaningful. It is through our narrative descriptions of personal experience that we make ourselves and others known to us" (p. 114). Narratives are "both process and the results" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 13), and people are constructed by language,
narrative, and our life worlds (Arvay, 2002).

This coconstructing process is best accomplished through narrative inquiry because this type of inquiry supports "the notion that human lives are 'becomings' or journeys in which actions and happenings occur before, after, and at the same time as other actions and happenings" (Polkinghorne, 2004, p. 58). Through narrative, people can get in touch closely with how participants compose their experiences into order and put their experience, actions, and events together to make sense of them (Riessman, 1993). Based on this overview of social constructionism and narrative inquiry, the present study chose to employ Arvay's collaborative narrative method (2003). This narrative approach emphasizes a collaborative method in coconstructing meaning of phenomena through a participatory and emancipatory relationship between researchers and participants.

A process of coconstructing meaning involves dialogical conversation, which negotiates meaning between people and explores the process of sense-making and meaning-making by telling a story of life (Reissman, 2008). It is an interchanging of views between two people conversing about a common theme (Kvale, 1996). In this interchange, the interview process is to "invite stories" (Polanyi, as cited in Arvay, 2003, p. 165) from participants to explore their experiences regarding the topic of investigation. The researcher and participants will reflectively and dialogically engage in the participants' stories to facilitate the meaning-making process. Arvay noted that this approach requires the researcher to attend to the multilayers of the stories; that is, the macro level of the stories, which involve broader contextual themes (e.g., cultural discourse and power) and the micro level of the
individuals’ stories, which includes the participants’ contradictions, the storytellers’ silences and pauses, and tacit knowledge being articulated through metaphor and body language.

Thus, the relationship with participants is essential because having a well-established relationship can produce quality data. Participants are not the "subjects" of the study, but they are investigating, along with the researcher, their personal experiences and meanings of specific phenomena (Osborne, 1990). In this approach, it is crucial to building a relationship in trust and in empathic understanding to solicit authentic descriptions from participants. An empathic relationship can decrease the "knower-known distance" (Josselson, 1995) and allow researchers to work more collaboratively.

The main aim of narrative inquiry is to understand the experience at hand as closely as possible. More importantly, the aim of this research methodology is not simply to extract personal meaning but also to collaboratively construct meaning. Meaning is not static (Gergen, 1999). As Gergen aptly put it, "The meaning of my words and actions is not fundamentally under my control. I need you in order to mean anything" (p. 146). In this research methodology, data are not existent within participants but within the collaborative interactions between the researcher and coresearchers. In other words, participants are expected not only to share their experiences but also to interact actively with the researcher to generate data. Furthermore, through a reflexive process, researcher and participants explore the influence of culture, history, and context, and they negotiate multiple perspectives of meanings.
There are two important aspects in this collaborative relationship. First, the relationship should not be static but as a process of rigorous and continuous interactions during all stages of the research. It should be nurtured throughout the research. Prolonged engagement promotes credibility of the study and its findings, and it is the intention of the researchers to invest sufficient time and effort to achieve certain purposes and conditions, such as immersing into the culture and building trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement is not a process of trying to become a "nice guy" so that participants may talk about their innermost secrets. Rather, it is a developmental process in daily engagement to build an authentic relationship. Lincoln and Guba outlined that prolonged engagement is to demonstrate to the respondents that their confidences will not be used against them; that pledges of anonymity will be honored; that hidden agendas, whether those of the investigator or of other local figures to whom the investigator may be beholden, are not being served; that the interests of the respondents will be honored as much as those of the investigator; and that the respondents will have input into, and actually influence, the inquiry process. (p. 303)

This process begins with being transparent in relation to the research goals and procedures as noted above. Furthermore, the researcher may go beyond simply explaining the research to share his or her personal intent of conducting this study and the reasons for exploring this topic. This personal detail may involve self-disclosure of the researcher's personal journey and an openness regarding values, beliefs, and experiences in relation to the topic. Self-disclosure concerning personal experiences helps strengthen relationships (Arvay, 2003).

Secondly, this collaborative relationship recognizes the power differences in research relationships and attempts to minimize these differences. The power does
not only reside in the structural relationship, but, for Foucault, it also exists in knowledge (Burr, 1995). Burr noted that conventionally established knowledge has the power to define others. Thus, recognizing the location of data is important in this study. The research process needs to be clear and transparent for coresearchers, and they need to be able to revise their stories to be authentic to their experience for the final product.

**Consideration for Criteria for Evaluating the Study**

The verification of qualitative research is a continuum in variations of evaluative approaches (Hammersley, 2007). One side of the spectrum consists of positivist and postpositivist paradigms, and evaluative criteria are based on foundational epistemology by which the researchers apply the same criteria of evaluation as in quantitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In this spectrum, evaluation criteria mean an observable indicator that discerns whether or not the research is valid and reliable (Hammersley, 2007). On the other side of spectrum, the evaluative criterion is used as a list of considerations (Smith & Deemer, 2000). It is not abstract standards but a socially constructed list of characteristics used to judge the quality of the production (Smith & Hodkinson, 2005). These researchers use a context-based list of reminders flexible enough to add or delete criteria depending on context, and they do not consider it possible to establish generic evaluative guidelines to determine the validity and reliability of the research, which is compatible with qualitative research philosophy (Hammersley, 2007; Smith, 1984; Smith & Hodkinson, 2005).

Determining which evaluative criteria to employ depends on the approach
taken in a particular study (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As discussed earlier, social constructionism is realism and relativism in its ontology (Crotty, 1998). Meaningful reality is socially constructed subjective reality, but it is real. Crotty noted that it is also relativism in its ontology by which people believe meaningful reality is how they make sense of it, and multiple realities may exist. The qualitative study is required to provide some criteria to demonstrate that this particular study went through a rigorous process to produce trustworthy results. Although this qualitative research does not pursue the employment of measurable universal standardized guidelines, it is still "a context-based explication [that] is required of how observations are transformed into data and findings, and of how interpretations are grounded" (Mishler, 1990, p. 423). However, in narrative inquiry, narratives are constructed through social interactions (e.g., social discourses and power relations) and are constantly changing. Individuals' narratives will not be static and consistent from one setting to the next (Riessman, 1993). In other words, criteria cannot be compartmentalized into a set of static formal rules or standardized procedures, but the criteria need to pursue a "quality of craftsmanship" (Kvale, 1996, p. 240). Kvale noted that it seeks defensible knowledge claims in each stage of the research during investigation by continually checking, questioning, and engaging in theoretical interpretation of the findings. It is "the task of articulating and clarifying the features and methods of our studies of showing how the work is done and what problems become accessible to study" (Mishler, p. 423).

Riessman (1993) suggested using trustworthiness for narrative inquiry. Trustworthiness aims to satisfy the question, "How can an inquirer persuade his or her
audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). Trustworthiness in this study involves four criteria: persuasiveness, correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic use (Riessman, 1993). Persuasiveness answers the question, "Is the interpretation reasonable and convincing?" (p. 65). Riessman indicated that a study becomes more trustworthy and persuasive when participants' accounts support theoretical claims and when various other possible interpretations of the data are examined. This trustworthiness was achieved in the present study through a member check procedure.

Correspondence can be demonstrated by taking a study’s results back to the participants for verification to see whether researchers are adequately representing the participants’ accounts (Riessman, 1993). One could argue, however, as to whether affirmations of the interpretations are possible or not, because stories and meanings, Riessman recognized, are not static but always changing. Thus, interpretation needs to be understood as a discussion process to achieve correspondence instead of considering the criteria of correspondence as a black-and-white dichotomous evaluation. Interpretation depends on the contexts of time and place.

Coherence in the interpretations involves global, local, and themal coherence (Agar & Hobbs, as cited in Riessman, 1993). Agar and Hobbs explained these concepts as follows. Global coherence refers to capturing narrators’ overall goals conveyed in their personal meaning of their experience by telling a particular story. Local coherence is a mechanical part of the narrative concerned with how a narrator tries to produce the narrative by relating events to one another. Themal coherence
involves clusters of repeatedly occurring themes in the interview text, which are perceived and worked as a unification of the text.

Finally, pragmatic use involves future contributions of the study to the field and to the clinical work in the field (Riessman, 1993). Pragmatic use is to ensure that results of the study will be relevant and contribute to the advancement of the field of the treatment of male offenders in spousal abuse and violence. This contribution to the field is achieved by making the study’s results available by way of manuscript and conference presentations.

Research Design

Purpose and research statement. The research question investigated the narratives that abusive men construct from their experiences of change in their violent behaviour toward their partners and children. This exploratory study used a collaborative narrative inquiry research method (Arvay, 2003) to conduct in-depth interviews and interpretive discussions with men who were violent and abusive but made substantial change to explore their personal accounts of their experiences along their journeys of change. Their stories are to capture their meanings of overcoming and changing their violent behaviours as a coconstructing process between men and women in the intimate relationships. This exploratory study does not simply describe or extract a process of change; rather, it deconstructs the conventional concept of change and explores the meaning of change from a social constructionist perspective. In other words, the end result shows the dynamics of the men's journey to change. These dynamics illuminate a complex process of reflection, negotiation, sense-making, or contradiction in change as coconstructed between men and women
and show the movement of change activities in which they engaged.

In this study, the data exist between the researcher and the participants over their continuous interactions concerning the topic of study. Meaning is not inherent in an action or experiences but is constructed through social discourse and social interactions (Bruner, as cited in Josselson, 1995). As Bruner further explained,

Meaning is generated by the linkages the participant makes between aspects of her or his life as lived and by the explicit linkages the researcher makes between this understanding and interpretation, which is meaning constructed at another level of analysis. (as cited in Josselson, 1995, p. 32)

Coconstructing meaning by way of the researcher and the participants engaging to shape understandings and make sense of them is a collaborative process (Josselson, 1995).

**Selection of participants.** Past studies in desistance from violence used various measures to identify successful outcomes (e.g., police records of recidivism by Bonta, Wallace-Capretta, & Rooney, 2009; a combination of psychological assessment, such as the Conflict Tactics Scale by Straus, 1979, and police reports by Dutton, 1986). Selecting those men who have changed or are making significant changes, however, was a challenging task because my study aimed to explore the journey of change and expansion of male offenders' lives inductively, while simultaneously I needed to select the people who had the experience of being changed without knowing the qualities of that experience. There are two issues in the selection of the participants: definition of "significant change" and the way to measure such a phenomenon.

Some studies considered successful desistance as being abstinent from violence and abuse for more than 2 years (Stefanakis, 1998). However, in my study, I wanted
to capture their journey, which is a movement forward in their lives to desist violence, to avoid developing retrospective stories, and to avoid simplistically using chronological information as a benchmark, limiting to preconceptions of a linear stage model. Hence, I used the very minimum abstinent time considered in the current research literature, which is 6 months of abstinence with extensive participation of counselling or group work, to be "substantial change" (e.g., Scott & Wolfe, 2000). This criteria also concurred with the past research, which has indicated that men are most likely to reoffend within 6 months of program intake (Gondolf, 2002; Scott & Wolfe, 2000).

My study conceptualizes change as a "joint-action" (Shotter, 1993, 2008) between the men and their partners, wherein the meaning of change is coconstructed by the interaction with their action and supplementary action. Thus, their partners need to experience some significant changes from these men. This experience, however, is not always possible as the couple may have broken up and chosen not to have a close contact with each other, regardless of the men's change. I recognize that reunification is not necessarily considered as a sign of positive "change" or restitution. The silence and distance in the relationship is also an action and supplementary action that coconstructs the meaning of change within such context. These male offenders are also in the context of intervention programs in regard to their change process. Thus, helping professionals who work with them closely, such as their therapists and probation officers, represent important information about significant changes undertaken by these men. In addition, the completion of treatment group programs and the willingness to continue receiving therapy can also
be considered as signs of desistance for potential male participants. I based my selection of participants for this study on the above rationale.

Since the focus of the study was to understand the story of desistance based on narratives told by those who have experienced this phenomenon, this research used purposeful sampling, which provides information more relevant to the research question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2007). The recruitment for the study involved several steps. First, I discussed the study’s topic with helping professionals, consisting of counsellors, probation officers, and victim support workers who work closely in the field of spousal abuse. I asked them to distribute an invitation for research participation (see Appendix D) to men who have been violent and abusive in the past but who have completed treatment programs successfully and/or who have, in their estimation, made substantial change for desistance. These professionals’ clinical experience of working closely and extensively with these men and using their own assessment tools in the context of their work to judge was an important determinant in distributing invitations to appropriate participants. After they invited the potential participants, I gathered supplemental information about these helping professionals’ guidelines to determine their senses of "significant change".

My study involved six male participants (average age: 42 years old) who were violent and abusive toward their female partners but experienced or are currently experiencing significant change. Twelve male participants were initially interviewed, and then six of them were selected based on the depth of their stories and meaning. A summary of this study’s participants are presented in Table 1. These
male participants needed to be abstinent from violent and abusive behaviours for more than 6 months. The potential participants also had to have completed at least one treatment program or a series of individual counselling sessions. In addition, their acts of violence and abuse must not have been induced by any apparent medical and/or physical problems, such as traumatic brain injuries, schizophrenia, or psychotic reactions. These were screened by the preinterview self-report (see Appendix E); likewise, I used the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA; Kropp, Hart, Webster, & Eaves, 1995) to determine the men’s risk level at the time of the interview. These criteria were not meant to be used as strict rules to establish homogeneity and to achieve generalizability in the sample but to understand the meaning of change in the context of violence against the intimate partners.

I met with those participants to see if they were willing to take part in this research (number of meetings, data reading, etc.), to articulate their thoughts clearly, and to work together with me. Once they agreed, the participants and I went over the informed consent form (see Appendix F) together, and the participants signed the form.

The strength of this participant selection procedure was that participants would more than likely be men who can be identified as offenders who have made substantial change. This recruitment process served the purpose of allowing the researcher to select more appropriate participants. However, the caution in this type of study is the safety of participants. Having the offenders and the victims discuss their past violence and abuse issues may affect their current relationships and might even create emotional reaction.
To reduce risks and to ensure a measure of safety, the participants were instructed carefully regarding their consent and their right to withdraw from the research. The researcher informed them of free counselling available at the University of British Columbia (UBC) clinic in New Westminster, which they could use for support during the study. I am a B.C. licensed clinical counsellor and was a board member for the Ending Relationship Abuse Society of B.C., a local professional agency that works to minimize the impact of violence and abuse, and so I would be able to refer the participants to additional appropriate services in another location.
### Male Participant Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Don</th>
<th>Dennis</th>
<th>James</th>
<th>Paul</th>
<th>Randy</th>
<th>Ryan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age*</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of abuse</td>
<td>Physical &amp; emotional</td>
<td>Physical &amp; emotional</td>
<td>Physical &amp; emotional</td>
<td>Physical &amp; emotional</td>
<td>Physical &amp; emotional</td>
<td>Physical &amp; emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Caucasian (European Canadian)</td>
<td>Caucasian (European Canadian)</td>
<td>Caucasian (European Canadian)</td>
<td>Caucasian (European Canadian)</td>
<td>Caucasian (European Canadian)</td>
<td>First Nations Canadian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary language</td>
<td>French/English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work status*</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status*</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Divorced &amp; living alone</td>
<td>Divorced &amp; living alone</td>
<td>Divorced &amp; remarried</td>
<td>Never married &amp; living alone</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal history</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Current probation order</td>
<td>Past probation orders</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Past probation orders &amp; incarceration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk level (SARA)*</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SARA = Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide (Kropp, Hart, Webster, & Eaves, 1995)

* Marked items: At the time of screening
Procedure. The research procedures followed a modification of the four steps of Arvay's (2003) collaborative narrative inquiry method: (a) setting the stage, (b) coconstructing the research interview, (c) engaging in six collaborative interpretive interviews and transcription processes, and (d) writing the narratives. The overview of applying Arvay's collaborative narrative method (2003) in this study is presented in Table 2.
Table 2

Research Procedure

**Selection of participants**
- Through referral from counsellors/therapists in the field

**Interview process**
- Additional interview with the women who are victims of violence and abuse to understand their perspective on changed men
  - *The purpose is to help understand the context better*

**Transcription and Interpretive dialogue**
- With male participants
  - Reading for content
  - Reading for the self as the narrator
  - Reading for the research question
  - Reading for relations in power and culture
  - Reading in relation to family
  - Reading in relation to risk of violence

**Writing up**
- A chapter of the story of change with the title
- Thematic description of the journey of change

**Trustworthiness**
- Member check
- Supervision on analysis process
- Being expressive about researcher's thoughts process
- Final interview with participants in regard to collaboration

**Additional survey with counsellors/therapists to understand their perspective on changed men**
- *The purpose is to help understand the context better*
The detailed procedures of this research method are described below.

**Setting the stage.** My study started by developing a rapport with participants. I was transparent in describing research questions, the research purpose and process, the roles and responsibilities of the researcher and the participants, the researcher's values in research relationships between the researcher and participants, and the basic philosophical values in the research design (Arvay, 2003). To achieve an in-depth collaborative relationship, I applied the concept of therapeutic alliance (Bordin, 1994). The participants and I attempted to establish positive affective bonds, which include mutual trust, respect, and caring, by having open and continuous dialogue throughout the research process. We also came to establish a consensus and commitment to the goals of the research and the means to reach that goal. Finally, both the participants and I were actively participating in and committed to the responsibilities of our roles and the processes of the research.

More importantly, as Arvay (2003) suggested, in-depth collaborative relationship is a process of continuous interactions during all stages of the research. Thus, I was mindful about nurturing the relationships throughout the course of the research. I did not limit myself to discussing simply a detail of the study. Instead, I sought to be open to sharing and to having a dialogue about my personal meaning and intention in conducting this study; about my journey to this point; and our values, beliefs, and experiences in relation to the topic (Arvay, 2003). To respect each participant's story, I was mindful about the power differences in research relationships and attempted to minimize these differences by letting the participants to revise their stories to be authentic to their accounts throughout the research process.
**Coconstructing the research interview.** For the interview process, I valued in-depth and open dialogue with participants, both to invite them to tell their stories freely and to facilitate our work together in the coconstruction of meaning. The collaborative process was implemented in the interviews I conducted for the present study, in which I as the researcher and my participants were required, for the rigor of research and for the quality of the data gathered, to meet until they exhausted the telling of their stories. After the first interview, the participants and I pondered the conversation that took place and reflected further. When we came back for the following interview, they discussed any additional stories as well as their reflection on the previous interview.

Similar to therapeutic alliance, in this collaborative narrative method both researcher and participants need to agree on working together to coconstruct meaning. This rigorous joint effort and interaction throughout the data-collection portion of the study would help build a collaborative relationship.

Of these male participants, I asked the following questions. The main question was an open-ended invitation to participants to talk freely about their stories and their journey to change, while the elaborating questions were meant to help participants process their experiences as new meanings of experience emerge.

Open-ended invitation (main question):

- Please share with me your stories of being away from violence and abuse. What do you call these stories? What do your stories mean to you?

Elaborating questions:

- What do you consider your stories to be?
- How could your stories be described in a metaphor?
• What is it like for you to be increasingly desisting from violence and abuse?
• What does change mean to you and to your family?
• What are you changing to?
• What were the obstacles and constraints to change?
• How do you know that you are changing and/or have changed?
• How and when did you become changed?

I used probing questions and responded with empathy to enhance understanding and accuracy of the participants’ meaning. Since the main focus of this study was to extract collaboratively the stories of change in the men who were violent and abusive, interviews with the male participants were conducted multiple times. After the first interview, both the participants and I reflected on the interview that took place and thought about any "striking," "moving," or "arresting" moments. This process may create a moment for new birth of meaning (Shotter, 1999) by which the interview can have a personal impact. Both the participants and I wrote notes about their experiences and related reflections, and subsequent interviews always involved exchanging the experiences and reflections from the previous interview. The interview continued until the participants felt that they had exhausted the telling of their stories. For male participants in this study, an average of three interview sessions at 2 to 3 hours per session was conducted. The interviews were video- and/or audio-recorded for transcription and review purposes. Time, place, and date of the interviews were determined by the participants to accommodate their needs and comfort levels.

Supplementary interviews with additional participants. To add more context and to enhance the construction of meaning in transformation, I conducted additional in-depth interviews with the four recruited female participants who were victims of
spousal abuse to explore their perception of their changed partners. This additional context and information helped me understand the men's accounts of their experiences of change through the lens of victims’ experiences of this change of behaviour and outlook and, thus, helped to coconstruct the meaning of change.

The recruitment of the four women who were victims of spousal abuse was conducted by distributing a letter of invitation to local helping professionals. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were explained in the letter as guidelines to ensure their safety. Once a potential participant contacted me, I replied to each potential participant to explain the purpose of the study and their rights and to ask for formal consent. Female participants who were currently in abusive relationships at the time of the study, who had been victimized within the 6 months prior to the study, who had not received any support from local agencies in regards to abuse, or who potentially could have been harmed in their relationship by participating in this study were excluded. The background of the recruited female participants is presented in Table 3.
### Table 3

**Background of the Study’s Female Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Number of participants</strong></th>
<th>( N = 4 ) females (3 Caucasian and 1 Japanese-Canadian females)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average age</strong></td>
<td>53 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of abuse</strong></td>
<td>All reported the experience of receiving their former male partner’s physical violence, emotional abuse, and stalking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Current status of the relationship with the ex-partners** | Completely out of the relationship (2 women)  
In the process of leaving the relationship (2 women) |
Answers to the following interview questions were explored:

1. Please tell me about your experience of the substantial change that your [former] partner has made in his life with regard to his relational violence. What is this change, and what does change in your [former] partner mean to you?
2. How and when did you know that your [former] partner had changed?
3. How has your [former] partner's change impacted you?

For female participants, an average of one interview session for 2 to 3 hours per session was conducted.

The purpose of this additional interview was to help me gain a better understanding of what "significant change" means to the victims of violence and abuse as well as to better understand the men's accounts of change. This information also helped me frame a more effective discussion with the male participants later on. I categorized the content of the interviews into broad themes to establish descriptions of "significant change" from the victims’ perspectives.

Furthermore, I conducted brief surveys with helping professionals in the field of domestic violence to share their thoughts about the changes in the men they were involved with. I conducted a survey with five clinicians to explore their experiences of working with previously violent men who have made a transformational change in their lives. These professionals had to have worked as clinicians or facilitators of group treatment for abusive men or for partner/children victims for more than 6 months. Helping professional participants who were not trained clinicians, who were only working as antiabuse advocates, or who had worked in the field for less than 6 months were excluded from participation. Selection of the five helping professionals was made through the list of board members and clinicians in local associations that work on the issue of domestic violence. I contacted these
professionals to explain the purpose of the study and their rights and to request their participation.

I sent these helping professionals a survey in an attempt to explore the following:

1. From your clinical experience, what do you think such a change means for these men?
2. According to your experience, what are the qualities and characteristics of men who have made substantial change after being violent and abusive?
3. How are you able to know when an abusive man has made a substantial qualitative change?

The purpose was to simply explore and understand these professionals' experiences and perceptions of changed offenders as background knowledge when interviewing the male participants.

*Engaging in six collaborative interpretive interviews and transcription processes.* For the collaborative interpretive interviews, the participants and I collaboratively engaged in producing these interview data, and then we had to interpret and discuss these meanings in six ways. First, the summary of previous interviews was given to the participants at the beginning of the second interview, and the participants were asked whether the content of the interview was coherent, conveyed their meaning clearly, and needed any corrections. In the second step, I facilitated discussions around six viewpoints in the interview, depending on each participant's emphasis of themes in his story. The six viewpoints and facilitative questions were views: (a) on content; (b) on the self of the narrator; (c) on the research question; (d) in relation for power and culture; (e) in relation to the family; and (f) in relation to risk of violence and abusive behaviour again. These viewpoints were not reviewed step by step but brought out as the conversation developed. Each
story was personal and unique, and each individual may have had quite different emphases in their stories to tell. Some elaboration on the six viewpoints follows.

First, the participants and I always went over previous interviews to ensure coherence and accuracy of the conveyed meaning that they shared. Second, for views concerning the self of the narrator, the conversation aimed to follow the guidelines to review as a narrator and examine what they were trying to convey (Arvay, 2003, p. 169):

- Who is telling this story?
- How are you situated in this story?
- What are you feeling?
- What are your struggles?
- How do you present yourself?
- What meaning are you trying to convey?
- What parts of self do you share and what parts are kept hidden? and why?
- As the protagonist of your own tale, what do you want to convey to the reader?

The purpose was to review how the narrator constructs himself in the story (Arvay, 2003).

The third possible conversation focused on the participant’s struggle and excitement in regards to the research question, their experience of change. In this type of conversation the researcher seeks out what is not said or what is implied and determines whether contradictions exist between words and behaviours (Arvay, 2003).

The participants were asked to think again about the conversations we had while reflecting on their personal experience with the change process and the layers of meaning associated with this change. This viewpoint targeted the moment of the birth of meaning, paying attention to "striking", "moving", or "arresting" moments (Shotter, 1999) that may have signaled an opportunity to move into other possible
interpretations of the meanings (Arvay, 2003). The guiding questions for facilitating this dialogue were as follows:

- Are there any striking, moving, confusing, conflicting, or arresting moments in these transcripts?
- What thoughts and emotions emerged?
- How do these moments make sense to you?
- What do these moments mean to you?

Fourth, the participants were invited to talk about their stories in regard to power and culture. This conversation provided an opportunity for the participants to explore and discuss any experience of oppression and possible historical, contextual, and social restraints that may require change. These cultural structures and traditions can become a restraint for the men, in regard to change. "Traditional patterns of gender role socialization for men (and women) promote values that are highly restraining for the development of respect and sensitivity in relationships and the acceptance of responsibility for abusive behaviour, by males" (Jenkins, 1990, p. 38). The male participants and I had conversations to attempt to make sense of and to answer the following question:

- What was your sense of maleness in terms of a role of husband, sense of entitlement with wife and children, taking responsibility of your action, sense of humility, voicing your feelings and thoughts, and what impact did these elements have on your journey to change?

Fifth, the participants were invited to talk about their stories in relation to their partners and children. I was mindful of following the guidelines and asked these questions to facilitate the conversation:

- What do you think your change means to your partner and children?
- What does their silence or absence mean to you in terms of change?
- What are you changing to?
- What are you hearing from your partner? and what are they silenced about?
The aim of this viewpoint was not to examine the extent of change these men made (if any) but to help focus our understanding on the meaning of change in relation to their families.

Finally, collaborative discussion was present in relation to risk of violence and abuse again. I was mindful of the following questions or themes of discussion and invited the participants to have a conversation.

- How does your history of offence and having a problem with the law fit into your story?
- How do you reconcile with the identity which has a risk of reoffending to who you are?

Since this is a collaborative work, I also pondered these questions to assist discussion. Arvay's (2003) discussion questions with some modification were also used to facilitate exploration in a collaborative interpretive interview with the participants:

- In the last interview, I felt that you were implying something when you shared with me (...), but did not seem to be expressed clearly. What do you think happened in that moment?
- When I heard your story about (...), there was something that struck me and made me wonder, what was your experience of sharing (...)? What were your thoughts and feelings about (...)?
- How does it make you feel and think about my interpretation of (...)? How does it fit with yours?

These interpretations and any ambiguous parts of the participants' narratives were discussed collaboratively to achieve more comprehensive understanding of their meanings (Arvay, 2003). Furthermore, I kept myself familiar with female victims' experiences by reading stories, having interviewed the study’s female participants, having had discussions with helping professionals who work extensively with female victims of domestic violence, and being mindful of a use of language and viewpoint.
to facilitate coconstruction of the meaning of change. I also interpreted transcripts using the same guidelines.

The transcription process for these interviews is not only to keep a record of content but also to capture "how it is told" (Arvay, 2003). Thus, the transcriptions were required to capture tones of conversation as authentically as possible by using standardized coding. Examples are as follows:

- Short mute (less than five seconds) will be coded as three dots: e.g., "...
- Longer mute (longer than 5 seconds) will be coded as double 3 dots: e.g., "...  ..."

However, transcripts could not capture all the details of the interactions (e.g., tone, emotions, etc.), and, thus, the audio recordings were used heavily as well. The mode in which the data were presented in transcripts relied heavily on the cognitive activity of reading, whereas listening to the audio recordings had allowed me to focus on their stories and empathically understand the participants' meaning.

**Writing the narratives.** The final step involved writing up the narrative accounts. These six interpretations and collaborative works brought the participants’ stories "back to life" (Arvay, 2003, p. 172). The aim was to "make every attempt to fashion a tale that is embodied - a tale that is coherent, compelling and revealing of the storyteller's intentions" (Arvay, 2003, p. 172). The narrative can be presented in various ways, such as a poem, a play, an autobiography, or a metaphor (Arvay, 2003), and how it is told is determined by the collaborative work of the researcher and the participants. Narrative is "one of the forms of expressiveness through which life events are conjoined into coherent, meaningful, unified themes" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 126). The end report of this study is not the end; rather,
narrative is "a story-in-progress" (Arvay, 2003, p. 172), and it is on-going. It is not simply to tell the story of what has happened and what they did, but, instead, to share the meaning of their change in life. The presented narrative should be "the ongoing process of creating meaning for existence" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 126).

The results are presented in two parts, and both sections of results need to be read to understand participants' narratives comprehensively. The first section of the results is a presentation of the stories. It was compiled as a book about a personal journey to change that consists of a series of chapters of each participants' stories. Presenting a personal story is important because this form of result allows readers to keep each participant's personal meaning and story, its context, and the sequence of the story intact, which is the foundation of a narrative research method (Riessman, 2008). The second section of the results is a thematic categorization of the male and the female participants' narratives, which provide thematic structure to the personal experience and perceptions of change in the men who are violent and abusive to their partners. This thematic categorization provided an overview of the meaning and description of change as a reference point.

**Data Analysis**

**Writing up the male participants' stories.** The steps involved in writing up the male participants' stories were as follows. The first step was to summarize interpretive discussions and develop a plot line placing personally meaningful episodes in sequential order, which associated meanings with their processes of change (Arvay, 2003). Thematic analysis was useful in developing unique plot lines, as that approach to analysis helped me identify personally significant themes.
In addition, listening to interview audio recordings repeatedly was useful for attuning myself to their stories, as they contain more nonverbal information. I chose to write the stories in third person accounts with pseudonyms to emphasize a nature of collaboration in our developing their stories together. Once the stories were written, the participants had an opportunity to verify and edit their stories (Arvay, 2003). The participants and I entered into a joint discussion to give titles to their stories. "These narrative accounts are a joint construction, carefully crafted through a reflexive and collaborative research process" (Arvay, 2003, p. 172).

**Thematic analysis.** Procedures outlined by several key qualitative research methodologies (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1975; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Osborne, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1989; Reissman, 1993, 2008) were integrated and utilized as guidelines for this thematic analysis. The focus was to capture meaning units or blocks that “seem to express a self-contained meaning from a psychological perspective” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 53). I analyzed "the meaning of the part in light of content that emerges from the rest of the narrative or in the context of the story in its entirety" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 13). This is a process of bringing the participants’ stories 'back to life' (Arvay, 2003) and bringing to the surface the personal meanings they tried to convey.

The six steps involved in thematic analysis were as follows. The first step was to read the transcripts and listen to the interview audios repeatedly in order to understand empathically and to elicit the participants’ emotions, thoughts, and meanings until a pattern emerges (Lieblich et al., 1998).

The second step was to review the transcripts to look for meaning units with
particular phrases and sentences that related to the investigating phenomenon. In the third step, these identified meaning units with the representing sentences in the transcripts were paraphrased empathically into my words to capture meanings and themes that were elicited from these statements or phrases. These paraphrased statements should capture "the meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story" (Riessman, 2008, p. 3). Furthermore, Colaizzi (1978) stated that “his [researcher’s] formulations must discover and illuminate those meanings hidden in the various contexts and horizons of the investigated phenomenon which are announced in the original protocols” (p. 59).

The fourth step was to organize these meanings into a cluster of themes in each participant’s story and clustered further into the overarching categories that were based on the common themes. Then, all the clustered themes and the categories of all the participants' stories were compared with other participants’ and merged into further common clustered themes and categories. Throughout this thematic analysis, I discussed continuously with the external consultant who has extensive experience in the field of domestic violence to keep my interpretations authentic to prescribed meanings. Polkinghorne (1989) described that “the researcher moves back and forth between the meaning statements and the successive revised hypothetical ‘exhaustive’ lists until the themes are accurately reflected in the clusters” (p. 53). The fifth step was to organize and gather all results in sequence in order to keep the stories intact. The final step was to examine the validity of analyzed themes and stories, which will be discussed in the next section.
Criteria for Evaluating the Study

In this narrative inquiry, to achieve trustworthiness, I conducted several steps. First, I provided detailed descriptions of how the interpretations were produced. I attempted to render transparent all the processes in this study, including a clear presentation of the details as to how the researcher achieved transformation of the data and makes the data available to readers (Riessman, 1993).

Second, in the course of interview processes and interpretation/data analysis processes, I continued to engage in a regular conversation with a colleague who specialises in working with both male offenders and female victims of domestic violence. The purposes of conversation were to share any striking points and new awareness with me, to share my interpretation of data, and to have a conversation with the colleague to see how my reflections resonated with her experience of working with offenders and victims.

Third, these emerging themes were reviewed by two colleagues who work with male offenders of domestic violence. Themes, descriptions of themes, and sample transcripts were presented to them separately, and they were asked to see whether they agreed with or could relate these themes and their descriptions to their clinical experiences. The themes were refined through conversation, and an agreement was reached. We agreed to all of the emerged themes at the end.

Finally, all the themes and stories were taken back to the participants as a member check to affirm that the findings adequately represented what they meant and to provide opportunity for them to add and/or delete their complied stories to achieve authenticity. If the participants wished to make some changes, they were asked to
provide reasons for each change to maintain transparency and authenticity in the result.

In this collaborative narrative method, the quality of collaboration between the researcher and the participants is an important element. This study is valuable in that it attempts to deconstruct the conventional meaning of change and shed light on the socially constructed part of the meaning of change. The collaborative narrative inquiry method allowed the researcher to explore fluidity of meaning. However, one weakness that needs further examination is that this methodology does not address clearly the boundary between the coconstruction of meaning and potential biased guiding, or even a misleading of the participants by the researcher. The verification of this issue also needs to be discussed at each level of the research process. Verification was established by meeting with my research supervisor to verify my procedure at each level of the process.

One of the ways to resolve this issue is also for the researcher to be reflexive, which means to continuously explore and be transparent about how my personal experiences shape my understandings of my co-investigators [participants] and how viewing issues from multiple viewpoints affects our understandings of the phenomenon under study. It is about the ability to negotiate multiple and shifting meanings and for both parties to be able to voice their understandings equitably. (Arvay, 2003, p. 163)

To accomplish this reflection, I kept track of my thoughts in a notebook throughout the entire research, and I was open to share those notes with my supervisor and above mentioned colleagues to keep my research methodology intact.

**Subjectivity as a Researcher**

In this section, I share some details about my subjectivity as a researcher. I
was born and raised in Japan and moved to Canada after I graduated from high school. I am continually interested and intrigued by counselling psychology because the quality of relationships seems to be a core ingredient of working in this field. My Master’s thesis in counselling psychology was to investigate Japanese immigrant women's experience of being abused by their partners. I was interested in learning and understanding the women's experience of being mistreated by their loved and trusted partners in a foreign country, as I myself am male in gender but also an immigrant from Japan and had a friend who was abused in a foreign country. During this interview work, one of the participants pointed out that interventions are more urgently needed for those men who were violent and abusive than for the victims because otherwise the problem would never cease. This statement affected me greatly and helped me realize that I had not been fully confronting the core of the problem. Since then, I started working with the male offenders of spousal abuse. I am intrigued by this work because anger and shame are a very common emotion for all of us, but, yet, they can be explosive, and they can create a complex dynamic of love and hate in an intimate relationship.

In the last several years, I have been working with those men who are violent and abusive to their partners as a therapist in court-mandated programs as well as in a probation office. I have been serving as a member of a board of directors in the Ending Relationship Abuse Society of B.C., which provides resources and support for people who work in the field of domestic violence. My philosophy of clinical approach is influenced by the humanistic approach, especially the client-centered approach (Rogers, 1942), the Satir growth model (Satir, Banmen, Gerber, & Gomori,
1991), and logotherapy (Frankl, 1959/1984).

Reflecting on myself critically in terms of the topic of study, I detect my limitation as having put less emphasis on working with gender issues and as lacking experience in working with children and youth. I paid extra attention to these areas throughout my research by being reflective about the issues surrounding them and by having frequent conversations about my interpretations of data with female colleague in the field.
Chapter 4: Results - Men's Stories

The following are male participants’ personal stories of change. These male participants were violent and abusive toward their partners for many years, but they are not any more. They are facing their violent and abusive behaviours and harm done to their partners and children. Change is a life-long process for them. They feel perseverance is crucial to make change happen. These are stories of their courage as well as of the struggles, suffering, and redemption they went through to fight against violence and abuse.

Stories of Change in Male Participants

1. Don's story. Don did not like how he used to behave in the past and decided to change his behaviour. For a long time, Don never looked at his anger. He used to live as if he was not fully aware of how much hurt he inflicted on his loved ones and the people around him. One day, after many years of his violence and abuse toward his family, his wife and children left him. That moment was a wake-up call for Don. He felt that he had hit rock bottom. At first, he was resentful toward his wife for leaving and felt actually good that they left, but soon he felt scared, worried, and sad about the situation. He realized how much his family meant to him. This recognition was the turning point for Don, and he began to face his anger and to look at himself thoroughly.

Don believes his journey of change is not an attempt to bring his family back but a process undertaken purely for him – and for himself only. Don says that change means to live his life better and to become a more responsible human being. For Don, taking responsibility meant not simply taking responsibility for his own
behaviour but having the courage to face his internal experiences and issues, such as his emotions and his learning process to become more empathic toward others. Don realized that without being fully happy and content with himself, it was impossible for him to love and care for his family and to build intimate relationships with his wife and kids. He used to blame his wife for his unhappiness and frustration, but he finally realized that he was the only person who could create happiness for himself.

Don reflected on his life and searched for some of the roots of his anger. He was curious to find the reasons why he was angry so often. He got in touch with his experiences in his childhood and saw some painful struggles that happened during that time. Don struggled with his parents' distanced relationship with each other and with him. They were absent when he was growing up, and he felt that no one cared for him. His father did not show his emotions, and his mother did not have much patience with him. She was violent and harsh to him. He tried to get his parents’ attention and, not knowing how to as a young child, he acted out by breaking things, getting beaten by his brother on purpose, and setting things on fire. Don tried to make friends by providing things that children usually were not able to access, such as cigarettes, drugs, and so on. Unfortunately, these behaviours drew people's attention to him only in the sense of classifying him as a "problem child." They did not hear the cries that came from his heart.

It was especially difficult for Don to go through his parents' divorce. It was difficult as a 10-year-old boy to face his mother’s leaving the family. He was confused and could not understand the reasons why his mother had to leave. He was in the dark until the day his parents decided to get the divorce, but his cousins and
other relatives were aware. Don was shocked when he found out that he was the
only one who did not know what he would have to face. He said, "Everybody else
around knew, but me and my sister didn't know. I felt really bad about... I felt really
sad about this. It hurt me definitely. It was a very strong moment in my life." He
felt that no one cared enough to explain to him what was going to happen in the near
future. He felt fed up with all the people around him. Don decided to become
independent and managed to find his own way to survive. His family neglected him,
and he abandoned his family.

Don experienced rough and hostile teenage years and was involved in much
violence and drug dealing. He hurt many people by committing these crimes. It
was violent, but he did not feel any regret for what he had done. He believed that it
was what he needed to do to survive. However, he did have some boundaries, and
by sticking to these boundaries he managed to refuse hurting women sexually and
killing others. One day, Don felt that he had seen too much violence, crime, and
blood; he could not take it anymore. He made a decision to move away from such a
lifestyle. Don started to focus on building his desired career and became a business
owner. He loves what he does, and he is extremely skilled at it.

Don loves his wife and children, but he has been struggling throughout his
marriage. He has been working fiercely to achieve his life’s goals, such as making
more money to improve his and his family’s lives by being able to afford more
luxurious things, such as a bigger house, a nicer vehicle, and more vacation time.
However, with his children diagnosed with autism and his wife needing to stay at
home full time to care for them, it turned out to be challenging and stressful to
achieve those goals, as he was the only family member with an income. Don felt that his goals were hampered by his wife’s care for their children. He recalled that he had been frustrated and blamed his wife and others for his problems. He called his wife names and various derogatory terms and had been pushing her around for many years. One day, Don got into a serious argument, became hostile, and then became physically violent toward his wife. This action resulted in his wife taking their children and leaving their home.

When Don looks back now, he does not like who he used to be. He feels regret and remorse about what he has done to his family. His wife and children meant a lot to him. Don has made the decision to change his behaviours. He joined an anger management group right away and sought help there. Don believes that this process of change will require life-long work. He feels that he has to keep learning constantly and keep applying what he has learned, as well as keep talking with those people whom he can trust in the group.

One of the significant steps in Don's change process was when he made a trip to meet with his parents. He wanted to go back to the roots of his anger, where all his problems had begun. He was not thinking about confronting them about what they had done to him but simply wanted to reconnect with them and hopefully hear what had happened to his parents at that difficult time. Meeting with his parents and hearing what their experiences became an important aspect of the healing process for Don. He made amends with his own experiences at that time and with his parents. He was able to see things from their perspectives and was able to feel their pain and struggles as well. Don was also able to share his thoughts and feelings about his
childhood with his parents as well as how he had managed to create his new life. His parents appreciated his openness and honesty. At last, Don was able to make sense of his parents' distanced relationship, his mother’s criticism and abusiveness toward him, and his father's emotional detachment.

This realization marked the first time Don was able to be empathic towards others. He acknowledged that he had difficulties hearing and understanding other people's emotions and being considerate to others. He admitted that he was egocentric. The interaction with his parents gave him an experience of his first empathic understanding of others. This understanding of others' feelings was extremely helpful for him to improve his relationship with his wife and children. It also helped him to open up and face his emotions as well as to share them with his family and thus build a stronger and closer relationship with them. Don said that he finally began to understand the impact of his violent and abusive behaviour on others.

Don still struggles with his anger, which is not easy to resolve. More work on his part is required to solve his anger problem completely, and he will also need to work diligently on his relationship with his wife and children. For Don, one of the key elements for a successful resolution of his difficulties consists in continuing to talk with his wife. He loves his wife and children more than anything else and is committed to finish this work and, thus, ultimately, to create more happiness for his family.

2. Dennis’s story. Over the course of their marriage of 15 years, Dennis was trying to be as supportive as he could to his wife who had been suffering from depression. It was difficult for both Dennis and his wife to deal with depression.
He just wanted to make his wife and children happy. However, in the end, his self-sacrifice made him only weary and exhausted. Dennis admits that he was verbally and emotionally abusive to his wife and that has hurt his wife deeply for many years. After all, his wife left him, taking the children with her, and he lost his job, his belongings, and much more. He was also hurt by his wife as she was having an affair. This action devastated and hurt him deeply. Dennis regretted having neglected himself and not having been open to his wife.

After a series of events that included receiving a peace bond and starting a divorce process, Dennis joined a men's treatment group for violent and abusive behaviour. It was challenging to attend such a group, and he was quite reluctant at the beginning. He did not feel he belonged to the program, as he believed that he had never been physically violent toward his wife. He felt it was not entirely fair for just him to attend such a group, as he felt that his wife instigated their fight with a physical assault, and all he did was simply to stop her. In addition, this legal problem affected his work, his relationship with his children, his financial situation, and other areas of his personal life. In the group, however, Dennis learned much about violence and abuse and found the group extremely helpful and eye opening. He realized that he had been emotionally and verbally abusive toward his wife for many years in their marriage.

Despite his original reservations, Dennis continued attending the group. He continued having an open mind and attending the group simply because he wanted to become a better person, to stop being abusive to his intimate partner, to stop being reactive rather than proactive, and to acquire effective skills to cope with his conflict,
live his own life in full, and, more importantly, become a better father to his dearly loved children.

When Dennis looks back at his life, he realizes that violence and abuse began when he was a young child. He is a survivor of sexual abuse. His neighbour sexually assaulted him when he was growing up as a child. This experience was the first time when violence and abuse violated Dennis's life. This event was also the beginning of his journey to fight against violence and abuse.

The experience of being sexually abused was extremely shocking, confusing, and scary for Dennis. It was confusing for him, as he did not have a clear memory about what happened. Without that awareness, the detrimental impact has been manifested into his life. As a child, the experience of sexual abuse hurt him deeply both emotionally and physically. Dennis feels that this experience damaged his brain function. He struggled with anxiety, restlessness, drug and alcohol addiction, depression, and suicidal ideation while growing up. With a blurred memory of the abuse and without knowing the impact it would have on his life, young Dennis could do nothing but simply live with such pain. Later when he learned about sexual abuse and its impact, it was a difficult reality for Dennis to accept. Even after his acceptance of the fact, he felt he was stuck as a victim of sexual abuse. He could not see himself in any other role than that of a "victim". With this identity of victim, Dennis blamed any hurt that he experienced on others. He said, "I let myself be a victim of the circumstances rather than saying no." However, he realized that blaming other people did not make him happy or fulfilled. He realized that being stuck was his own choice. Dennis made the conscious choice to stop identifying
with the role of the victim and move on. It was a challenging process and required him to work on himself extensively.

Dennis tried to grow out of "being a victim" and attempted to create some change every day by asking himself, "What am I going to do today?" and "Knowing all that, accepting all that information, what am I going to do to change today?"

Dennis worked diligently on the process of change, but over the course of his marriage, he felt that he gradually lost his focus and motivation, and he neglected to take care of himself as a result. Dennis feels that this self-neglect led him to be more angry, aggressive, and abusive toward his partner.

Witnessing his parents' verbal abuse of each other and experiencing his father's physical discipline while growing up also violated young Dennis's life. His parents often fought in front of him. He remembered that he heard his parents yelling and fighting with each other. He was scared, frustrated, and felt powerless. He did not like hearing and seeing such fights at all.

Dennis' father often physically disciplined him, and Dennis believes that this experience affected how he relates to his partner and children. He feels that he has never had a respectful role model for building intimate relationships. He was conscious about not wanting to become like his father, but one day, he was shocked to realize that he behaved exactly like his father when relating to his children.

Dennis finds that the process of change involves many facets of his life to various degrees. He said that the process of change is such a humbling and important growing experience for him. It requires patience, courage, and perseverance to continue on his journey.
One of the important aspects of the process of change for Dennis is to realize and learn to take responsibility for his own life. Taking responsibility is not simply owning his behaviours and accepting what he did, but it is also taking responsibility for himself and his life. It means that he needs to trust and honour his internal experiences as his own, take care of his well-being, and resolve his unfinished business. Taking responsibility is to become the author of his own life, be authentic to himself, and be congruent where his feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are consistent to each other. Then he can communicate such internal experiences to others honestly and openly in a respectful manner. Dennis realized that he needed to take care of himself to be mentally healthy to love and care for his partner and to build an intimate relationship. He realized that neglecting himself would only lead to frustration, aggression, and abusive behaviour. He said, "If I feel something, I'm not going to hide it or ignore it. I'm going to get it out" before everything gets out of hand because of too much frustration and anger. He believes that an intimate and respectful relationship can only be built if he is honest and open with his own emotions and if he communicates his emotions and thoughts to his partner in a respectful manner with effective communication skills.

Another important aspect of change for Dennis is to build a new connection with his wife and his children. He is in the process of going through his divorce, and he now needs to adjust to the new dynamics of the relationship with his partner and children. It is particularly difficult for Dennis to accept that his children are having another man as a father. It is incredibly painful for him to go through this experience.
Dennis also found learning was an important element for his change process. He found the only way to truly acquire learning was to apply and put what he had learned in the group into action in his real life. Through this action taking, he could practice what he had learned in reality and thus integrate his newly acquired insights into his day-to-day living. The process of receiving feedback from others and reflecting thoroughly on his choices of behaviour and their outcomes are also important steps in the learning process.

Dennis is getting involved with someone right now. He is feeling that his automatic negative thoughts, anxiety, and fear of abandonment have surfaced again, and he has been struggling to deal with them. He feels that these are by-products of his past abuse. Thus, he feels that he needs to continue working on resolving his past hurt. Dennis noticed that, when he reacted to his internal voices, he became demanding and forceful. He caught himself repeating the same pattern of abuse and control toward his new partner, and he is trying to remember what he learned in the group and apply such skills to deflect. He is trying to behave differently to build a healthier intimate relationship this time.

Dennis still struggles with negative emotions, fear of abandonment, low self-esteem, lack of confidence about himself, and anxiety. Right now, he feels as if he had been climbing up a mountain, but then half way through he was washed off by a mud slide, and now he is starting all over again. This experience is Dennis's continuous journey to become a better and more authentic person, a person that his children will be proud of. Dennis is facing a trial in his life, but he perseveres and is moving forward gradually, but surely.
3. James's story. The seed of James's violence and abusive behaviours was planted when he was two and a half years old, when he and his mother were on an airplane that his grandfather was operating, and the plane crashed. They all survived this horrific accident, but James and his mother suffered severe burns. As a very young child, without having any concept of "airplane crash" and suffering from burns, young James could not comprehend what was happening to him, and he could only remember excruciating pain piercing through his entire body all the time. He could not understand the reason why he was suffering from constant and severe pain, and his face was burnt and deformed. Quite unfortunately, his classmates picked on him just because he looked different instead of being an encouragement and support for him. This airplane crash affected his entire family, even the family members who had not been on the plane, in significant – though different – ways. The airplane crash burnt James's young mother's face as well, and it hurt her self-esteem. His father was traumatized to observe the aftermath and relapsed into his addiction problems. The family was broken into pieces. James said, "When they separated, I was about seven. So, from the earliest times that I can remember, when I reflect back, I was already kind of disconnected within myself, emotionally, mentally." James was struggling, "I became very angry, frustrated with how my life kind of quickly…unraveled." This feeling of disconnection and frustration was the beginning of the violence and abuse that intruded James's life.

Violence and abuse inflicted great pain on James and his family, as violent abuse had been passed on through the generations for a long time in his family. James said, "I couldn't get away from it. I lived in it thick. It was just one effect..."
after the other. If I wasn't inflicting, somebody else had in my surrounding life. And this cycle of abuse really, really struck hard in my family."

As a child, James had also been physically and emotionally abused by his parents. It was impossible for him at that time to comprehend the reasons why his own parents, who were supposed to love him dearly and make him feel safe, were hurting him. James was confused and could not understand why he was in emotional pain all the time.

Unfortunately, his parents were not the only ones who hurt him, but his classmates started to bully him. His classmates hurt him because he looked different. James then soon became a bully himself to protect himself from bullying. James said, "For myself I developed many, I'm going to refer to them as character defects at a really young age. ...I was in survival mode and ... I turned into a bully at school. I turned into a bully in the neighbourhood. Always had the walls up around me. And that went on for a lot of years."

A sense of fear, shame, and guilt filled him. James experienced intense negative emotions but could not comprehend them. This sense of confusion and emotional pain overwhelmed him. He was powerless and could not do anything about his feelings. James felt hopeless and gradually became disconnected from himself and others. This separation was the only way for him to survive. James said:

I was just constantly suffering emotionally and mentally suffering. Couldn't control it, felt the need to control it, but couldn't. ... being out of control like that, mentally and emotionally, I needed to feel in control. So if I could control the people around me, I would feel a little better and then, they didn't do or say things the way I wanted them to, then the explosions would occur, and that sort of thing. And that's who I was.
Violence and addiction were James's defenders and protectors. Drugs and alcohol numbed his emotional pain for a while to give him an illusion of peace and joy of life. Anger, violence, and maliciousness protected him well: it stopped others from coming too close to him and from hurting him. James felt everyone was causing harm and always against him. He also confused his loved ones – who were reacting to his aggression, bitterness, violence, and abuse – with those people who had abused him in the past "because I was hurt by many different people when growing up and so whenever I feel pain, I automatically thought someone else is causing this again." In his mind, there was no distinction between his former tormentors and his partners. Just like his father, James hurt everyone who caused pain to him. He was afraid of being hurt again. He therefore put the highest and thickest wall around him to be safe. He could not take pain anymore. This fear fuelled his anger, hatred, violence, and abusive behaviours. James blamed everyone around him who might have caused any pain, discomfort, and negative emotional arousal. James was overwhelmed with his intense negative emotions and felt they were out of his control. Thus, he attempted to control others around him by using anger and violence to gain a sense of control over them – and thus also over his emotions. Aggression and violence helped him gain control in his life. James was in survival mode. He could not count on others, and he was the only one whom he could trust.

Contrary to his emotional reactions, James wished for intimate relationships to feel warmth and to alleviate his sense of an internal void. He wanted to be respected, appreciated, and loved by others, just like everyone else. These goals
were something that he yearned for but that he had so far never achieved. However, when someone became closer to him, he became confused because he did not know how to receive such positive emotions. James was feeling insecure and obsessed. He had never experienced such warm feelings, and so they were scary for him. As soon as he became more intimate with his partners, James pushed them away by hurting, cheating, and leaving them.

James was feeling stuck because in hurting others, he hurt himself tremendously, and he did not like who he was. However, he did not know how to stop his behaviour. Deep inside, he knew that he was not evil but pure and born to do good deeds. Every time he behaved violently and abusively, he felt guilty, remorseful, and sad. James was feeling helpless and stuck. Every day, he was filled with pain. Drugs and alcohol were friends to him when he felt such pain but not for long. Without realizing it, James, who had been a victim of abuse, slowly transformed into a perpetrator himself and began to hurt his loved ones, just as others who were supposed to love him had hurt him deeply. James got himself into many legal problems. His life fell into pieces, and he was desperate to survive and change.

Being true and honest to himself, facing himself, and acknowledging he was a liar, a thief, and violent and abusive were extremely difficult steps for him to take. Facing and sharing his past experiences and thoughts was painful, and thus he kept these experiences and thoughts inside of himself. "I just know that not being able to be honest with myself and others with regards to my behaviours. My reactions, they really kept me down, it really kept me sick." The pain was enormous, and James did not believe anyone in this world would be able to understand him well enough to
grasp what he was going through.

One day, James broke down. He did not have any more energy and options to move forward. He broke into tears and fell onto his knees to ask for his higher power to help him. This experience was the turning point for his recovery process. For the first time in many years, James made a choice to confront and face his emotions and what was happening inside of him. Abuse had damaged him not only emotionally but also in his body and soul. The damage was deep, and he needed powers greater than himself to be healed. Healing also required James to forgive himself. James said,

The healing must come from a belief, a belief that is..., on a spiritual guideline. Because of the abuse, past abusive events, it left me spiritually damaged. It left me emotionally damaged. Immensely, spiritually, physically, emotionally damaged. So, for me to be able to... move forward. I needed to be able to identify with something or some power greater than myself.

When James started facing himself, he was shocked to realize that he was trapped completely within the cycle of violence and abuse. He called this darker side of himself his "demon". His "demon" is the sum of his character defects as a result of the cycle of violence and abuse.

James felt connecting with others was important for his recovery process. It would allow him to give back what he had received from his supporters to all those people who were in a similar struggle by sharing his experiences with them. Sharing such experiences in the group would inspire others, and it would also help him identify his abusive character traits and thus help himself continue to recover. James found these interactions and connections with others to be rewarding and meaningful.
One of the important aspects of recovery that James learned was to take responsibility. First and foremost, taking responsibility was not simply acknowledging his own abusive behaviours, but it was also being honest with himself and his life. He needed to be accountable to himself – which meant he had to face and accept his internal experiences of pain, fear, anger, hurt, guilt, and shame.

James's experience of being hurt by someone as a child was not his fault, but he is still responsible for his own emotions. In other words, James realized that he has a choice in his life, regardless of his upbringing. He needs to take responsibility to take care of his well-being. No one except himself can make him feel happy and fulfilled. This awareness allowed James to acknowledge his own abusive behaviours, move toward growth, and do the right things to make himself and his loved ones happy. James said,

As a result of living like that, I really wasn't being accountable or responsible for my own life. I was too busy blaming other people. And I was too busy being in survival mode watching out for the next person to hurt me. So, today I don't have to worry about that. ... Today I don't blame my mother. Today I don't blame my father. ... So that's the difference I find then and now- is that that accountability is basically recovering in a nutshell.

James continued, "Taking responsibility for me is being accountable. For myself and being responsible means, being honest with myself. Taking responsibility means to me growth. Taking responsibility for me also means...doing right."

Making amends was one of the important actions in James’s taking responsibility for himself and his past abusive behaviours. Making amends is not simply seeking forgiveness from his partners. It involves a thorough understanding of his own behaviours and how they have affected and hurt his partners. It also
involves having an empathic understanding of his partners' pain and struggles as a result of his behaviours as well as the readiness to connect with those people to express his remorse and regret. However, it is also important that James must not have any expectations for his partners to accept his apologies; all he has to do is to let them know what he did was wrong. In this part of his healing process, James is to take responsibility for himself to live his life with his values and to become more congruent. James has already made amends with some of his partners and was able to reestablish positive relationships. However, some of his partners decided not to have any connection with him anymore, and he respects their choice. For James, making amends also means to reestablish a connection with those people who hurt him in the past and to forgive them. It means to provide empathic understanding, be compassionate, and humanize those people. He talked about his father, but he was also able to acknowledge his father's good nature and to empathize with his struggles.

James takes his recovery process seriously each day and continues to reflect on his progress and to try to apply what he learned in his daily life. He appreciates and treasures each successful moment, and these successful experiences have been rewarding for him. It makes him realize how far he has come in his recovery process and this empowers him.

The recovery process is painful most of the time. However, it also is rewarding. It makes it necessary to take each day seriously, one at a time, and to keep evaluating – and perhaps reevaluating – the choices available each day. Each day, James also needs to take a moment to reflect and refocus. He needs to keep his guard always up and needs to take care of himself. It is essential for him to
acknowledge his mistakes and to have the courage to amend them each and every day. For James, having a good day is a spiritual experience because he was so used to violence and conflict, and successfully managing the day makes him to see redemption and healing in himself. James stated:

It's all these different experiences that I encounter, whether it's a daily basis or a weekly basis. I'll refer them to spiritual experiences in the sense of my good days, all these days where I'm having a good day or I'm considerate of others or anything to do with goodness in my day. I find that's a spiritual experience for myself and as I accumulate them, I awaken to something even bigger and better. I'm growing through the experiences, I'm growing. This is how I see things. This is how I believe things are for me. I build up healthy powers. Healthy beliefs. ... I guess healthy activities, or necessities into my daily life, it changes. It changes, it empowers me in a healthy way, right.

Through these experiences and by working through one day at a time, James has already started to accept and appreciate himself for who he is. Accumulating such experiences may very well lead him to a fundamental recovery process in many respects.

4. Paul's story. Paul’s story about violence and abuse began when he was a very young child. He was hurt by his father, Dan. One event with Dan, when he was 9 years old, was particularly significant for him and played a key role in his experience of violence and abuse in his life. Paul shared:

I think it started from when I was a kid and I got a really really bad licking from my dad, a beating actually. Because when he gave lickings he went overboard most of the time. But it was because he had lost a shovel and he blamed me for losing it. At the time I didn't know that he had lost it. I knew it wasn't me. ... And he kept saying that because he believed in God I should tell the truth. I was telling the truth and he still gave me a beating. So there I kind of started hating God and I started really disliking my dad. ... and that's really where it began. That's where I got angry at the church, at God, at my dad and...things just started getting worse from there.

In fact, his father beat him so harshly that even now, many years after that incident,
Paul can still feel the pain in his body. This incident did not break his body, but it broke his soul. Paul said, "Like everything that happened like that, it reinforced it that I wasn't good enough. ... they don't love me. Because they never ever told me that they loved me." He felt completely useless, that everyone hated him very much – but he did not know the reasons why.

Dan was a priest. Whenever Dan physically disciplined Paul, he made his son believe that he was destined to go to Hell and that there was nothing that Paul could do to save his life. As a young child, he felt no hope for his life. Throughout Paul's childhood, Dan repeatedly beat him and told him that he would go to Hell, almost as if he tried to do whatever was in his power to ingrain this idea into Paul's mind. With the infliction of physical pain as additional emphasis, his father’s words, which Paul also perceived as “God’s words,” since Dan, as a priest, was also a messenger of God, had a powerful impact on Paul, who eventually started believing his life had no hope and he should not be in this world. Paul was feeling helpless and useless because whatever he did, it would not change his destiny. He began hating himself. He was feeling angry, lonely, exhausted, and useless. He was confused and could not understand the reasons why his own father and the all-loving God, who was supposed to love him deeply, did not love him.

From the day he was beaten, he decided not to feel his emotions and physical pain anymore but to do whatever he could to learn how to block them completely. Paul said, "It was a severe beating. And from then on, I can remember I wouldn't feel pain anymore. And I felt angry most of the time. ...Like physical pain. I could bruise really bad and stuff and it didn't bother me. Because I blocked it out.
completely." As a result, he grew extremely angry. He became oversensitive to other people's comments and opinions about him, and he started to lash out on people around him.

Soon after, he was introduced to alcohol. Alcohol eased his pain, and he felt okay about himself. He said, "I worked for my grandfather a couple of times and my grandfather drank. So he give me beer and stuff, so then I started feeling, hey. I'd have a beer and it did something to me. I would feel okay again." However, he noticed something was wrong with his behaviour once he took his drinks; as he got more into alcohol, he also became more violent. One day, when Dan found Paul drunk, he gave Paul an ultimatum: either leave home or obey his rules and quit drinking. Paul decided to leave home. He was a 15-year-old child, but he felt that he needed to live by himself.

He worked hard to earn his living, and he enjoyed his work. His job was the only place where he felt safe and confident about himself. However, at night, he picked up some drinks to ease his pain. Later in his life, Paul’s brother got drunk and got killed in a car accident. That was when Paul started drinking heavily. Soon, alcohol stopped doing the trick, and then he started getting into drugs. His life at that time was full of darkness, loneliness, and pain. He had lost his way. He was full of anger.

He got into several relationships and had two children. However, he continued to drink and abuse illicit drugs. He was physically and emotionally violent to his loved ones, hurting them seriously. Knowing his deep-rooted anger, Paul was also feeling scared that he eventually might hurt his loved ones even more.
seriously. One day, Paul had an argument with his ex-partner, became drunk and angry, and went to his partner's house and killed her dog. That was a scary experience that he could not forget. Paul said, "I felt like I had crossed that line right there. …That was probably the scariest thing that ever happened to me. Like I was in a lot of car accidents and stuff like that and it was never as scary as what that was. Because I did step over my own line." He had never thought he could do such a malicious act, and it was a chilling and helpless realization that he could hurt even his loved ones when he became angry. Paul said, "It just made me hate myself more."

He wanted to be loved by and also to love others, but he hated himself so much that it was difficult for him to comprehend that people actually could love him. He needed to push anyone who came close to him away because he believed that he was destined to go to Hell and being with him meant being dragged into Hell with him. He continued to push his partners away by hurting them and staying away from home more often. His partners were frightened, hurt, confused, and devastated. Paul could feel his children’s resentment toward him and hated himself even more. His anger was so deep, and he struggled to stop hurting others and change his way. He stayed away from his children and partners more and more so that he could not hurt them anymore.

Paul felt stuck, because the more he hurt others and acted out in his life, the more guilt and other painful feelings he felt. He did not like who he was at that time and how he hurt his partners and children. These emotions became a sense of worthlessness, hopelessness, and helplessness. He had completely lost the meaning
of his life. He felt alone and empty inside. Paul did not care about his life anymore. He drank more and more to see if alcohol would take his life away. Paul said, "I had no other place to turn. No other place to turn. I didn't know of any other place to turn."

People around him took pity on Paul and helped him get into an alcohol treatment program. He decided to stay away from alcohol. Attending AA was challenging at times, as God was talked about a lot in the group, and in his mind, God related to his father. In addition, when he became sober, he realized that he had lived his entire life with alcohol, and he did not know how to live without it. It was not simply refraining from alcohol; he needed to learn to live his life in a new way. It was difficult. However, Paul persevered, and he built confidence by taking action. He managed to stay sober even when facing crises. Leaving alcohol was one of the major steps in Paul’s coming out from his dark years.

In spite of this major accomplishment, Paul was very disappointed because, to his great surprise, becoming sober even for many years did not resolve his anger. His extreme anger never left him. He said, "I was learning a little bit more with going to AA and going to counselling, I was slowly, slowly learning how to live. But the anger was still always there." Paul was confused and overwhelmed with the depth of the issue.

People around him were happy that he was no longer drinking, but Paul knew he still thought like a drunk. Even after 15 years of sobriety, he still struggled with his father's comments. His father's message was still so strong that, every time he interacted with his father, he felt like he was brought down to the darkness again. It
was difficult not to believe what his father said. Paul avoided his father as much as he could to keep his sanity. He felt stuck and helpless because even those many years of hard work would not save him from going to Hell. Paul was compelled to find the reasons and roots of his anger.

It took Paul a long time to make sense of his anger. The root was a hurt. Paul realized that he was craving for his parents’ acceptance, appreciation, and love. He was hurt that he was not loved by his parents, especially by his father. He was hated, abandoned, and neglected. He remembered one time when he was just about 10 years old, his parents left him and his siblings at a home for a year and half because of their work. Paul felt that they did not care about him.

Dan's harsh ways, constant physical abuse, and horrifying message gave him a sense that he was not loved. This hurt turned into volatile anger in Paul. For many years, he was focused exclusively on how to survive, and for that purpose he needed to shut out his internal voices. His emotions were shut down, and he never wanted to reflect on them. Paul experienced hurt from his parents, and this feeling of being hurt turned into hatred toward himself and into feeling absolutely useless. These emotions were reinforced with negative beliefs planted by his father.

For Paul, change is a process that he has to go through in certain stages or layers, like the layers of an onion. It took Paul a long time, but he was finally able to face his anger. He was tired of living the way he did and did not want to hurt people anymore. Paul's first breakthrough was to face his anger, or more precisely, to realize that he had a problem with anger and to try to discover the roots of his anger. These realizations opened the door for a transformation process in his life.
The root of Paul's anger was his belief that he would go to Hell. Paul struggled with this conviction for many years. However, he remembered that one day, on the way to his counselling session, all of the sudden, he realized that there was no reason to believe that he should be destined to go to Hell. He came to realize that going to Hell was a false belief, just a mean message sent from Dan’s heart, a message that was not even true. It suddenly became clear to Paul that these issues were his father’s issues, not his. When he finally came to this realization, his anger dissipated, and his volatility just disappeared. Paul started seeing his life with hope and appreciation. He felt the need to make amends with those people whom he had hurt.

Making amends was an important step in the healing process for Paul. Making amends with his parents, especially with Dan, was significant but not an easy process for Paul. He initiated conversations with Dan, but unfortunately, unlike Paul’s mother, Dan denied what he had done and continued to blame Paul, saying that he would go to Hell. Paul said, "I would have liked him to see in himself, say that I have a problem. That would have seen that he had a problem with his anger." Paul continued:

And his anger might have been hurt or something too. I don't know. Because he would not talk about it, so I don't know why he was angry or why he couldn't forgive himself. ... And just before he died I asked him that, 'Do you really believe that God forgave you?' And he said, 'Yes.' Then I said, 'Why can't you forgive yourself?' Like I could not understand it because he preached it all his life and now you're dying and you still can't forgive yourself, but you're saying that God forgave you. Like what is it there – what is in your mind that you cannot see that? Because that's what you have tried to teach everybody and yet you are not doing it. And especially after I realized I wasn't going to Hell, I could forgive myself quite easy after that. And I could not see why he couldn't. Because here he's the one that had been trying to teach me that all my life. And he couldn't do it.
It was heartbreaking for Paul to see Dan having difficulties in forgiving himself and not being able to love Paul. However, as Paul now began to believe that he would not go to Hell, Paul was able to stand firm on his boundary and let his father deal with his own issues. Paul did not believe in false messages any more. He was able to stay sober and not be filled with anger. Despite Dan’s attitude, Paul grew more compassionate towards his father and continued to have open conversations with him until his final day. Just a few days before his death, Paul's father finally expressed his love toward Paul. It was a relief but was also sad for Paul because his father struggled so much, waiting until his last day on earth to express his love toward his son.

Paul often wondered about the reasons why his own father did not love him; even today, Paul still cannot figure out the reasons for his father’s unloving behaviour. However, the fact is that Paul was the one who reached out to his father in spite of the past hurt, and he feels good about it. He decided to give this issue back to his father to deal with. Paul is standing firm for himself, for his own value and worth. He now feels free and stronger.

Making amends also allowed Paul to break the cycle of suffering and violence at home. He is now facing his past violent and abusive behaviours. He acknowledges that his ex-partners and children had been hurt deeply by him. He made amends with some of his partners, and he was able to reconnect with them. Some are still deeply hurt. Paul's children grew angry just like Paul did with his own father. Paul and his children were disconnected from each other, and his children were resentful to him. He is now trying to make amends and rebuild a
relationship with them. Unlike his father, Paul would like to be a part of his sons' healing process. With his counsellor's help, Paul was able to learn to sit down to listen to his sons; he was able to reconnect with one of his sons, Tim, again, although he is still working to reconnect with his younger son.

His sons have anger and alcohol problems just like Paul, but unlike Paul, his older son, Tim, took initiative for himself and made efforts to seek help. Paul is proud of him for his courage. He thinks Tim needs Paul to be with him in this journey by listening to him and showing him love. Paul talks with his sons openly about what has happened. Seeing his younger son, Terry, who is struggling and lost his way just like Paul did before, hurt Paul deeply. Paul keeps connecting and waiting for the opportunity to come. He feels that having open communication can lead them to more healing.

Paul also receives empowerment from his children. Tim continues to love and trust Paul, even through these dark times of his life. It was a significant experience for Paul to have someone who cares, trusts, and loves him unconditionally because it means that at least one person – his son, in this case - sees some good in him. Paul has never experienced such love, and he wants to respond by showing some improvement of himself in return. For Paul, making amends is not simply apologizing to people, but avoiding the same mistakes and not hurting his family ever again. Moreover, it is to be actively a part of the healing process. His children give meaning to his life, a reason for persevering through this process of change.

In this process, learning was an important element for Paul. He knew nothing about emotions, and he needed to learn about them. It was not simply a
cognitive activity but an experiential process. Paul started experiencing a variety of emotions and identifying them. He found it essential to build close relationships with others.

Paul's family members trust him more now. They trust him because he has become more responsible for his life and more comfortable being open to sharing his own experience with others. Paul can now accept and appreciate love from others and, thus, he can provide love to them. He likes how he feels toward himself and others today. He feels it is quite relieving and empowering that he is no longer feeling angry anymore. Paul does not want to lose what he has gained. He has learned not to judge and be too critical on himself, that his life is simply his own, and that he needs to be responsible for living it fully and meaningfully. Paul is grateful and appreciates many things in his life now, but he is taking seriously the consequences of how he harmed his loved ones in the past.

5. Randy's story. Randy has been struggling with his anger and aggression for a long time. He has searched his soul and reflected for many years. When being asked about the beginning of his violence and abuse, Randy talks about his relationship with his father. No matter how hard he tried, his father did not provide care and love when he was growing up. He grew up in the education system in Hong Kong, and it was difficult for him to follow the cultural expectations there. He was very restricted in his behaviour and experienced high academic pressure. Randy was suffering from ADHD, and he struggled to keep up with his school work. He cried out for help, but neither the school nor his parents helped him. His father simply put more pressure and demands on him by asking him to study harder without
providing any support. Randy failed his Grade 3. It was a difficult time for him.

When his mother saw him struggling through his school, she decided to take her
children back to Canada. His father decided to stay in Hong Kong for his career.

Randy struggled with high expectations and demands – in particular since he
was the only son of the family. He was expected to do well academically and to be
a strong and talented leader of the family and its line. Randy's father was not around
to nurture him but simply demanded more with frustration and anger. Randy's father
was angry, controlling, and demanding. Randy felt it was impossible to please him.

He felt that his father did not push Randy for the sake of his future well-being, but
simply to take his anger and frustration out on Randy. It was difficult for Randy to
relate to his father and became resentful of him. One Christmas day, when Randy
was 16, they had a serious argument, and he could not take it anymore and decided to
leave home. Since then, Randy has been living independently.

He felt his life changed drastically with a serious auto accident that happened
several years ago. He commented, "That's when my life changed and that's the point
where everything flipped around. ...When this happened, then everything just fell
apart. My whole life just fell apart." This automobile accident resulted in the other
driver becoming a quadriplegic; Randy suffered from a serious concussion and
short-term memory loss as well as chronic back pain. He also lost his car, which he
loved more than anything. He had had this vehicle and worked on it with his hands
for so many months. It was an embodiment of his meaning of life and his friend.

It was sad for Randy to see his vehicle go. Suffering from short-term memory loss
and chronic back pain were frustrating as well. He was stuck in bed for 3 months
and could not do anything. He struggled with feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and shame.

Randy was filled with senses of worthlessness, guilt, powerlessness, and empty feelings. After the accident, he struggled to put his life back together. His intimate relationship with his partner became especially difficult. Randy became frustrated and even angrier with people who did not listen to or follow his suggestions. He felt compelled to demand others to follow his suggestions and opinions. He simply tried hard to achieve the best results and to avoid any negative consequences that might affect someone else, just as he had been affected significantly by the other driver's mistake. Randy stated,

It feels like they're not being very responsible as a human being, as a person in this society. . . . In some way, I do feel like, it seems like I'm trying to control them. But I'm not trying to control them to feel the power. I'm trying to...it's my own problem and I feel like I need them to aim for their best."

He continued, "The other driver made a bad decision, I also made a bad decision. …Bad decisions in general still frustrates me. I don't like seeing other people making bad decisions anymore because of that." Randy expected others to live best with their abilities, and he could not respect other people’s choices. He felt critical towards people who did not listen to him.

Randy admitted that he was emotionally abusive to his partners. He had difficulties loving, trusting, and counting on others. He wanted to stay away and push people away because he felt that he did not deserve to be loved. He also could not handle his emotions, and he hated everyone around him. However, Randy was subconsciously aware that he was moving in the wrong direction and that his partner, Alice, was getting hurt more and more. One day, he had an argument with Alice
about a dining table; he became angry and threw it to the other side of the room. It was a shocking moment for Randy. He had thought he would never do such a thing. It made him realize that he had an issue. It was difficult and painful to face his own issue of violence and abuse.

Randy saw Alice suffering in their relationship and saw her being hurt many times by him. He recalled that he used aggression and coercion to get what he wanted, and he did not care about other people's feelings. He wanted to feel powerful, to be on top of others. He looked for confrontation and conflict because he simply wanted to get angry. Once conflict happened, Randy let out his anger and aggression, and he felt relieved afterwards. However, when he got what he wanted, it did not satisfy him any longer. This dissatisfaction made Randy feel even angrier and emptier inside. His partner tried her best to work with him to dissipate his aggression. She provided him with everything she could to keep him in the relationship, but he continued to be angry. Randy soon realized that he was not angry at her but at himself. He realized that he was angry at himself, his life, other people, and the world around him—in short, angry at anything but her. This realization was painful and made him even angrier, but it showed Randy that he had a choice either to stay angry or to do something about it.

Randy had neither faith in himself nor the desire to make any changes at that time, but he was sure that he wanted to stop hurting Alice. He was aware that he was hurting her was not happy about how he treated her. Alice was "living in hell," and he could see her suffering and struggling. He realized that what must have been for her to be in such an abusive relationship, and he decided to leave her physically so
that he would stop hurting her. This departure was the first turning point for change for Randy.

Randy wanted to be the man he was meant to be, the man he used to be before his accident, a man he could appreciate and be proud of, a man who cared for and loved others freely. He wanted to live a better life. It was a significant realization for him to understand that he was responsible for his life and emotional state and that changing his behaviours needed to start with him. Randy believed that no one else could make any changes but him. He felt that even if he might have a reason to be angry, at the end of the day that anger would always be his own. This life was his, and he had the choice of either feeling sorry about himself or starting to take actions to make his life better and worthwhile.

Randy needed to first face his internal experiences, including guilt, shame, and other painful emotions, and to reflect on the reasons why he was so resentful toward others and why he disregarded others' feelings. These reflections and a consequent deeper understanding helped Randy forgive himself and others. He said,

It starts with forgiving yourself. It starts with loving yourself. ... I thought if I forgive other people, if I forgive the other driver, then maybe I can forgive myself. And I'd try, try, try. But I can't. I can't ... But when I turn around and start with myself, then it works.

Randy struggled with a sense of guilt. He felt that the very core of my existence was wrong because I existed at that place, at that time, the other driver is now a quadriplegic, ... and it's hard to feel guilty about yourself. It hurts. It hurts to have all that guilt. It hurts to be so angry and hateful towards yourself.

For Randy, forgiveness started with forgiving himself. If he could not love and forgive himself, it was impossible to forgive others. This awareness led him to build
a nurturing connection with himself and others.

One of the things that helped Randy heal and move forward was to understand that he was not a mistake. Randy felt for a long time that he was a mistake. He found it very difficult to love himself when he was feeling guilty and ashamed about himself. This insight created a significant new awareness for him. Randy reflected on the moment:

'It was like I was blind in some dark room and someone flipped the light switch and it was like, 'Holy smokes!'... That was the biggest change. And that just opened up a whole new set of doorways for me to choose how I want my life to be.'

He realized that people could make mistakes, but he, himself, was not a mistake.

Randy realized that he was worthy, that he was a unique and precious existence. He felt his life had value in this world.

Facing one's own self and internal experiences is challenging and difficult. Randy required a lot of courage and humility to accept that he had some issues to deal with and to seek help. It would have been much easier for him to stay angry and keep blaming others. However, Randy knew that doing so could only lead him to discontentment, and that is not who he is. He did not want to live with aggression and to keep hurting himself and others. He wanted to change purely for himself.

In his journey of change, Randy believes that understanding his emotions was extremely helpful to reflect and understand the reasons why he was feeling angry, how his aggression was affecting his life and others, and what choices and ways he could pursue to resolve his anger and frustration. Randy believes that understanding his own and other people's feelings and connecting with others at emotional levels could build close relationships, although this connection can make him feel
vulnerable. This awareness also helped him to become more compassionate, empathic, and able to connect more with Alice. He believes that this type of connection requires good communication skills that enable both him and his partner to share their emotions openly.

Randy appreciates that Alice continued to love and support him after the accident. He feels that experiencing her unconditional love helped him move forward. Randy's journey of change still continues. He struggles to apply some of the things he has learned. His change process also involves learning skills of effective conflict resolution and communication, learning how to manifest what he has learned in his behaviours daily, enhancing self-growth, taking care of himself to stay healthy emotionally and physically, and bringing something good back to others. Randy needs to keep using what he has learned in the anger management group and keep his guard up all the time. It is easy to fall back into old patterns of behaviour. He feels that he needs to keep motivated and move forward. Randy wants to change himself to be able to build a better relationship with his partner. He wants to live his life well and fulfil his life’s meaning and potential in full. His journey of change teaches him humility, which is empowering and a healing for him.

6. Ryan's story. Ryan's stories about violence and abuse began from the time he lost his grandfather. His grandfather was a positive role model and teacher for him. He taught Ryan many valuable things about life, such as how to live life meaningfully with honour, values of working and studying hard, spirituality, hunting, playfulness, proper manners, and many more useful things. His grandfather nurtured him and taught him ways of life, and these teachings resonated in him as a
life principle. From time to time, even with numerous violent offences and drug and alcohol problems, deep down in his heart, Ryan has always sensed his pure intentions and kind heart. His grandfather provided him with a lot of love and was a mentor and a father figure for Ryan. He felt he lost his way when his grandfather passed away. He then started getting involved with the wrong crowd of people. He was only 6 years old at that time.

When he was growing up, his home was not a safe place. His uncle was an alcoholic and violent toward his mother, aunt, and grandmother. He remembered that his uncle stole money, guns, and anything for alcohol. He saw his uncle screaming and yelling, beating and kicking his mother, aunt, and grandmother many times. Ryan's body still remembers a sense of terror as well as the sounds connected to it. His sister was only 2 years old at that time, and at 5 years old, Ryan was desperately trying to protect her. He and his sister were scared, powerless, and helpless. He could only hide under the bed with his sister to avoid his uncle’s violence. The only thing that he could do was to pray for God to intervene and keep himself and his family safe.

Ryan had also been sexually abused by his cousin and physically assaulted by his grandmother. His sexual abuse experience was physically and emotionally painful and confusing. He felt helpless and powerless. Physical assault by his grandmother was also a frightening experience. He was pulled down all of the sudden to the floor violently and forcefully by his grandmother. Later, his grandmother apologized and explained what had happened, but Ryan was angry. He was hurt, scared, and resentful. These experiences planted a seed of anger and
hatred toward women into him. He was sensing some discomfort, shame, hatred, and negative energy inside himself, but he thought he could push it away by being tough and macho. He lived with his anger for many years and took it out on all the women he was with. They had nothing to do with his past, but he wanted to make them pay for his hurt.

School was not a safe place for him either. He started hating school at around 13 years of age. He was bullied at school, a lonely and scary experience for him. One time, he reported the incident to the principal, and school officials intervened. However, he saw his classmate cunningly lying to and manipulating adults and then continuing to be violent and abusive to him. Ryan was scared, sad, lonely, and helpless. His classmate's violence and abuse never stopped, an experience that hurt Ryan's soul deeply. He became bitter and learned the benefit of lying and how to lie well.

Ryan started stealing at an early age. He got involved with the wrong crowd of friends. He became a callous and reckless child, stubborn, greedy, angry, dishonest, and selfish. At 11, he started smoking and drinking. He got into a life of violence, legal problems, as well as drugs and drinking problems. He lost his way and was trying to survive. Soon, he dropped out of school and got even more into drugs and alcohol.

During his adolescence, he grew taller and stronger. He played more sports and lifted weights. He figured out that the only way to protect himself at home and at school was to be physically strong enough to overpower those people who tried to scare him. He practiced martial arts and watched many martial arts movies to learn
skills for effective fighting. Soon the opportunity arose. One day, he picked a fight and knocked his opponent down flat. Ryan was amazed at his skills and power. The adrenaline rush felt good. Once he had started to become physically aggressive, he wanted to do it more often. It was like "a big head-rush" for him. Once he hit, he got right back in and ready again. He felt "nothing behind me or anything is in my way of fighting. That's where I see it as just focused on just one person. And that one person is going to get damaged. Not me." Physical violence also gave him a sense of power and pay back for the hurt that he had experienced in the past. On some occasions, when he observed another man being abusive to his partner, it made him angry because it reminded him of the pain he had felt when he was seeing his uncle being violent to his mother, aunt, and grandmother. He felt compelled to jump in to beat this man up. He started getting into more and more fights. He instigated fights and challenged others. He built confidence through these physical fights. Without noticing it, he turned into a bully himself. He said, "I kept on hurting people that didn't deserve that. I carried it on. I carried it on and that turned me into a violent person."

Ryan continued to struggle with drug and alcohol abuse and dependence. His abuse and dependency became worse. He overdosed but continued with the same lifestyle. He often experienced blackouts and became more violent when he got drunk. He has multiple assault charges and convictions, as well as incarcerations.

Ryan was violent and abusive toward his loved ones. He hurt his partners, his children, his mother, his brothers, and his community. He became exactly like
one of the people whom he had feared and hated when he was growing up. He said,

I started beating up my girlfriends and that, too. . . . being really mean in attitude, behaviour, and physically, mentally, too. I called a lot of my girlfriends down. I called them every single thing of negativity. I hurt them. I put them in a trance of fear towards a man. And, that fear is always there, but it kept on going. ... It was bad what I had done. It was wrong what I done. ... And, I continued on that violence to a woman. And, once that violence to a woman carried on, I went to jail again. I went to jail. Jumped into jail, and I was in and out of the jail, drinking, drinking, and working at the same time.

He was filled with anger and negative energy inside of him. He apologized to his partners and people around him, but he was not sincere. He was not thinking about what he apologized for and did not really care.

There were several turning points for him. One day, he was drunk again with his wife and his friends and his brother-in-law. He became jealous and started having a serious argument with his wife. Soon, he became violent, and his brother-in-law and all of his friends gathered to fight against him. He attempted to assault his brother-in-law with a heavy rock, but his wife came between to protect her younger brother. He ended up shattering his wife’s jaw. He was held accountable for his assault and faced serious legal consequences for his action. This experience frightened him. It made him realize his behaviours carried consequences, and many people around him, such as his probation officers, people at work, and the police, were holding him accountable for his behaviours. He realized that he needed to stop being violent and abusive. Otherwise he would end up having to face even more serious legal consequences. He did not want to get involved in lawsuits anymore.

Another turning point for him was the experience of a spiritual awakening. He got himself into another bar fight just as he had done on many other days. Only
this time, it went wrong for him, and he was knocked out and beaten seriously and went into a coma. He survived but was left with a brain injury. While in the coma, he had a near death experience: He saw his deceased relatives looking at him and saying that it was not his time yet, that he should go back. This experience was the turning point for his desistance from violence and abuse. He felt that he had a gift and a purpose in this life and needed to fulfill it.

Another turning point for him was to experience his family's love despite the serious harm he had done to them. When he was hospitalized with this serious injury, his relatives contacted his wife, and she cared for his well-being, in spite of so many years of violence, abuse, and hurt toward her. His wife was sincerely concerned and said, "I know you're at your mom's right now. Everything okay?" He was exhausted. He heard sincere concern from his wife and children, and that broke his heart. It made him fall down on his knees and humbly accepting their help and care. He said,

Then it kind of hit me, and I started crying, and she goes, ‘I'll be down there right now with your boys.’ So, they come and they go, ‘Are you okay, Dad? Are you okay?’ And they picked me up and I said I just want to go home with you guys. ‘Okay, come on.’ They took me to the apartment and they looked after me right there.

They looked after him for 3 years. He was overwhelmed by his family's sincere care, despite what he had done to them, and he appreciated them very much. He humbly accepted this experience of love and care into his heart. From this time on – and for the first time – he sincerely wanted to make things right.

Ryan was physically, mentally, and spiritually broken and stuck. He needed to change his course. For his change process, he needed first to face what he had
done in the past and the consequences of those actions. It required courage to face all this. It was difficult, but he needed to break his walls and macho persona to face fear and painful emotions to move forward.

Ryan had some critical awareness and was open to new learning experiences, which facilitated his change process. Various violence treatment programs helped him deepen his understanding about violence and abuse and how his behaviours impacted others. It also gave him a better idea of what women and children experienced when they were abused by a loved one. These programs also taught him skills and tools, such as emotional regulations, effective communication skills, conflict resolution skills, and relapse prevention skills, that helped him stay away from hurting his loved ones. In some of the programs, all the Natives would go together to sweats and speak about their problems and what had caused them to bring there. This experience helped him connect with his cultural and spiritual community.

One particular exercise, which was shocking to him, was to watch a video about intimate relationship violence, and it disturbed him to see a resemblance to his past. When he saw a video of a man who was physically violent toward his girlfriend on the street, it brought back memory flashes of his own behaviour, and he saw himself on the screen. That was exactly what he had been doing to his loved ones. It was a shocking awareness and painful reality for him to face. He was embarrassed and ashamed. He became determined to take all these learning experiences and apply them to his own past and look for ways to fix the damage he had done.
From time to time, even when he was violent and abusive, he had sensed his inner nature, where he was a pure, innocent, caring, and loving child. It made him wonder what had happened to him. He realized that his inner child was stuck helplessly, and he needed to nurture himself to grow this inner child to its full capacity. It was an important realization for him to understand where his anger came from and to let his aggression go in order to resolve his past conflicts.

Ryan realized that he had been carrying around past issues just like carrying around a heavy suitcase all the time. Throughout the years, it had become heavy on his shoulders. He needed to take a look inside to clean and heal. He needed to learn to forgive himself. He needed to do whatever it would take to reduce the weight he had been carrying.

Ryan used to feel shame and embarrassment as well as many other painful emotions. He believed that he was a failure. He needed to protect himself from everyone, and so over the years, he had built a big, thick wall around himself so that no one could touch him. He had also used the macho persona to protect himself. Fear was another root of his anger. He responded with lies, blame, and denial, and he used aggression as a backup, when he sensed fear. However, he had now acquired tools and skills that would help him communicate what he needed to share with other people effectively. When he tried those skills, he was surprised to find them unexpectedly empowering – much more so than his former violence had been. This made him feel good about himself. He now feels confident that he can use communication skills to convey his opinions and messages to anybody in a proper way. He feels comfortable to allow himself to make mistakes and confident that he
can pick himself back up and go back to redo what he had done wrong. Now, his guard is not up any more, and he can communicate and relate to people without feeling the need to protect himself. He has realized that when he respects others, people respect him back. That is how people can earn their honor.

Ryan is now also trying to make amends to the people whom he had hurt. This process of amendment requires work and time. He did much damage in the past and said "sorry" so many times but then hurt the same people he had just apologized to over and over again until it became very difficult for them to believe him. Rebuilding trust is a challenging task. However, making amends has also been a healing process for him. He has been reflecting on what he has done and started to understand the degree of hurt that he had inflicted on those people. He expressed his apology sincerely to his family and to all the other people who were involved. During his time of violence, he had also turned away from his cultural and spiritual community, and he is now trying to make amends with them, too.

Making amends for Ryan is not simply expressing how sorry he is, but it is a process of re-earning honor and respect. Learning to forgive himself is a crucial step in this process of making amends with the people whom he had hurt. The whole process involves long-term open, honest, and respectful communication with his wife to prove he will not hurt her anymore and heal her wounds. He needs to keep nurturing his relationship with his wife. It is his character and actions that count, and the new trust between him and his wife has to come from his changed behaviour; it cannot be established overnight. He is now reaching out to the people who are now experiencing a similar struggle. He wants to pay back to the
community what he has received from others. He is determined to push forward and succeed.

Ryan is focused on nurturing his children and breaking the cycle of violence. This is his meaning of life right now. He was violent and abusive to his children. He used to yell at his children, but he does not like yelling at people anymore and learned that yelling is not necessary. All he needs is an open and honest conversation with them. He is now working hard to break the intergenerational cycle of violence. He would like his children to learn from his mistakes, and he is open to share his experiences with them. He respects his children for the choices that they make and for their unique ways of growth. He would like to provide an environment for them to speak openly about anything to him.

Experiencing the positive consequences of his change has been helpful for him. Seeing how people around him respond to his process of change makes him feel empowered and confident that he is going in the right direction. Change is an on-going and life-long process. Anger is still there, and he needs to be always aware and pay attention to his anger and frustration level. He is now mindful of his thoughts and emotions. He makes sure to act respectfully towards others. He also takes full responsibility for all his actions and their consequences. He needs to be mindful about his inner child, his own heart and spirit, and to pay attention to himself. It is his decision and choices to live better and well. He courageously takes one day at a time and reflects on and applies what he has learned to make these learning experiences reach deeper. He is trying to connect with people and to become an empowered person, just like his grandfather.
Summary

These were stories of change that were shared by the male participants. Their stories captured various meaningful moments of their change experiences. However, as all of the participants indicated, these stories do not mean that they have completed change processes fully. As a matter of fact, they are still struggling with and living in change processes each moment of their lives, and so their stories continue.
Chapter 5: Results - Thematic Analysis

This section of the results consists of thematic analysis of the six stories of the male participants’ experiences of their change processes as well as the accounts of the four female participants of their perceptions of changed men. The emergent themes are summarized in Table 4. In addition, themes emerging from the interviews with four female participants are shown in Table 5.

Thematic Analysis

Four thematic categories and 22 thematic subcategories emerged in regard to the male participants' process of change (see Table 1 for male participants' themes). Table 2 represents four female participants’ four thematic categories and 16 thematic subcategories of their experiences of being abused at home and their sense of changed men. Each of these thematic subcategories has further subthemes. The detailed descriptions for both male and female participants’ themes follow.

These themes were meaningful moments for the male and the female participants in their experience of the change process, and the themes were intertwined and dynamically related to each other to make stories of change. Hence, they have commonality among as well as uniqueness to each individual because some of these themes may be much more meaningful to one participant than for another participant. Furthermore, sharing stories about their previous states before making significant change (e.g., what and how they committed violence, who these men were before they changed, what they were thinking and feeling at that time) was equally important for the participants.
Table 4

Male Participants' Themes

1. Issues in Current Intimate Relationships
   (1) Experiencing a Conflict at Home or With Other People not Involving Violence and Abuse
   (2) Violent and Abusive Behaviours Toward One's Wife
      a. Being hurt by own violent and abusive behaviours
      b. Sense of control over one's own violent behaviour
      c. Escalating one's own violent behaviours with drugs and alcohol abuse
      d. Being caught in a cycle of violence

2. Initial Hurt: Beginning of Journey
   (1) Violence at Home and School When Growing up
      a. Feeling abandoned and hurt by parents
      b. Witnessing and experiencing violence at home when growing up
      c. Being physically and sexually abused by others
   (2) Experiencing a Significant Life-Changing Event

3. Becoming Violent: Transforming From Powerless to Powerful and Control Over Others
   (1) Being in Survival Modes
      a. Transformed into survival modes
      b. Feeling confused and overwhelmed in close intimate relationships
      c. Using drugs and alcohol, and resorting to violence as a defense
      d. Being trapped in the intergenerational transmission of violence

4. Process of Change
   (1) Hitting Rock Bottom Experienced as a Transition Point for Change
   (2) Courage to Face Own Internal Experiences and That One Needs to Change
   (3) Becoming Aware of One’s Problematic Behaviours and Their Impact on Family
   (4) Learning About Violence and Abuse, One's Own Emotions, and New Skills
      a. Learning about violence and abuse
      b. Learning about emotions
c. Learning about effective communication skills
d. Learning about effective anger and stress management skills
e. Learning to become comfortable with one’s boundaries

(5) Learning From Putting What They Learned Into Action
(6) Making Sense of How One Engages in Violence and Abuse
(7) Taking Responsibility
   a. Being honest and open to oneself
   b. Taking responsibility for one’s life
   c. Being accountable to oneself
(8) Need to Resolve the Roots of Anger and Other Negative Emotions That Lead to Violence
(9) Making Amends With Those People Who Hurt Another and Those People Whom They Hurt
   a. Fully reflect on and understand one’s own behaviour and how it impacted and hurt one’s partner(s)
   b. Experiencing forgiveness for oneself and others
   c. Apologizing, reconnecting and reconciling
   d. Rebuilding trust and nurturing, and respectful relationships with those people whom one has hurt, if they allow
   e. Actively engaging in the healing process of their partners and children whenever possible
(10) Experiencing One’s Own Positive and Constructive Self, Despite Struggle
(11) Change as a Life-Long Journey
(12) Connecting With Those People Who Have Similar Struggles
   a. Receiving support for one's own change process
   b. Helping others to change
(13) Finding the Purpose and Meaning in Life
(14) Relying on Higher Power for Healing and Intervention
(15) Experiencing Progress and Change From Time to Time Helps Move one Forward
(16) Experiencing not Being Abandoned and not Being Given up Upon
(17) Hindrance to Change
Detailed Descriptions of Male Participants' Themes

1. Issues in current intimate relationships.

(1) Experiencing a conflict at home or with other people not involving violence and abuse. This theme describes the men’s experiences of conflict in their intimate relationships at home or with other people outside of home not involving violence and abuse. Some of them experienced severe conflict and disagreements with their partners regarding financial responsibility, sharing house chores, and dealing with children's education and care. In some cases, there were disagreements concerning their partners’ suffering from mental health issues, infidelity, and children’s developmental disability. Two of the male participants felt overwhelmed with the amount of responsibility they were taking on for the family. They felt responsible for giving family needs priority and neglected their self-care as a result.

Thematic category 1(1) Example 1: Dennis
My wife- one day I came home from work and she told me basically that she’s having an affair and that she was going to move out with this person. She subsequently told when the worker came in to help Z, she told that worker about this incident which happened four months earlier. Because what happened- she came back, she apologized. I said- there's something wrong. You need to go back to the doctor, check your medication. She went back and they increased her anti-depressant and she was fine. So, four months later, now she is telling me she is having an affair and whatnot.

Thematic category 1(1) Example 2: Don
It kind of hurt me. It kind of hurt me, and there was no reason to be because again, if you let go, you can wait. Those things can happen again. It's not the end of the world. But to me it was the end of the world. To me it was – oh, I'm not going to be able to do it. It's like my dream is broken here. And for me it was really hard because I give her the two kids, you know. That was her dreams. So I was kind of maybe jealous. Maybe Who knows? if you go deeper a little bit, maybe there was some jealousy there that – you know I gave her what she wanted and I didn't have what I wanted. Maybe. Maybe it's some feeling of not feeling like it was a fair game here.
(2) Violent and abusive behaviours toward one's wife. This theme describes the male participants’ experiences of being violent and abusive toward their partners. All of the participants admitted and acknowledged that they were violent and abusive physically and emotionally toward their partners. They recognized that they were egocentric, thinking about their needs and wants only and disregarding their partners' feelings. They were not able to be empathic toward their partners and children during this period. They blamed their partners and everyone else for their problems and emotional pain.

a. Being hurt by own violent and abusive behaviours. Even when the men displayed aggression and got what they wanted, they often felt dissatisfied or unhappy. They tended to experience increased anger afterwards. Being violent toward their partners and children often hurt them, and they felt remorse, regret, guilt, and anger toward themselves and were bothered by their behaviours. Some of them were shocked to realize the depth and intensity of the anger and aggression that they held within themselves. They had never thought that they were capable of committing such horrendous violence and abuse toward their partners.

Thematic category 1(2) Example 1: James
Just nothing, there was nothing that I was content with. There was just nothing that I could be content with. ... And it really bothered me. Because you know, I had a sister who I had lost through, through violence against women. You know, and domestic violence. Basically what I'm getting at is....every domestic altercation that I was in I was committing...against my moral beliefs. It really was. So...for me to understand that, I just couldn't understand. I couldn't understand. It was going back to that pain and suffering from within. I couldn't tolerate it or manage it. Tolerate it. And feeling trapped a lot of times. Feeling horrible because I'm this man that I just don't like. I just, I just didn't like him. Didn't like him and I couldn't be accountable for him. Couldn't be responsible for him. And so I just blamed. I just blamed everywhere. It was pure suffering.
b. Sense of control over one's own violent behaviours. Some of them were aware that they were in control of their use of violence and abuse and were able to avoid going beyond the boundary that they had set.

Thematic category 1(2)-b Example 1: James
But my assaults, and I hate to really minimize or justify my abuse, because I really don't like it. It's, it was either abusive or it wasn't. And in my case it always was. It really was. But, you know, I firmly believe that there's excessive abuse and I never really, and I never inflicted excessive abuse on my partners. I was abusive. Without a doubt, I was abusive. But, you know I was never ... Did I hurt? Yes. Were my actions abusive? Yes. But, I never assaulted them as I would a man if that makes any sense. And I hate, and I really don't like justifying the abuse, but I do believe that there are levels.

c. Escalating one's own violent behaviours with drugs and alcohol abuse.

Five out of six male participants had a problem with alcohol and drugs. They acknowledged that alcohol and drugs were not the cause of their violence and abuse, but they were also aware that addiction could escalate their anger and aggression.

One of the men shared his experience of experiencing intense, persistent, and deeply rooted anger, even after he had been sober for many years. Becoming sober did not automatically resolve his anger issues. He felt confused and helpless not knowing how to deal with this intense anger.

Thematic category 1(2)-c Example 1: Paul
I was still in the place where I didn't like myself. And I was still thinking drunk. Because my mind still hadn't changed, and that's probably ten years after I quit drinking. My mind still isn't..... .... And I went back to counselling again in P. And...I was learning a little bit more with going to AA and going to counselling, I was slowly, slowly learning how to live. But the anger was still always there and I could never figure out why. And the counsellors couldn't figure out why. You're working so hard on yourself, maybe you're working too hard on yourself. But I'm angry all the time. I don't know why. Like where does that come from?
d. Being caught in a cycle of violence. Some of the participants were aware of their patterns of violence. Once violence occurred, the men felt pain and remorse. They often tried to apologize to their partners for their violent and abusive behaviours to cope with such emotional pain and to prevent their partners and children from leaving. However, their apologies were superficial and insincere, as they often blamed their partners as a cause of their violence and were unwilling to face their own issues. Repeating such patterns of hurting their partners and insincere apologies had hurt trust.

Thematic category 1(2)-d Example 1: Ryan
I don't know how many times I said sorry. But sorry doesn't help.

2. Initial hurt: Beginning of journey. These were points when violence and abuse first emerged in their lives. They were innocent, pure, and loving children when they were born, but their lives were invaded and intoxicated by violence and abuse. These were significant beginnings of violence and abuse in their lives. Some of the men felt that they were hurt deeply physically, emotionally, and within their souls. They felt that they were overwhelmed by and fell deeply into the cycle of violence.

(1) Violence at home and school when growing up.

a. Feeling abandoned and hurt by parents. This theme describes these participants’ experiences of feeling abandoned and unloved by uncaring parents. They observed their parents were having difficulty in their relationship. Some of their parents had been through divorce and often came across as demanding, controlling, and emotionally disconnected from them. The men saw their fathers and/or mothers as often angry and frustrated. Many of the male participants
experienced physical discipline by their parents, if not physical violence and abuse. They felt that “discipline” was a means for their parents to take out their frustration and anger at them. Instead of nurturing these men to grow, their parents projected their own frustration and anger onto them. In some cases the men reported emotional hurt by receiving parents’ hurtful messages repeatedly. The physical pains from discipline with emotionally abusive messages penetrated their bodies, minds, emotions, and souls. The messages became their identities. These hurts made them believe that they were not wanted in this world, being hated even by people closest to them; they felt sad and confused, not knowing the reasons why their parents did not love them. These experiences could lead them to self-hatred and desperation. In some cases, their parents had problems with drugs and alcohol. The male participants felt they did not have role models and guidance from their parents and had lost their way.

Thematic category 2(1)-a Example 1: Paul
In the 7 years that I lived there, Mom and Dad never once came to my place. Never once. And yet they would go to V or to S to visit the other kids. They'd go to S, they'd go to M to visit my brother, but they would never come to my place. You know, and that hurt. Again, it was a hurt. And I would get angry all over again. Like why do they drive all these miles, and they can't even come over for a cup of coffee? ... I was 40, 50 years old. And it still didn't make – and it still hurt. And with that hurt, I would show anger. Because I didn't know it was just hurt. I was angry at them. ... And I would take it out at work and stuff like that too. Like I would....I would get upset over small stuff.

Thematic category 2(1)-a Example 2: Randy
If we really mean that much to him....then he would do whatever it takes. That's partly how...that's also why what he does to hurt us hurt that much more. It's not just what he does. It's that we don't mean that much to him. You know, we're just....some kids that he pays for food and rent for. That's nothing.
b. *Witnessing and experiencing violence at home when growing up.* Two of the men experienced observing violence at home. It was a painful experience to hear their parents fight and argue all the time at home. Their parents were yelling, arguing, and throwing things. Some of the men felt that this experience and fear was the seed of violence in themselves. These experiences led them to helplessness, powerlessness, and sense of injustice. They have experienced flashbacks of such experiences triggering them to become violent themselves in similar situations.

Thematic category 2(1)-b Example 1: Ryan

It wasn't all in school. It was at home, too. My grandfather's son, my uncle, my mom's brother, he was always violent and mean. And, every time I seen him, he's always drinking. So, he would steal money, steal guns, steal everything from his dad. To get his booze. So, in that long run, me and my younger sister, she's just like a baby. You know, like 2 years old. I was like – I'm 3 years older than her. I was like 5, 6. My grandfather was still alive. I'd carry her around. When he comes home in a violent mood, and swappy – swappy means drunken up, drunk. Too drunk, and he'll force himself into the house, and he'll be mean to my mom and my aunties. And my aunties are my grandpa's daughters. He's sleeping in the other room. He ends up beating up my mom and my – we, me and my sister was watching. My sister is crying, and I'm scared. She's scared, and – I seen a lot of beatings, what he did to my mom and my aunties, my brothers.

c. *Being physically and sexually abused by others.* Some of the men experienced sexual and physical abuse by their family members and others. Some of them experienced being bullied at school. These experiences hurt them deeply – not just emotionally but also physically as well as spiritually. These experiences were confusing, and some of them were manifested with anxiety, negative spontaneous thoughts, and depression when they were growing up. Being abused sexually involved frightening and confusing experiences for them. They became angry inside. Some of them confused their current relationships with their past hurt by other women. With such confusion, they started projecting hatred toward other
women. Some of them felt that they were tired of being treated abusively by women. They wanted them to pay for what they had done in the past. One of the male participants began to hate women and projected anger at women around him.

Some of them were bullied at school. These experiences caused them to feel humiliated, powerless, and helpless. They did not know how to protect themselves. These experiences planted the seeds of anger. There was no adult intervention on their behalves, so they learned that the only way to protect themselves was to become stronger than others. Soon, some of them became bullies themselves and experienced a feeling of power and a desire to pay back.

Thematic category 2(1)-c Example 1: Dennis
it definitely affects me every day. Sexual abuse...children that go through sexual abuse, it, at that age, because you're so young, it affects you for the rest of your life; the way you think, the way your brain's-even the connections in your brain it makes when you're growing, it's trying to keep that part of your life separate. So, physiologically, your brain adapts in different ways, right. So it never, it affects you for the rest of your life. No matter what, so...not to the degree now that I used to, but I still.

Thematic category 2(1)-c Example 2: Ryan
It didn't feel good to me. It felt, hurt. And, pain. And I was crying. So, I was molested by my own cousin. So that's where part of the anger for a woman was. ... when I turned 16, 17, and then all the way up to 39 years old, I was like – oh, I hate woman.

(2) **Experiencing a significant life-changing event.** There were some significant life-changing incidents that two of the men experienced as planting seeds of anger.

James experienced an airplane accident when he was 2 and 1/2 years old. This accident hit his family and broke it apart. James was too young to comprehend the accident, his physical pain and resulting deformity, and the reasons why he was in the hospital so many times. He was facing fear, pain, and confusion as a young
child.  James also experienced having his sister killed by an abusive and violent boyfriend. He felt that this loss pushed him off the cliff, and this made him extremely angry at everything and everybody.

Thematic category 2(2) Example 1: James
When I was two and a half, I was a few months shy of my third birthday. My mom and my grandfather, my mom's father, the three of us were involved in a plane accident, airplane accident and we all survived this plane accident. ... And it caused it to ignite and the three of us were in this cockpit in blazing fire. So, you know, right from that point, that day, my life obviously changed. We were all burned survivors and immediately after this happened, the accident, my grandfather, my mother and I spent long, extensive time in a burn unit. I was in T Sick Kid's hospital approximately six months solid. And my mother and grandfather were both in a S General Hospital, in T for approximately nine months solid. And um..during that time, like I said, I had two older siblings. My father, you know, trauma struck. And my father was traumatized as a result of being notified of the accident and going to the hospital and of seeing the aftermath of the accident. In the sense of witnessing my mother basically raw, no skin. So he was really really really traumatized witnessing that aftermath; of his wife, then wife and obviously myself. And um, you know, he was left to take care of two young daughters. And all of this, really, was unmanageable for him. He had issues with substance abuse prior to the accident. However, after the accident happened, like I said, that substance abuse increased. That was how he was coping. And masking, you know, his emotions. And um...it wasn't long after that...the increase of his alcoholism and I guess, drug use, you know, he became abusive. And ah, he became physically abusive towards my mother. And so, there was a lot of...damage done. My belief, that it stems from the plane crash.

Randy also experienced a life-changing accident. Randy had serious accident in which both he and the driver of the other car were seriously injured.

Randy lost his precious car in the accident. He felt that he was a failure, and he did not see any value in himself anymore.

Thematic category 2(2) Example 2: Randy
When I came back, I dumped all my savings in the car to upgrade it some more. You know, there's always constant upgrades. It's never the best. So I got new brakes, suspension, headlights. And, it wasn't long – I think it was about...I came back in May and in September um, someone – I was heading home one Friday afternoon, and someone ran a stop sign and I slammed into her. Because she ran the stop sign right in front of me. And that's when my
life changed and that's the point where everything flipped around. So, I
guess before that I had a bit of issues as well. But it wasn't enough to be a
problem. But when this happened, then everything just fell apart. My whole
life just fell apart.

3. Becoming violent: Transforming from powerless to powerful and
control over others. This theme tells how these male participants' transformed their
hurt into aggression and became perpetrators themselves.

(1) Being in survival modes.

a. Transformed into survival modes. As a result of neglect and abuse by
their parents and others, many male participants felt that they were deeply hurt and
overwhelmed with intense emotions. Such emotions were beyond their
comprehension. These men turned their painful emotions, such as shame, guilt, fear,
and hopelessness, into anger in order not to feel the intense impact of these emotions.
As a result, they grew increasingly angry. They tried to gain control over their
painful internal experiences and people around them by using aggression/violence to
control them. Alcohol and drugs also helped them to manage their painful emotions.
It numbed them for short periods in order to survive these years.

Without having anyone to provide care and love, they needed to become
independent quickly, as they felt they had lost their way without their parents'
guidance and role models. They tried to gain their parents' attention and love by
presenting problematic behaviours, but their parents and people around them simply
paid attention to the behaviours and did not attempt to understand the emotional states
behind the behaviours. They became reckless children and started presenting more
serious problematic behaviours, such as having emotional outbursts, stealing, and
being physically aggressive.
They started learning to give up on their parents and began surviving on their own. They acquired tools to survive in the adult world. They learned how to lie and found lying was effective to get what they wanted. They became stubborn, greedy, angry, insincere, and selfish persons. Some of them had difficulty keeping up with their schooling because they needed to start earning their living as they were suddenly forced to become independent. Some of them were involved heavily in criminal behaviours as a result. They were simply trying to survive. They started drinking and abusing drugs at an early age, as well.

b. Feeling confused and overwhelmed in close intimate relationships. Many men in this study felt deep hatred toward themselves (e.g., felt useless, worthless, tired, angry, lonely, and had lost a purpose in their lives). They pushed people away because they believed that they were not good enough for anyone. They were afraid that they would bring down their intimate partners. They struggled with becoming intimate in the relationship. They often experienced a dilemma and confusion in that they longed for love and affection but did not know how to receive love. They could not trust anyone, and they felt insecure. They wanted to be loved, but they did not feel comfortable being loved, and they therefore ended up hurting their partners each time they had a relationship. Some felt uncertain about their identity, and they felt they were constantly misunderstood. They were desperate to find some sense of belonging.

Thematic category 3(1)-b Example 1: Randy
I had to do to protect myself because I was so hurt from the accident. Part of that was to not love and not trust and not, not count on other people. To not....to not put myself in a vulnerable position in a relationship so that I wouldn't have to worry about losing someone or something that I loved again. And...I also wasn't capable of dealing with my emotions because I was too
overwhelmed with my emotions already. And that just got the ball rolling. And that didn't allow me to deal with myself because I don't love myself. And then that lead to me hating everyone around me. That ruined my last relationship.

Paul stated that he hated himself (he felt useless, lonely, tired, and angry and had lost purpose in his life). He pushed people away because he believed that he was bad, even evil. He felt that he was not good enough for anyone. Paul thought he would bring everyone engaged with him down. He experienced the dilemma and the confusion that he wanted to be loved, but could not receive love and could not provide love.

Thematic category 3(1)-b Example 2: Paul
Then I'd go and party and stay away from home for two or three days. So that she would be upset with me. Because I wasn't good enough for her, so I had to prove to her that I wasn't good enough. ... I kept thinking that – well, I kept thinking that she couldn't love me because I wasn't good enough for her. So I couldn't let her love me. I wanted to love her, but I couldn't love anybody because I didn't love myself at all. So I couldn't love anybody, so I didn't want anybody to love me either. ... I hated myself, so I automatically wouldn't let anybody close to me. And every time I did it, I would get mad at myself. You know, then I would go act out. You know, and then I would go to a bar and get drunk and get into a fight and I didn't know who it was with or what it was with. You know, and then I had to go hurt somebody.

c. Using drugs and alcohol, and resorting to violence as a defense. Drugs and alcohol were helpful to soothe their emotional pain. They were able to numb their emotions. However, the men could not get the same numbing effect as their addictions progressed. Consequently, their addictions became worse as they became increasingly dependent on the substances. Their anger also protected them because more forceful displays of anger pushed away others so that the people around these men would not hurt them. Aggression was useful to protect one’s self from being harmed by others. They were afraid and so built up a big, thick wall around them.
They used a macho persona to protect themselves from being scared and hurt. They themselves were the only ones that they could trust and depend on. Some of the men felt remorseful, guilty, and ashamed, although some struggled with lack of empathy and felt a powerful adrenaline rush when they hit someone.

James was trying to survive. He was extremely confused emotionally without knowing why he was feeling like that all the time. He was desperately trying not to be hurt again. He was trying not to feel painful emotions, such as shame, guilt, fear, and hopelessness. These strong negative emotions often led him into aggression. James tried to gain control over his painful emotional states and over people around him by using aggression/violence to control them and drugs and alcohol to numb his feelings. His anger protected him because the powerful the projection of force quieted others and pushed them away so that they would not hurt him. As a result, he viewed himself as a violent man. However, every time he used these tactics, he ended up feeling remorse, guilt, shame, and sadness. His strategies did not work, but they got him through the days.

Thematic category 3(1)-c Example 1: James

it's suffering. I was suffering mentally and emotionally. And I had no....no real understanding of how to stop the suffering. And like I said, the alcohol kind of temporarily masked that. And basically after a period of time, you know, that would progress and the effects would progress worse, whether it was within my own self or on the outside of myself. Things just progressed for the worst for me. ... and I progressed to...being charged with assaulting my partner, spending some time in jail over it.

Ryan learned to protect himself by becoming physically strong and learning how to fight. He learned that he needed to build himself up to protect himself and others. He needed to become tough. When Ryan was young, being violent and aggressive made him feel powerful. He learned that aggression could make those people who
tried to harm him stop bothering him. A strong expression of violence and aggression toward those people could make him feel that they were under his control.

Thematic category 3(1)-c Example 2: Ryan
Scared. Fear. Wanted to do something, but I was too small to. ... hopeless, powerless. Kind of a lost feeling, too, because I had nobody around me. Usually I had my friend with me, my brother to look after me. But they went in to higher classes and moved to another school. There's where I got picked on. I had long hair, too. I looked like my sister. I looked like my sister, and plus, I was getting teased. Some of them called me the b word the c word. That's where I learned a lot of foul language, too. And, so I thought that was okay. And I started sprouting in my bones. Started getting taller and taller and finally I cut my hair. And I looked like a boy, and I started working out. Started playing soccer and getting stronger and stronger. That same person that was calling me down, I threw him down. That's where I started becoming a bully. It's just a return of another bully, and I learned off of that bully, so I become a bully to other people. ... So there's where I learned where bullying is. Become that bully, after I went over that bully. And I continued that school to school.

d. Being trapped in the intergenerational transmission of violence. The participants felt helpless, trapped in the cycle of violence. They were hurt by their parents. Their hurt and anger were passed down through the generations. The cycle of violence and abuse was deeply embedded in their families. They were abused and hurt deeply. They confused their past hurt with their current emotional pains (e.g., feeling sad, embarrassed, and disappointed when they could not get a promotion). Whenever they experienced emotional pain, they could not discriminate between unhealthy and healthy emotional pain and hurt. They automatically flashed back to the original painful feeling, attributing such pain to people other than themselves. In their minds, they needed to blame others, and so they themselves could not be held accountable. Soon, they realized that they had become like their fathers, whom they hated. The men hurt people close to them because these intimate partners were "easy targets" right there in front of the men.
The men needed to unlearn what they had learned when growing up in order to break the cycle of violence.

Dennis stated that he learned how to behave like his father and relate to intimate partners through the experience of being abused by his father and by witnessing his parents' abusive relationship. He caught himself behaving like his father to his children.

Thematic category 3(1)-d Example 1: Dennis
I don’t want to be like my Dad, but you catch yourself doing things that your dad did you know you didn’t like and you know you didn’t like. At least I catch it.

4. Process of change. The process of change involves many elements of change intertwined and dynamically related to each other. Each element resonates with each other to make change. Change is not simply gaining, but it is also a process of letting go and becoming clearer about the distinction between several elements of their experiences. It is a qualitative change that has been a set of maturing, healing, and empowering experiences for the men. The men experienced a new sense of humility as well as emotional and spiritual growth by going through this change journey. Facing change and going through change is challenging, but it is also an empowering and healing process for having gone through it. The men felt they were reclaiming themselves as more complete individuals and were becoming more harmonious. It was a relief, as well, as they were relieved from any false, abusive messages. They also became more curious about themselves, wanting to become more comfortable and authentic to themselves. This change process was freeing, and they felt grateful toward themselves; they started to learn to accept and appreciate themselves; this experience was a new sensation, involving physical,
mental, and soul/spiritual change.

(1) Hitting rock bottom experienced as a transition point for change. In the past, the men persisted in their way of dealing with their situations and remained in "survival mode". They felt that they were stubborn and were not ready to listen to others, nor could they face anything that caused them pain. As a result, they got into more serious problems, such as serious legal consequences, their partners and children having left them, overdosing with alcohol and drugs, near death experience, exhaustion living with violence, and extreme emotional pain. They ended up being stuck, hitting rock bottom, and feeling helpless. They felt much pain and despair. They did not know where else to go and what to do. They decided to surrender themselves to some higher power and others' love, affection, and help. They started facing their issues.

Thematic category 4(1) Example 1: James
But it took me to get to that rock bottom. That surrender stage where I just can't do this anymore. I don't want to do this anymore. Please help me. You know, please help me.

(2) Courage to face own internal experiences and that one needs to change.
It took courage to face and reflect on their violent and abusive behaviours and harm done to their loved ones. They realised that they may not have been able to restore their partner’s and children's hurt. The men reported that facing and accepting the fact that they needed to change, and then taking action in order to create change, were all challenging first steps.

Thematic category 4(2) Example 1: Randy
There's a lot of people out there who will...change is really hard. Especially – not just change, but facing change and taking the action that you need to change and accepting the fact that you do need to change, and then the whole change. It's huge, it's hard. That's why we don't like doing it. That's why
we avoid doing it. That's why we don't like doing it unless we have a reason to. And...that's why most people do kind of...have to get to a point where they're at rock bottom or something significant happens in their life that they see something significant in someone else's life.

(3) Becoming aware of one’s problematic behaviours and their impact on family. The male participants became more aware that they were having problems with violence and abuse. They also became increasingly aware of the emotional damage of their violence and abuse on their partners and children. It was a shocking awareness that they could become much more violent and mean than they had ever imagined. They started realizing the depth of their issues and that their behaviours were abusive.

Thematic category 4(3) Example 1: Don
I remember it really well. I came home, and my wife and my kids weren't there. And, I didn't realize right away. I thought, 'Oh, wow. She's gone. Perfect. I can go work in a line, or I can go work anywhere. I know lots of people.' I was very irrational, believing stuff like this. Not making sense. Good, good. And then I drank, drank. And then the next day, I started to realize why she left, and I started to see all this coming back in my head. What have I done? I couldn't sleep. ... I was feeling like what have I done? I really have to do something here. I have to change. I have to figure out a way. And, I started to look at anger management on google and all this places. The next day I started to realize I'd made a mistake.

Thematic category 4(3) Example2: Randy
At one point the relationship... we had a slight disagreement about the dining room table. She didn't like it. I liked it. She kind of stomped on it because she was frustrated at me, and I threw her across the room. I broke the floor and the table. And scared the living daylights out of her. I don't blame her. That shocked me as well. And that's when I learned how anger can become physical and can become very violent and dangerous.

(4) Learning about violence and abuse, one's own emotions, and new skills.

Learning was one of the major facets of the change process. Learning about emotions, learning communication skills to convey such emotions, acquiring effective anger and stress management skills, and learning about one’s own boundaries were
helpful for them to facilitate their change process. It is also important for them to put their learning into action.

a. Learning about violence and abuse. They were educated about violence, abuse, and the mechanism of violence and abuse.

Thematic category 4(4)-a Example 1: Dennis
I am learning a lot of things that I was doing in a relationship that I didn't consider abusive. So, I'm doing a lot of discovering of- oh, gee, I wasn't aware of that so it is really increasing my level of awareness. Also getting me back to thinking about how my brain was wired all those years. You know, the formative years. And now I have to try to modify some of my patterns of behavior.

Thematic category 4(4)-a Example 2: Dennis
I have been verbally abusive. Other ways- financially. When you're the sole breadwinner, making all the financial decisions, that is a form of abuse. Didn't realize that until the program. So there are other ways of being abusive other than being physical.

b. Learning about emotions. One of the important learning experiences was learning about emotions and empathy. Learning, understanding, and experiencing their own emotions were helpful tools to manage their anger. Learning about emotions was not a simple cognitive activity, but as they experienced emotions underlying anger, they were able to identify them through the experience of learning. They learned that anger is a secondary emotion. Underneath, there are multiple emotions. When experiencing anger, they needed to be aware of what exactly caused it and reflect on their internal experiences. They did not need to agree with these emotions or fight against them, but simply understanding these emotions helped with anger management. Learning about emotions has been a powerful tool to help manage anger. The men learned different types of emotions to experience. Learning about emotions was revealing for them. It became a major discovery and
strategy for preventing violence and abuse. Now, they could feel others' feelings and express empathy toward others.

Thematic category 4(4)-b Example 1: Paul
one of the things was when I watched the videos on abuse. I've got emotions, or when I went to anger management – the funnel. Like that was a big revelation. How all of these emotions really...people act it out in anger and it wasn't just me. A lot of people don't know they've got the emotions. They're all there, but we act them out as anger. So now we have to see what emotions we have.

Thematic category 4(4)-b Example 2: Don
empathizing with others. That's another thing that's really, really important. That made me change; I never did that before, not thinking only about myself, stopping to be egocentric. That definitely helped my change. Big time.

c. Learning about effective communication skills. The men learned effective communication skills to build close and intimate relationships with their partners and children. This skill is helpful to resolve conflict effectively without resorting to violence. This step led them to develop better communication skills. They learned much about nonviolent communication skills as well as how to listen to others and their own heart.

Thematic category 4(4)-c Example 1: Ryan
and not physically because – why go physical? Because that's what I used to do. I used to hurt people all the time. A fist, a kick. That's violence. And now, I don't do that no more. It's something, I go up to a person and communicate. Communicate, get the story straight. Or, put it on one side to another side. There's two sides. Two sides of the story. ... It's time to communicate with the heart and brain to make it right for each other. Explain yourself, and explain their selves.

d. Learning about effective anger and stress management skills. It has been helpful for the men to learn some effective anger management skills. Facing and reflecting on what they get angry about and finding effective ways to manage such anger by expressing it and talking to someone about it as well as by seeking to resolve
the underlying problems with their partners are all helpful strategies. The men realized that having an open conversation is important in any relationship. This open communication is the way to understand each other's emotion. They also learned some coping skills to deal with their stress. Some of the men found meditation an effective coping technique that helps them keep calm.

Thematic category 4(4)-d Example 1: Don
Meditation is very good for when something happen. I stop. I can control my thought a bit better than I used to.

e. Learning to become comfortable with one’s boundaries. The men became aware of their own boundaries and became comfortable with them. They learned to let go and leave certain issues that are not theirs in other people’s hands.

Thematic category 4(4)-e Example 2: Ryan
I said, 'Why should it bother me? I'm at home. I'm not doing that. So, just leave it. Let it go.' That's their words. ... So she (my wife) goes – ah, and walked away. 'So it doesn't bother you?' 'No, just let it go. That's their problem, not ours.' They want me to have that problem, to go out there and make it more worse. So I don't want to do that. So I just end up playing games. I said, 'Just leave it.' and it's a lot easier for me to let those things go. Before, I used to go and look for that person. On foot – do do do. And I'd go up to them: 'What are you saying about me?' But now, it's like never mind. Never mind about that. Because that's their problem that they want to throw onto our family. Because it could be jealousy or anger in that person, eh. Ya, but I've been there and done that.

(5) Learning from putting what they learned into action. Learning is not simply a cognitive activity. Taking actual actions and reflecting back on action and consequences are good learning strategies that can build confidence as well.

Paul had a difficult break-up with his ex-partner, but he managed to stay sober, and this experience helped him realize that he can manage and resolve problems without getting drunk. Seeing these different outcomes were empowering for the couple. Having new actions also led to new insight into themselves: Putting
what is learned into action in daily life and focusing on the positive consequences of actions and on positive personal experiences

Thematic category 4(5) Example 1: Paul
And that was a kick. Because I was sober at this time. And only a year and half sober. So it was kind of a kick to the head a little bit. But, it was a wakeup call because one of the first thoughts that came to my mind: It's not worthy being sober. And then I thought, 'No. It's not worth getting drunk.' So it was a wakeup call that I could sort of handle stuff.....sober. That's just part of life. ... So in a way, it was a good thing. Sure I lost a lot of money, but today it's just money. But it taught me that I don't have to go out and get drunk.

(6) Making sense of how one engages in violence and abuse. The men felt compelled to make sense of their current behaviours and the reasons why they were feeling so angry. They needed to make sense of how their conflicting identities can fit together and the reasons why they were acting contrary to their positive and constructive desires. The men started making more and more sense of the connection between their current violent and abusive behaviour and their own unfinished business and victimization in the past. This is an on-going process throughout their change journey. Some of the men were confused and frustrated not knowing the reasons why their anger did not stop, even after they learned skills to manage their anger and/or became sober and clean. This sense-making was important for them to start their change processes.

Thematic category 4(6) Example 1: Dennis
At that point I still hadn't realized that I had been sexually abused, so once I discovered that, all these things that happened in my life, I went ahh okay, that makes more sense now. That's why I was acting out there. That's how that impacted that. That's where some of the anxiety comes from; all these different things, I was starting to say, oh, that's why, that's why. So that certainly was a good thing. I'm glad I didn't go through my whole life before I discovered that, right. 'Cause then I maybe never would have taken that path I took, right, maybe a different path. It probably wouldn't have been very productive or positive path, right.
(7) Taking responsibility.

a. Being honest and open to oneself. For these men, taking responsibility means to open up and be honest with themselves. They needed to face their own internal experiences, such as emotions, thoughts, and behaviours, and own them. Taking responsibility is to share thoughts and feelings openly and honestly with others when it is necessary to have open and honest conversation with their partners.

Thematic category 4(7)-a Example 1: James
I think a lot of just the honesty. A lot of just being honest. Honest in the way of being able to identify with the ah...characteristics or behaviours of an abusive person. Being able to say, yes, that was me. That was me. Yes, I reacted that way. Yes, I've been in that predicament or you know, without placing any blame on anybody. Just saying that's me and being open and honest about it. That, I think really changed me. It really, it really changed me. Instead of saying, well, something different. Like, she did this to me or this happened to me or...instead of it always being something on the outside of me. Today, you know, having the ability to really be honest with my own self. Opened a lot of doors. It allowed that understanding, that awareness and it opened my mind up.

Thematic category 4(7)-a Example 2: Don
You need to empathize. You need to open up. Open up is the way. That is the first step. If you can open up, then other people will open up to you.

Thematic category 4(7)-a Example 3: Don
If you say what's on your heart, and you go honest and then other people will do the same. You won't even have to do anything. So you have to open up, tell people what you feel if you want people to tell you what they feel.

b. Taking responsibility for one's life. The men realized that they needed to become the author of their own lives. They have now come to take ownership of their lives and to take care of themselves. They have come to realize that their lives are simply their own and that they need to be responsible for living their own lives fully. They realized that they are the only ones who can make their lives meaningful and content. They believe now that change is for themselves and not for seeking a
secondary gain, such as buying their partners back to the relationship. They realized that it was their own choice to change and that they need to want to change. They believed that it is entirely their choice and their determination to change, to let go of what no longer serves them, and to get better. They now pay more attention to what their heart tells them spiritually, physically, and mentally, and communicate it to others freely and openly. Taking responsibility does not simply mean taking responsibility for their action but also taking care of and nurturing oneself. They realized that they needed to take care of themselves first to be emotionally healthy. They realized that they could not neglect self-care. They needed to appreciate and nurture themselves, and to respect themselves. Otherwise, they could not truly love and respect others.

Thematic category 4(7)-b Example 1: Don
Try to change even if your wife don't come back. It's okay. I'm doing for myself. I'm trying to relive myself here. Because I figure it out. I wasn't blaming my wife. I wasn't blaming anybody. I was just blaming myself. And I figure it's not even good to blame myself. Or, blaming my mom or dad. All I have to do is be responsible, figure out new ways, and live on with my life. Lots of discovery. New. New stuff. ... The reason I am here and am doing is not because of them, it's because of me. That's how I see it.

c. Being accountable to oneself. Taking responsibility involves no longer blaming others and past hurt for their violent and abusive behaviours. The men realized that they are responsible to resolve their past issues and be healed. Using drugs and alcohol are not constructive coping strategies and can mask intense painful feelings, and they do not solve anything. The men realized that they are responsible for their behaviours in spite of their past hurt and whatever situations they have encountered. The men also realized that their actions are their own and that all behaviours have consequences. They are holding themselves accountable for their
behaviours and emotions, for which some men had to face severe consequences.

They openly and fully admit now what they have done to their loved ones. They acknowledge that violence is wrong and not justifiable in any way. They are fully aware of the damage done to their partners and children and willingly acknowledge such harm was caused by them. They feel regret and remorse about what they have done to their partners. They would like to connect with others and with themselves in a more loving and nurturing way. Being able to be accountable is empowering.

They have a choice in their behaviours and knowing that is helpful.

Thematic category 4(7)-c Example 1: Dennis
But I worked for a lot of years being a victim to accepting it to- What am I going to do differently? So this is going back to the mindset of change. So rather, to live- I am as a victim, blame everything as abuse. I was a victim, always a victim. So really intense counseling- I moved from being a victim. The reason I did that- because I was abused, the reason I did that was because I was abused. Always a victim. Through really intense counseling I moved. What am I going to do today? Knowing all that, accepting all that information? What am I going to do to change today? What am I going to do to change today? I lost that- what am I going to do today? I lost that somewhere in the marriage.

Thematic category 4(7)-c Example 2: James
It's not nice... looking at that and seeing yourself as that person. For myself. It's not a nice picture for me to look at, But, you know, today I can be accountable. Today I can be responsible for my actions and behaviours and ah..you know, there was a lot of times where I would be in complete denial. Complete denial, referring to my behaviours, actions and reactions towards my partners. I would not admit anything, any wrongdoing, any harmful act, any abusive act. I would not admit to anybody. Knowing inside that I was. I would not admit anything. ... I don't know but I just know that not being able to be honest with myself and others with regards to my behaviours. My reactions, you know. It really kept me down, it really kept me sick. And I could never allow that...I could never allow the reality to be out in the open in the sense where I could get better. That's basically where it was for me.

(8) Need to resolve the roots of anger and other negative emotions that lead to violence. The men stated that it is important for them to find and to resolve the
roots of their anger, such as hurt and unfinished business to dissolve their anger.

Thematic category 4(8) Example 1: Paul
We both started coming to counselling here at D. And we started right from the day I was born and we went through and we went through all of this. And we talked and we talked and we talked and I think it was three or four years of going to her steady. Like every couple of weeks we would have a session together. We picked my life apart. We picked it, because I wanted to know why I was angry. So we did a, she showed me a few videos on abuse. And I could see myself on both sides. I could see myself as an emotional abuser, but I could also see myself as being the physically abused person and that came from my childhood, that I was abused. It wasn't right to get a beating like that. It was okay maybe to get a spanking, but not a beating. That was not right. And it finally dawned on me that that was not right, so then it started – I started thinking, 'Well if that's not right, that must be where it came from because that last licking that I got from Dad, that last beating, that is when everything changed in my mind.' So I had to look at that to see what it was. It still took me quite a bit of counselling after that. One day I walked in....and I said to K, 'I think I know finally,' and I said, 'I don't think I'm going to Hell.' She says, 'No, you're not.' She says, 'Why do you say that?' So I explained to her how I had lived all these years that I was going to Hell. That kept the anger in me because I was never good enough with myself. So if I wasn't good enough for myself, then I couldn't be good enough for anybody else. So I became, I stayed angry and I had to act out. I had to act out. There was no other way. So I became abusive in relationships. All the way through. And it kept getting worse and worse and worse.

(9) Making amends with those people who hurt another and those people whom they hurt. As the men increased their self-awareness, sense-making processes, and ability to take responsibility, they initiated making amends. Making amends to those people whom they hurt and to those people who hurt them were an important change or healing process. Making amends meant for them to reconnect with their partners, children, and their parents, and to right the wrongs. The process also helped them make sense of how their anger was planted and how their past experiences were manifested in their present lives. This process created further compassion and empathy for those people whom they hurt and those people who hurt
them. They felt their anger relieved and dissolved by making amends to their parents and others, whether making amends was successfully accomplished or not at that time. A process of making amends created an open conversation with their parents in regard to their hurts and their parents' experience with them as children. Making amends did not mean for the men a one-time apology, but rather an on-going process of connecting, building a healthy relationship, continuing to work on themselves whether their partners and children were willing to reconnect with them or not, and respecting their partners and children's needs. It did not always go so well. Some of their parents were not willing to seek amends with them, and not all of their loved ones accepted their amends. Making amends consisted of many interrelated facets during the change process.

a. Fully reflect on and understand one's own behaviour and how it impacted and hurt one’s partner(s). Making amends involved thorough reflection on their behaviours and internal experiences in the past. It also required putting themselves fully into their partner’s and children's shoes to feel what it was like to be in their situations. They needed to have full empathic understanding of their loved ones' pain and struggle. They needed to fully reflect on and understand what was done wrong and why it was wrong. Simply knowing that what they did was wrong was not good enough. All these new understandings needed to be felt deeply before they could seriously proceed to make amends. Their new understanding needed then to appear in their behaviour. This application created deeper personal connections and more open conversation.

Thematic category 4(9)-a Example 1: Ryan
Everything. I spent hours telling her, 'That time I threw the table, that time I
did this, that time I did this. That was wrong, this is wrong. Not just go up to her and say....what I did in the past is wrong.’ I need to point out everything. There's some little things that I'll miss out in between. But the big things. To let her know I do know, not just saying what I did was wrong. I did know exactly what I did. I knew why exactly it was wrong. I tell her why it's wrong. It's not right for me to throw the table. It's way too violent, especially when she's in the house. When someone else is in the house. It's not right for me to expect her to pick me up when I'm feeling crappy. It's not right for me to do certain things. Why? Why was it not right? Just knowing it's not right is not good enough, at least not for me. Why was it not right? How she would have felt? How I would have felt if I was in her shoes? And why that is not alright for me to make her feel that way and why did I do that? Why did I feel the need to do that to her? And with her being aware of me having reflected upon everything and understanding her, understanding exactly why. What? How? That really made her feel so...relieved.

b. Experiencing forgiveness for oneself and others. The process of change begins once one has figured out the reasons for anger and resentment toward others and for disregard for others' feelings. These reflections lead to a deeper understanding and ultimately help to forgive both oneself and others. This forgiveness in turn helps build a nurturing connection with oneself and others. Understanding that one is not a bad person and learning to forgive those mistakes is a relief. One may make a bad decision occasionally, and there is always the possibility of making a mistake, but what counts in the end is to always try to make the best decision possible. It starts with forgiving and loving oneself. This step allows for love and forgiveness for others. Feelings of guilt, self-hatred, and blame for an accident are painful, and it becomes easier for one to blame the other person for what happened. Forgiveness starts with oneself. Without self-love, it is not possible to forgive others. It is difficult to forgive others. If one assaults and hurts one's wife quite badly, and it is very difficult to gain her trust back. It is important to learn to forgive oneself and then to make amends with those people who hurt.
My counsellors over there, my probations over there said that we really got to look at forgiveness. You got to forgive yourself first, and then you need to go ask for forgiveness. You've gotta go say sorry to yourself and respect yourself. These are what my counsellors are telling me in Vancouver.

\textit{c. Apologizing, reconnecting and reconciling.} Making amends involves admitting one’s wrong actions and initiating connection with those people who were hurt by them, to express remorse and to apologize. Apologizing is not simply recognizing that what they did was wrong and saying, “sorry about my violence and abuse,” but also includes a full reflection on the reasons why they were feeling sorry, what they did wrong, why they did everything that they did, and how they are facing their past violence and abuse now. It is also to convey such thoughts and feelings to their partners. It involves a reflection on their feelings, such as disappointment for hurting someone whom they cared for and how that was related to their own past unfinished business. It is a full admission and expression that what they did was wrong and not acceptable. In this process of making an apology, it is important to learn to forgive oneself and then to ask for forgiveness from those people whom they hurt.

She was- she knew that I wasn't going to bother her anyways. She wasn't worried about that. She...an apology was definitely something that I owed her and something that she needed, but it wasn't just an apology. An apology wasn't enough. There are some things that you do in life and you can go back and say you're sorry and you can tell them how much you wish you never did it, but it's just not going to mean anything, because what you did was very wrong and very hurtful. Saying sorry is not going to be enough. That was the situation. An apology is pointless if all it is that you recognize that what you did was wrong and you feel sorry about it. You need to- sometimes it's pointless. I knew I had to apologize to her. I knew why I had to apologize to her. I knew it was something that I needed to do and that I was going to do, but it hit me one day when I felt that way, but...even when it hit me, I also knew one thing, which was that I need to dwell on it. I need
to reflect upon this apology for some more time until I felt it was time to do so. It took me about two months to really gather why I was feeling sorry, exactly what I did wrong, exactly why I did everything that I did and exactly how I am facing it now. So...the talk with her involved her knowing that I'm sorry, knowing that I understand exactly what I did wrong.

d. Rebuilding trust and nurturing, and respectful relationships with those people whom one has hurt, if they allow. Making amends is not simply apologizing to people but includes the intention of not making the same mistake again. Expressing remorse and building trust are different processes. They cannot happen without taking full responsibility for oneself and demonstrating a sense of responsibility. The men experienced gaining trust as they lived their lives more responsibly, and they become more comfortable with being open and willing to share their internal experiences with their partners and children. They felt more comfortable accepting their love and thus offering love in return. They felt that it was essential to continue to have open communication with their partners in order to rebuild trust. Rebuilding trust was also a nurturing experience. They built sincere and nurturing relationships with their partners and children.

If their partners were willing, the men tried to rebuild richer and closer relationships with their families. In some cases, their families may have gone through separation and divorce. In spite of the new family dynamics, they tried to build a new way of connecting with their ex-partners and children. It may have been challenging for them, but the men respected their children’s and partners' personal choices. They used learned skills to communicate efficiently with their partners openly and respectfully. They respected other people's boundaries as well as their own and could connect and build relationships with others with care, respect, and
empathy.

Thematic category 4(9)-d Example 1: Ryan
She has shown me that love. All the things that I have done to you, this is my time to apologize to you and I'm sorry. I've done all this damage to you and hurt you, and this fear. I know I can't let this go, and I know I can't let it go for you. Because these are your feelings and this is your physical body. I'm very sorry. I want you to accept my apology if you can. So, all these three years, I've talked to my wife – the trust wasn't still there. She said, 'I still don't trust you,' Physically, Mentally. Because that was my mistake of intruding her boundary. Her life.

e. Actively engaging in the healing process of their partners and children whenever possible. The men felt that making amends helped their children heal from the hurt that they caused. Their children were often resentful at them and, thus, making amends helped to break the cycle of violence and perhaps prevent their children from passing their anger onto the next generation. Making amends can break the secrecy of violence and abuse happening at home and can help siblings to connect. The men found it a relief to learn that they were not the only one in the family who were abused and who felt victimized.

Thematic category 4(9)-e Example 1: Paul
I try and talk to the kids about it. I really do, because I want to find out more what I did to them. So that maybe we can work through it together then. Because my dad even refused to even acknowledge that he had done anything. And I don't – I want to have my kids feel that I am trying to correct a hurt, you know. I'm trying to change what it was that really really hurt them. And if I did that and if I can find out what it was then I can work on it.

(10) Experiencing one’s own positive and constructive self, despite struggle.

When the men searched their hearts, they found positive and constructive qualities. They yearned for a good life, rich intimate relationships, and hopes for the well-being of their children. They knew they had respectful values and rules that they could live by. They experienced a glimpse of their constructive and positive being by
experiencing pain, guilt, and the shame of hurting their partners and children. Something told them that they had good souls and were pure and motivated to become a better person. They did not want to repeat what they had done in the past to hurt others. Although sometimes it was extremely difficult to hold on, they needed to believe in themselves that they could change. Going through the change process took much determination, courage, and patience. They used some of their inner strength to survive.

Thematic category 4(10) Example 1: James
Because I really believe that I wasn't born hateful. I wasn't born this evil little soul. I was born with love. This loving soul, that's how I was brought into this world. I was innocent, I was pure. I was all these things. And, unfortunately, life had evolved and...but you see, I can inherit those...real, true meanings for myself. ... Caring, loving. That's who I really am. That's who I was...that's, that's how I was brought into this world. I was brought into this world that way. So that means that that's my real self.

(11) Change as a life-long journey. The process of change is a continuous battle. The men feel that they need to keep working on it. Change takes a long time; it is a slow process that requires patience. The men feel that they need to keep reminding themselves of the consequences of their behaviours and continue using tools that they have learned. In particular, they need to monitor their anger and frustration levels. The men find that continuing to connect with people with similar struggles helps them keep their changes accountable. The process of change involves many layers, stages, and levels of depth. The attending group also gave them support for this life-long journey.

Change is difficult because one cannot see what the end result looks like and when it will happen. It is easy to be discouraged. The men need to learn, apply, and keep using the skills learned during the anger management sessions. They can move
forward but also fall back quite easily as well. The key is to continue working on oneself and to keep moving forward.

Thematic category 4(11) Example 1: James
Absolutely, I refer to them as character defects. I refer to them as, those demons as character defects and you know, I believe that I will always have them. I believe that they are instilled in me. However, they can be dealt with on a daily reprieve. And the journey for me is, honestly, today it's a one day at a time process. It's a one day at a time journey for me. My main goal on a daily basis is to be in a, have a conscious contact with a belief that I, that I am comfortable with and be the best person that I can be. You know, and that's how I start my day. That's how I, that's the process and that's the journey that I'm on today. And at night I try to reflect on my day and on my behaviours, on my actions, on my reactions. Just, reflect on myself, you know. Just take some moral inventory and you know, where I was wrong, identify it. And you know, I try to, within a twenty-four hour period, to go back and amend that behaviour or whatever. And try and promptly admit it and correct it and ah..but the thing is correcting it, so that I don't have to keep going back to make amends, you know. It's a process. And I have to realize that I'm early in this process and so I'm going to make some mistakes and I'm going to you know, have some shortcomings. But the key is to identify them and correct them promptly and correctly. So that keeps my moral self in check. You know, it keeps that I can continue to grow. Not to be a saint or nothing like that but just to be able to transform into my real self and to form my own identity and I find that that's extremely important and not always easy. ... I need help. I need help, you know. And that's the key, that's the big key, is to maintain the help.

(12) Connecting with those people who have similar struggles.

a. Receiving support for one's own change process. The men found connecting with others in the violence treatment group was important for their change. They continued to learn and be inspired by each other in sharing and discussing their own experiences in the group. They learned from each other about the types and extent of abusive behaviours, emotions, coping strategies, and many more skills. Hearing other people in the group was also helpful in normalizing their struggles, but they also learned the impact of violence on their loved ones. Listening to other people and their honest and open sharing of their experiences inspired and
also helped them to stay focussed on their change process. It kept them mindful that they had problems and needed to continue working on improving themselves.

Thematic category 4(12)-a Example 1: James
It really is. It really is. And today I have other men who I have, like a circle, like a network of men who are in similar...similar paths as I'm on now, or have been in that pathway, been on that pathway in my past so that, I have some people that I can trust and identify with. Understand. And they really help me on my, during my tough days or moments of despair if you will. I have these people in place today in my life. So I'm not doing this alone. like I'm not doing this alone. And I find that extremely extremely helpful. I always carried this thought or had this attitude that no one could understand me. And today I don't carry that belief. I don't carry that thought anymore. Because, you know, there are people who can identify with me. And so life for me today is a whole lot different in such a short time. So, it's coming up to five months. You know, the P program really helped me. Sixteen weeks, I'm going back, I'm signing a confidentiality form so that I can go back on a voluntary basis. For myself. I find it really helpful for my recovery. I mean, personally, I would...I'm sure a lot of men would like to say this, but...I would make it longer. I really would. I would make it longer.

b. Helping others to change. They also felt that they owed people around them, as many people helped them in their change process, and that giving back to people around them who are struggling with similar issues helped them during their recovery process. Some of the men were actively trying to reach out to those people who were experiencing similar struggles.

Thematic category 4(12)-b Example 1: James
I want to give back. I want to give back and I need to be able to have some good recovery in order to give that away. And ah, so I'm going to continue that recovery, continue to build on that foundation that I have established and I'm going to be able to maybe help another man, maybe save a life, I don't know. So, my unfortunates in my past I look today as my fortunate, you know. That's my belief and I think that's my purpose, that's been my purpose. So, that's basically where my belief system is.

(13) Finding the purpose and meaning in life. Some of the men explored and searched their soul to find the purpose and meaning of their lives. Finding meaning and purpose helped them stay focussed on their change process. One of the
men stated that his near-death experience gave him a new perspective on life. All this gave him a direction to move forward to and makes his life worthwhile and meaningful. He feels confident with the direction in which he is moving. Some of them found purpose in becoming a good father to their children. They attempted to break the cycle of violence to set their course straight and try not to pass the effect of violence onto the next generation. They reached out to their children to have an open conversation with them.

Thematic category 4(13) Example 1: James
That meaningful purpose brings so much joy. It brings so much joy.

Thematic category 4(13) Example 2: Ryan
When I got injured in 200X, I kind of wondering why they told me to come back when I was on the other side. On the other side of the spirit side. I've seen my grandfather, I recall my grandfather. I seen my grandmother. I seen my grand-uncles and aunties – so no, you've got to go back. You've got a gift. So, I came back.

(14) Relying on higher power for healing and intervention. This theme involves the men's experience of using spirituality or a higher power (God) to intervene in the situation and heal them. Their childhood abuse hurt them emotionally and affected their body, mind, and soul. They needed to rely on the higher power to heal and to help them desist from violence. Some of the men experienced surrendering themselves to a higher power to make change. One of the men experienced prayer to cope with violence at home when he was growing up. He felt that his prayer improved the situation and settled the relationship with his uncle.

Thematic category 4(14) Example 1: James
The healing must come from a belief, a belief that is... I guess on a spiritual guideline. You know, because of the abuse, past abusive events. It left me spiritually damaged, you know. It left me emotionally damaged. Immensely, spiritually, physically, emotionally damaged. So, for me to be able to...move forward. You know, I need to, I needed to be able to identify
with something or some power greater than myself. You know, not necessarily meaning like a religious belief, but more or less a spiritual belief, in the sense of...moral beliefs.

Thematic category 4(14) Example 2: Ryan
There's where the prayers come from. I pray for him. I pray for the creator to come down and give him his blessings of taking that anger away. Now, he's starting to stand up and he speaks to the family now. Ya. And he doesn't come home drunk no more. He comes home sober and he talks to his sister. He talks to his nephews and nieces. And that's change that he's made. It's not what I did. But I prayed for him. And it's good to pray. It's good to pray and now I look at it now. It's working.

(15) Experiencing progress and change from time to time helps move one forward.
Some of the men were experiencing the positive consequences of their change as they progressed through their change process. As their behaviour changed, they noticed that people around them started connecting with them and showed them honour and respect. They felt much happier, positive feedback as a result of their actions. Seeing a product of their change made them feel confident and encouraged them that they were doing the right thing. Checking their progress from time to time empowered them to continue working on positive change in their lives.

Thematic category 4(15) Example 1: Randy
We...people these days tend not to spend so much time reflecting on their lives. So it's nice to – that's why I see a counsellor every now and then. It's nice to sit down and reflect on it as well. But um, overall I....with me having to explain to you how things have changed and how anger management has helped made me realize that I have a lot of good progress with that and I'm heading in the right direction. And, I do feel that I'm going to succeed in my life. And taking control of my life. Instead of just letting anger take control of it.

(16) Experiencing not being abandoned and not being given up upon.
Some of the men experienced unconditional love and forgiveness from their family members, in spite of their violence and abuse over a long period of time. Having
someone who had faith in them, who trusted that they could change and that they were truly good human beings deep down, was helpful for them to continue moving forward in their change process. Unconditional love and caring touched their hearts, as they had never experienced such love when growing up. Some of the men felt that their relationship with their sons was an important part of their journey towards change. One had experienced love for the very first time from his son, and that experience helped him take courage to face his issues and start the change process. The men also appreciated how their therapists, doctors, and other social supports had helped them, and they were grateful that they could experience their trust, love, care, and concern. All this support helped them to recover.

Thematic category 4(16) Example 1: Paul
Unconditional love. No matter what I had done, that was okay. It wasn't okay, but he still loved me. See, and I think that was...because my dad wouldn't give me...he still would not tell me that he loved me, eh? And at that time my mom wasn't telling me that either. But here's my own kid telling me that he loves me. Even though he's seen me drinking and doing very stupid things and stuff you know. He still loved me. So I think I slowly let him love me. And that was why I wanted to improve. I wanted to be to the place where I could love him too. As much as what he loved me.

(17) Hindrance to change. The process of change can take a long time and requires much effort and patience. The men felt that they needed to keep working on their change. The change process was a constant and sometimes discouraging battle for them. Being identified as "violent and abusive men" or attending an "anger management group" had the potential to be stigmatizing for them. They were afraid people might prejudge them and that such stigma and shame could make it difficult for them to openly seek help. Some of the men felt powerless and marginalized by society and the legal system. Some of the men also felt stigmatized
They felt that in today's society, men are bound by concepts of masculinity and manliness by which people think that men should not seek help or show their weaknesses to others. It was difficult for them to seek help and to share emotions. Some of the men also felt that hardening their hearts and being stubborn got them into more trouble. These attitudes prevented them from listening to other people's advice.

Thematic category 4(17) Example 1: Randy
First of all, most people, most anger issues are in men and men are just naturally born to not want to accept help. It's the way society teaches and it's also a sign of weakness. If I accept help, then it must mean I'm not good enough. And animalistic instincts you don't show anyone you're not good enough. So, you don't – even a lot of people go to anger management, they don't tell their friends. And it's also just....when you also accept that you need help, you also accept failure. You don't need help if your succeeding. You don't need help if you doing well, right? So, it's like going to school. You don't go to anger management. You don't go to anger management to get a certificate after. You have court ordered anger management where you go more or less just to say you went. But for those who choose to go, do you go to get the certification? If that's not it, you won't go to school if you knew everything. You want to go to school if you are...smarter than the professor. You don't go to school if you're going to end up teaching the professor. Just like how Einstein dropped out of school. Right? First of all, it's a waste of time, waste of money. I can be doing so much more with my time, money and energy. So, accepting that you're going to...need help and accepting that you're a failure. And angry. People don't like that.

This section presented details about the four thematic categories and 22 thematic subcategories of male participants' experiences of process of change in this study. The participants identified how violence and abuse intruded into their lives and how they became like the perpetrators whom they once feared and by whom they felt unjustly treated. These were significant themes to provide a context of their process of change. Within such a process, beginnings and transitions of change were also identified.
Female Participants' Categories and Themes

The following Table 5 is a summary of this study’s four female participants’ categories and themes about their experiences. Four thematic categories and 6 thematic subcategories were emerged. A detailed description of female participants' themes follows.
Table 5

Female Participants' Themes

1. Difficulty of Breaking Ties
   (1) Experiencing Conflicting Feelings of Love and Giving up
   (2) Attempted to Improve the Situation

2. Moving Forward
   (1) Physical and Mental Exhaustion
   (2) Taking Care of Oneself and Becoming Independent
   (3) Meeting With Other Women Who Were in a Similar Situation was Extremely Helpful.
   (4) Contributing in the Society so That Society Will Change

3. Women's Experience of Violence and Abuse
   (1) Men's Attempts to Keep Power and Control Over Their Partners
   (2) Women's Struggle With Blaming, Self-Doubt, Confusion, and Crazy Making
   (3) Men's Use of “Bait and Hook”
   (4) Issues of Stalking
   (5) Lack of Appropriate Social Support
   (6) Deliberate, Manipulative, and Cunning Former Offenders

4. Changed Men
   (1) Women's Needs to be Able to Fully Trust Their Former Partners
   (2) Men's Taking Responsibility
      a. Taking responsible for his life
         i. Purpose for change
         ii. Resolving his own issues
         iii. Becoming an independent, mature, and fair individual
      b. Acknowledging and taking responsibility for the impact of one’s behaviour on the lives of the women and children and the pain and suffering that it caused
      c. Being accountable for what he has done
      d. Being respectful of the women and children's choice to live life independently
   (3) Lost Hope for Men's Change
   (4) Owing a Sincere Apology to the Children
Detailed Descriptions of Female Participants' Themes

1. Difficulty of breaking ties.

(1) Experiencing conflicting feelings of love and giving up. Because the women were seriously affected by violence and abuse, they struggled to deal with their emotional ties to their partners and went through the grieving process for losing their intimate relationships. Because of this grief, the women felt resentful toward their partners for the damage they caused them and their children.

Thematic category 1(1) Example 1: Cathy
I'm glad to be out of it. And yet I still miss him. I still miss those things. And you wish like it could be that way. It's hard for both parties, you know. And then when I get really sick and in lots of pain, then my hatred comes out. And I really hate him for what he's done to me. So I have to struggle with that. And now, I'm to the point where I don't even want to be in a relationship ever again.

(2) Attempted to improve the situation. When the women were in the abusive relationships, they tried repeatedly to make their partners change and to improve their relationships. The women worked hard to try to stop violence and abuse to improve the situation. However, the women stayed in the relationships for various reasons: They cared for their partner’s well-being and had emotional ties to them; they also thought their children needed a father, and they wanted to keep the family unit intact. Considering breaking up the family was complicated due to factors such as accumulated joint properties and assets, complex legal procedures, and so on. Some of the women also felt that culturally they were expected to not give up but persevere.

Thematic category 1(2) Example 1: Marina
We did go through counselling with Mr. A. We did almost a year of that between 200X and 200X and then he decided – my ex-husband decided he did not want to go anymore, and about a month and a half, two months later, he
assaulted me and that's when I said I had enough. That was it. So it's not like we didn't try and reach out and get professional help for the issues. And then we separated and he tried to come back and forth, you know.

2. Moving forward.

(1) Physical and mental exhaustion. In the beginning the women had hope that their partners would stop their abusive behaviour, and they remained with the men as long as they could. Gradually the women lost hope as their partners continued to be abusive and never took responsibility for their actions. The women became completely exhausted physically and emotionally, until there was no energy left in them. Consequently, they needed to move on to save themselves and their children.

Thematic category 2(1) Example 1: Ann
I think there's so much to do, I was working – I could only work part-time because I had to care for the children as well. And they were heavily involved with extra-curricular activities, which meant me having to drive and pick up and drop off and you know? And, I was both busy at work, and at home. And my whole life revolved around just getting through the day and trying to be a provider and trying to meet the needs of my children, and then along with that, my mom became ill. And then I was doing...everything to the point where I couldn't really handle it too well, so I had to take a leave of absence. My health also deteriorated. And what happened to was, when my daughter was at X college, I had a phone call from a professor saying that she...had taken C to emergency because C, my daughter was suicidal. ...it hit me so much. It was like a freight train hit me. It got to the point where I couldn't even drive a car; because everything seemed to be happening so quickly. so I used to walk to the station, and I could barely walk there. It's a ten minute walk. ....what was more immediate was my daughter, to meet her needs. To meet my mother's needs, to meet my son's needs. And, I weighed 75 pounds. I was, you know, so....so I think it's sort of like a level of survival. And then meet the needs of others. So, I think that that just shifted. ... I look back and think, 'I don't know how we did it.' You know I used to think – I was so exhausted on so many different levels, I used to think when I was driving, 'If I got hit by a car, I'd be okay.' You know? 'It'd just be okay.' And then I'd realize, 'No. The kids are still young enough I have to-' And that helped me get through, keep going.
(2) Taking care of oneself and becoming independent. The women needed to start taking care of their physical and emotional needs for themselves and for their children. They needed to become more independent and increase their options.

Thematic category 2(2) Example 1: Pam
I tell women that you can't worry about taking care of everyone else until you take care of yourself first. Because they run themselves ragged because they're trying to run interference with their children, making sure the children don't see anything, you know, making sure he's okay. That he keeps his job, even if it's for a selfish reason that you need that income in order to be able to support yourself. But they don't take time to look after themselves. I also teach them how I got through the criminal harassment trial is I would promise myself a treat afterwards. Every time I had to go do something bad like that. I would give myself a treat. So that instead of focusing on the trial, I was focused on what I was going to do after the trial. And women have found that really works. With one woman it was A shows. She loved A, but never took the time to sit and watch them. So her treat after having to go do something miserable to do with him, then she'd go home and watch A. So that was what her focus was always on after, not just on the trial or whatever and worked really well with women. It was continuous reinforcement that if you don't look after yourself, you're not going to be any use to anybody.

Thematic category 2(2) Example 2: Marina
I'm just standing up for myself. I have made my boundaries very clear. I don't put children in the middle of whatever he's going on dealing with and stuff. But yeah. And yes, he would use the children in my view.

(3) Meeting with other women who were in a similar situation was extremely helpful. Meeting with other women who were in similar situations was extremely helpful for support as it was empowering and comforting for them. Knowing other women in such situations could also help normalize their struggles and pain.

Thematic category 2(3) Example 1: Pam
I started in a drop-in support group. Which was great to hear other women's stories. ... That's how I kept my sanity.

Thematic category 2(3) Example 2: Marina
I think hearing that other women are going through the same thing, and knowing I'm not the only one going through this stuff. So...I found that helpful. I'm not the only one out there.
(4) Contributing in the society so that society will change. The women got actively involved in social services to fight against violence and abuse at home. It gave them a sense of hope by actively engaging in and facilitating change in society for the safety of other women and children.

Thematic category 2(4) Example 1: Marina
I think for me, I mean I've done quite a bit of counselling, but I also turned to restorative justice and I took claim with that, and I've worked with victims and offenders. And I've worked with it because it provides a sense of hope.

3. Women's experience of violence and abuse. What constitutes violence and abuse in not only simply the physical act but the nature and intent of such behaviours. The nature of violence and abuse includes (a) a threat to make others do certain things without respecting their personal choices and will and to take away others ability to speak freely; (b) a power and control to make oneself feel confident and powerful by oppressing intimate partners and children; (c) a blaming and displacing of responsibility onto intimate partners to avoid facing one’s own guilt and pain; (d) creating confusion to avoid facing one’s own issues, avoiding responsibility, and not talking about the issues directly; and (e) being cunning and manipulative to avoid being held accountable for their behaviours and not taking responsibility for their own lives.

(1) Men's attempts to keep power and control over their partners. The women felt that their partners controlled them by stalking them and inflicting other forms of violence and abuse. They also felt that the men were committing these violent and abusive acts to try to gain control and power: The men felt so out of control in their lives that they were desperate to have some control.
Thematic category 3(1) Example 1: Pam
As he lost control over his own life, he tried to take more control over mine. And I think this happens a lot. ... They can't control anything around them, so they try to control the closest thing to them. Lost all their power. They've lost all their power. They have no power because they can't get a job, can't. The earth is crumbling around them, you know. Earthquakes and whatever, they have no control over. So they have to control something, so they control you. So he started getting more controlling.

Thematic category 3(1) Example 2: Marina
I've tried. I've talked to a woman counsellor about this (stalking problem). She said, 'Don't try to put yourself in his shoes.' At first I felt that it was vengeance. Now I feel more like it is a game. It's a game and it's power.

(2) Women's struggle with blaming, self-doubt, confusion, and crazy making. The men blamed and displaced responsibility on the women for their violence and abuse. The men also made statements that degraded the women's self-worth and seeded self-doubt in their judgement and their experiences. They made the women believe this degradation so intently that the women struggled with self-doubt and a sense of guilt for a prolonged period of time. In some cases, the women's friends and even their families did not believe them, which exacerbated their self-doubt. Some women struggled for a long time with self-doubt and wondered what they had done to make their partners act violently. The women felt as if the men were brainwashing them by blaming them and controlling and replacing the women's reality. It was even difficult for the women to identify themselves as victims of violence and abuse and to recognize that they were in abusive relationships. Being blamed was confusing to the women. They often downplayed violence and abuse as a result. Not being able to feel confident and sure about their own perceptions and reality was painful, overwhelming, a heavy burden that generated guilty feelings in the women. When society, the legal system, and people
outside did not stand up firmly for violence and abuse, it caused further emotional harm to the women, as it affirmed their self-doubt.

Thematic category 3(2) Example 1: Pam
I spoke out and I knew on a intellectual level that it wasn't me, it was him. ... But one day I was just coming out of a meeting and I was walking across the street and it all of the sudden dawned that it was all him and his behaviour and it really didn't have a- but there was a change in my attitude towards the situation. ... That they (female victims) can intellectually know....but they need to know in their heart and soul that it's got nothing to do with them. And then they can continue to live their life. Otherwise they're always carrying the baggage. Right? The emotional baggage with them, until they get to that realization. ... and to try to get her to believe that her gut instincts and what she feels is correct, is a really hard job.

Thematic category 3(2) Example 2: Marina
the term crazy-making was given to me by one of the counsellors. A lot of what my ex does could be termed as crazy-making. Everybody telling me there's no solutions, there's no short-term fix. Ah, not to let him be intrusive in my life even though he is trying to be intrusive in all areas of my life. If he enters my head, say 'Get off the bus'. That's what one of the counsellors said was, 'You know, he may send you all these e-mails and everything. You can look at them, but whatever. Delete them, go out. If he enters your head, tell him 'Get off the bus'. Don't carry him around with you.' Ah, that's been helpful. (Interviewer: "What does that crazy-making mean?") Crazy-making? just a whole bunch of stuff that has – the confusion and saying stuff and I mean, I have walked away from a good portion of my friends. I've walked away from half of my family. I also walked away from his family. Because if I say black, he says it's white. If I say, 'Let's meet in the middle, he'll say- You know? There is no, there is no compromise. There is no...there is nothing. After our divorce trial, he fired his lawyers. And it took me a year and a half to get the restraining order filed. It was like, well this and well that, well this and well that. The divorce order wasn't filed, so I couldn't get child support. Nothing. All these crazy things going on. It's like, let's get this over and done with. And then telling my friends that I'm the one not doing it. And back to that message of what he did with my daughter of 'Mom won't let me see you' over spring break. But sending an e-mail to the lawyer saying, 'I'm working over spring break, so I can't take the children.' And to me that's crazy-making. Just stuff like that where it's difficult and confusing. There's a grain of salt in there, the rest is just grown so out of proportion and just..... ... I would try and have boundaries and I would stop. I have told him a thousand times to stop. I think lawyers have told him...I don't know how many times to stop. And just...we just- it's ridiculous.
(3) Men's use of “bait and hook”. Some women felt that their ex-partners used “bait and hook” tactics to keep them in the relationship. It was difficult to judge when to leave.

Thematic category 3(3) Example 1: Pam
What it is and what I like better is the new theory....it's a bait and hook. It's like a fishermen. They throw out the nice whatever, nice feelings, and then as soon as they got you back into that relationship, the bad behaviour comes. Once you're back, then comes the hook. Like the fishermen. I think the behaviour's more like that then the honeymoon cycle. … They would bait you with nice, lovely things like they do with the fish, right? And then as soon as you bite, they- you're hooked. You're back into the insanity.

(4) Issues of stalking. Stalking was/is a serious issue for female participants when leaving their relationships. These female participants experienced or are experiencing stalking even after they managed to leave their partners. Stalking was or has continued for several years in some cases. The women felt exhausted with continuous and unpredictable unwanted interaction and disturbances from their ex-partners. They felt confused not knowing the reason why their partners were in contact, felt scared, anxious, and stressed with the persistent harassment. It was like emotional torture with a constant reminder that their ex-partners were out there.

Thematic category 3(4) Example 1: Marina
My life is very calm and quiet and peaceful. Aside from dealing with his e-mails and that intrusion. It's not physical violence, so I guess that's a good thing, but my car being vandalized, to me that was a lot. I think he's had people follow me. I'm pretty sure I've been out and I've had people photograph me. And I've taken photos….ah, before you go to trial, his girlfriend and her friends were there taking photos of me in my vehicle there for the discovery. They were out there, and his lawyer spoke to him about it. My lawyer of course made an issue about it. But it's like, why am I being followed? People, I'm not a rock star. But you start feeling like, you know. Like if I have a piece of paper that protects me in my house. Some days, I don't want to leave my house. I have to fight that feeling and just go on with my life. I don't want to have that – I don't want that control. I don't want to feel like I have to be afraid of every little...little thing of what's next? So..... ... Control over, like I mentioned, he knows where I work even though I have not
told him and I don't know where he got the information from. What's next in that? In messages he'll say, 'I'm going to contact your employer.' It's like, 'Well, what are you going to contact my employer for and say?' You know, and I guess there's a level of anxiety. That's the feeling with this stuff. What is he going to do next? That's what it feels like. And it seems like...it's almost like a reminder that he's there. Maybe that's what his intentions are. I don't know. I've received phone calls at 12:30 at night from his phone and....nobody's there and I'm not calling him back to see what he wants. Like what are you doing?

(5) Lack of appropriate social support. The women felt they were not getting sufficient and effective support in the community. They were disappointed with the lack of understanding and support. They felt abandoned, confused, and helpless with a lack of support and accountability. Lack of understanding and support in the community also affirmed their partners' blame and displacement of responsibility onto the women. The participants felt that lack of accountability can also fail to stop violence and abuse in the community. The women felt that society and the community needed to be more accountable for violence and abuse. The women believed that having more and accurate information (e.g., housing, financial, legal, etc.) could be helpful to affirm that they deserved and were justified in seeking help, to create more options for the women and children, and to empower them.

Thematic category 3(5) Example 1: Ann
When I'm told over and over again by my ex-spouse how I am not worthy. And then when I meet law-enforcement people who think my story, my experiences are not worthy of their attention. The police officer gets up and goes to write something in the file. When the Senate Committee says these things about the women who have experienced the violence ('In my day, a woman would stand by her man.' 'Women are wimps.'), when the judiciary does not think it is an important enough situation to have a decision in a timely fashion. When it takes three years to do three months. They don't seem to realize. They again reinforce the attitude that I am not worthy. My children are not worthy.

Thematic category 3(5) Example 2: Pam
And through the policies and so forth, they can see that their reality is right.
That their belief that something's wrong in this relationship is correct. And that the police or whoever is supposed to do something about it. Whether the police do- like with that woman, the police still weren't doing their job, but she knew that it was because they weren't doing their job. It wasn't because she was wrong. So that makes for a more empowered woman.

(6) Deliberate, manipulative, and cunning former offenders. The women found their partners' violence and abuse controlled and deliberate. Their ex-partners made conscious choices to be violent and knew how far they could push to hurt the women without breaking the law. The violence was also cunning in nature in how it was delivered. The women felt the emotional abuse was especially subtle and cunning.

Thematic category 3(6) Example 1: Cathy
My dad now, he said men that hit women are coward. They're just cowards, because they would not do that to somebody their own size. A's not going to go to work and get all drunk up with his buddies at night and pick a fight with someone his size or bigger than him or slap him or push him or shove him. It's in the privacy of your own home with the woman you supposedly love. That's who you take it out on. … cunning, it's the right word. … And that's- and then he'll say, 'Oh, I was so drunk, I don't remember.' Well believe me, I don't care how drunk he was, he wouldn't have picked on somebody his own size. That's right. He's still picking and choosing. No matter how drunk he is. And nor would he hit me or do anything in front of anybody. So he's got all control when somebody else is around, so I don't know about losing control because how can you say that you're losing control when he's only losing it when he's alone with me? He's not losing it with his friends, he's not losing it when we have company. He's not losing it at my family's place or when we're on a road trip. You know? He's not losing it then. So I don't know how much of it is control, or losing control. You know, I hear men, ‘I just lost control.’ How did you lose control when you got control under a different circumstance?

4. Changed men

(1) Women's need to be able to fully trust their former partners. The women experienced and heard so many insincere apologies over the years. They experienced their partners as extremely kind and caring until all of the sudden they
turned violent and abusive. Thus, trust was broken, and the women became cautious of trusting their partners. The women believed that the true character of the men showed when they disagreed. The men tried to bait their partners, but they could not keep up with superficial niceness. Any display of restitution and apology made the women doubt their intent.

Thematic category 4(1) Example 1: Pam
I'm very hesitant to accept the idea he has changed because if I find myself in a situation with him, and he strikes out, I know there's no recourse. Like there's no service provider, no police or anything to help. so it's like I have to be able to really, really trust in my perceptions in order to accept that he's changed.

Thematic category 4(1) Example 2: Marina
Before, the way he would apologize would be flowers or jewelry. 'I'm sorry. You're the love of my life, blah blah blah. I love you. Blah blah blah'. You know. All of that kind of stuff. We did with Mr. A, I believe it was EFT (emotion focused therapy). The therapy with and everything. And he found that very uncomfortable and very difficult to do with actually discussing what he had done. Um....I think that's why he didn't want to continue doing that, but....I think I would trust more of an apology of that sort... than I would with the flowers and the apologies and all of that. I mean...I don't know if he could apologize enough. For many of the things that he has done.

(2) Men's taking responsibility.

a. Taking responsible for his life. The women felt that the men needed to be responsible for their lives in order to change.

i. Purpose for change. The women believed that the issues of violence and abuse were their partners' own. The men needed to change not to reunite with their partners and children but for their own good. The men needed to take responsibility to make nonviolent choices.

Thematic category 4(2) Example 1: Pam
The change is not for the benefit of the individual wanting the change. You know, it's not going to manipulate that so that he gets something else. So
that he gets the relationship back. It has to be there. And the idea of well...the idea of an adult inflicting pain and suffering on to others, especially children because of something's that's stemmed in their childhood is not acceptable. It's not an excuse in any way, shape or form. That adult has thinking abilities to realize this. So, you know, I can see it happening, but...I hope that as children become adults, they become stronger and more caring about others so that they don't inflict the same damage to other people.

**ii. Resolving their own issues.** The women felt that their partners needed to work to resolve their own unfinished business and issues around violence and abuse. They felt that their partners needed to be aware of and courageously face their issues and understand how their behaviours impacted the women and children as a result.

Thematic category 4(2)-a-ii Example 1: Ann
It was shocking. Prior to getting married, I knew that he had some anger issues. I thought it had to do with his mother, who would always be on his case. But then what was startling was...after our daughter was born, he became more violent. … What was the uppermost situation, the apex on the violence, was when his mom was dying of terminal cancer and that's when it seemed to explode. To me, I think he had unfinished business with her. And he was not able to convey how he felt. And I think deep in there, there was a love for his mom, but there was also such anger with her as well. So it exploded when she was dying.

Thematic category 4(2)-a-ii Example 2: Marina
I don't want to hate him. I've started looking at it more that he has a problem. He has a problem. I did ask the courts for a mental health assessment on him at this point. Because of Charter Rights and you know, and he refused to. Both of my children have ADHD. My ex, he also has ADHD. He has been suicidal in the past when he was a child, related to Ritalin. So...you know, I know that mentally there may be some things. There was also drug use. He had to go through drug testing through the process to see the children. He was using cocaine and other drugs along the lines as well. I don't think that's an excuse for his behaviour. I don't, I absolutely don't. People that use drugs and don't. But I do think that there's something wrong with him and I wish the best and I hope that one day he does get the help. The help he needs and take responsibility for some of the stuff that he's done. And I'm sure it'll be tough to face. I just, I want my life and...have your life. So, I've moved on. There's kind of like a consistent pull. You know? He wants me to move back to the Lower Mainland. Just stuff like that. You don't control my life.
iii. Becoming an independent, mature, and fair individual. The women felt that their partners needed to become independent and take responsibility for following up on the legal and financial obligations (e.g., child support) for which they were accountable.

Thematic category 4(2)-a-iii Example 1: Ann
There was also the financial component. The financial component was such that...he did things for three years to delay the court proceedings. And during those three years, he paid one year of child support. At the end of the custody and access hearings, he was supposed to provide our children with payments to help support them and he didn't. And so, it was up to me to go to the family maintenance department and go through that process. And when I went to the interview, the person said, 'No, there's no chance you can get it.' There's some chance, or you could get it all.' They don't know. But at that – it was deemed by the judge. It was in the final papers that the children would receive this money. And at that time, I weighed 75 pounds. And the doctor, specialist said that I was going to have kidney failure in my internal organs and my internal organs were going to shut down and I would die. So my lawyer at that time said that I was not strong enough to try to get the support payments. And so then I decided that I had to live – because my children were young and they still needed me. So you see, we've lived without that, without support payments. During those three years on the court, I lost all my savings. Just... at the end, my ex-spouse was granted half of my pension plus interest from the time they expected me to retire. So, he got a whole bunch of money, he did not provide child support payments. I think if he were to come back and say, 'I changed,' he would have to show me that he could...not provide for my children, because the children are now adults, but he has to be financially independent.

b. Acknowledging and taking responsibility for the impact of their own behaviour on the lives of the women and children and the pain and suffering that it caused. The women wanted their partners to take full responsibility for their behaviour and the harm done to the women and children. The women also wanted the men to fully face and acknowledge the extent of the pain and harm caused to them and their children. The women believed that their ex-partners should be well aware of their pain as they observed what the women and children went through. By
taking responsibility and being accountable for their own decisions and choices, the 
men would acknowledge their actions. Making excuses to justify and rationalize their 
abusive behaviour showed they were not taking responsibility for their actions.

Thematic category 4(2)-b Example 1: Marina
He doesn't admit to any of the stuff or to any, and he doesn't realize what the 
impact has. It has an impact on my health, it has an impact on- definitely on 
the children. It has an impact on so, so many things. And he needs to take 
that responsibility. He has done these actions and it has a domino effect all 
down the line. And it seems like every two months, I'm making a police 
report. You know? Keep reporting, keep reporting. I know the A city 
RCMP has talked to him recently. I know that, but he takes no, you know, no real like....I think he'll admit to certain things, but I don't think he 
will...grasp how, how big it can be. How much this has affected people.

c. Being accountable for what partners have done. The women felt that 
taking responsibility requires the men to be held accountable for what they have done 
to the women and children. The women did not want to have their partners go 
through extensive legal penalties, but they wanted the men to be held accountable for 
their behaviours in some ways. This accountability included accepting the 
consequences of harm being done by the men.

Thematic category 4(2)-c Example 1: Marina
I would like to see him be held accountable at some point, but the way the 
system is, I'm not expecting it truly to pass him. You know, I don't want him 
to go to jail. That's not what I ever wanted for him, but I want him to get the 
help that I think he needs. And that is that this kind of behaviour is not, you 
know, it's not acceptable.

d. Being respectful of the women and children's choice to live life 

independently. The women wished the men would respect the women’s decisions to 
live their lives separately. They wanted their ex-partners to respect their lives and 
boundaries. The women believed that their partners would leave them alone and 
wish them happiness if they fully took responsibility for their behaviour and accepted
the consequences of their harmful actions.

Thematic category 4(2)-d Example 1: Ann
I don't I would ever welcome him back. Because I'm a different person now. I don't think I could ever accept him back, because of the damage he did to the children. Both children witnessed violence. And at age 18...my daughter was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. ... It wasn't an easy journey for her. ... I can't forgive him for the damage he did to the children. He (my son) has manifested in other ways, I think, the violence that he witnessed.

Thematic category 4(2)-d Example 2: Marina
But the responsibility, if he was willing and ready to take responsibility and actually understand, that would be amazing, but I think it would be more for him than anything. I just want it to not happen anymore. I don't want those e-mails. I don't want that.

(3) Lost hope for men's change. The women were not hopeful for a change in the men’s behaviour, as they tried a number of possible means to promote change in their partners, but change did not happen. As a result, the women moved on to better and more fulfilling lives. However, the participants felt that making this change may take a lifetime of hard work, if it is even possible.

Thematic category 4(3) Example 1: Marina
I think I've been through that before. He assaulted me and we separated. And he came back to me after saying that he had – months later saying that he had changed? And it – he hadn't. And that, and I have offered him options of mediating. I've given him options of sitting down, like family group conferencing. I've had to sit down and work out what's actually best for our children. We have two children together. And he just, he doesn't seem willing to if – I don't think he could ever truly, truly change.

(4) Owing a sincere apology to the children. The women felt that if the men fully changed and took full responsibility for their behaviours, then the women would like their partners to make a sincerely apology to their children for the serious harm done to them. They suffered significantly and believed this pain required serious restitution.
Thematic category 4(4) Example 1: Ann
In the past I've had letters. When he'd blow up, there were notes and apologies and flowers and chocolate and I'd accept them and the same thing. Because of experience, that is not important to me. Because I'm able to live a simple life, you know, I don't go for vacations and things like that. That's okay. I live a simple life. My home is modest and whatnot. And I can live comfortably knowing I've done it all on my own. And having to pay....start all over again. And having paid off my mortgage. I've done it all on my own. What I have is mine and that's fine. So restitution, apologies to me, it's for the children.

These are themes of female participants' experiences of being abused at home and their senses of changes in the male participants in their lives. The female participants struggled greatly with their partners' blame as a cause of violence and abuse and the community's indifference toward to holding these men accountable for their violence. Lack of accountability exacerbated the women's self-doubt. The female participants longed for their partners to take full responsibility for themselves and their behaviours and acknowledge how much the women and children suffered because of their actions.

**Summary**

Acquired narratives were analyzed thematically to capture men's and women's experiences, perceptions, and meanings of successful change process. These themes construct experiences of change and present such experiences as meaningful for both men and women. Themes are not independent variables, but they make sense and become meaningful when understood them in relation to other themes. These themes will be discussed in Chapter 6.
Chapter 6: Discussion

The six individual unique stories of change that were coconstructed through my in-depth interactions with male participants revealed individual unique contexts, transition points, significant episodes, sequences, and meanings of being violent and of becoming authentic to who they are. Their stories need to be read closely with the results of thematic analysis because that analysis tells how themes are related to each other and to the participants’ desires and future directions.

The participants’ stories depict their struggles to find their ways and meaning in their lives. Reading their stories tells me that violence and abuse intruded at some point in their lives and hurt them, just like they intruded into their loved ones' and children's lives with violence and abuse. This page of their lives’ chapters had not been told frequently before, as it had been subordinated as their "violent offenders’" narrative became a dominant story. These first pages of their chapters are important, critical pages to understand who they are, where they are right now, and in which direction they might be moving. The stories describe how they were hurt by violence and abuse; how they struggled to live with such hurt; how they hurt their loved ones; and how they took courage to face such hurt, shame, and guilt to reclaim who they truly are. It was a humbling experience for me to be immersed in their personal stories and to experience their perseverance and courage to live constructively with the consequences of their behaviours as a lifelong process.

The stories of change that were shared by male participants and female participants have also provided a deeper understanding and valuable insight into many aspects of change. First, unlike current concepts regarding change in violent
and abusive men whose process of change is considered to take place independently of the process of recovery of the victims, the results of this study indicate the value of considering a coconstructed meaning with respect to change. The process of change that occurred needed to make sense and be meaningful to both the offenders and the victims involved.

Second, in contrast to the current trend of deductively conceptualizing the change process, inductively derived information about the change process sheds light on the ways in which change occurs. These results concur with Frankl’s (1988) notion of dimensional ontology, which emphasizes the importance of the integration of multiple dimensions in order to develop holistic views of phenomena. The process of change needs to be viewed beyond early theories of development that tend to be prescribed from the laws of nature, consisting simply of an elaboration of enlargement, cycle, and horizontal stage theories with fixed sequences of chronological orders (Mahoney, 1991). However, the dismissal of early theories regarding change in violent and abusive men is not the intent here. A natural or physical law, for instance, requires an understanding of the process of change, and one cannot ignore such dimensions of the process of change. However, the results provide a meaningful aspect of the process of change with respect to the experience of men who are violent and abusive, and challenge researchers to implement and integrate these meanings to establish more holistic views of the phenomenon. It is an attempt to bridge and balance “many calcified contrasts, particularly those between mind and body, head and heart, self and society and science and spirituality” (Mahoney, 2003, p. 3). This connection can be possible by integrating valuable
insights and contributions from major conceptual traditions in psychotherapy, such as
behavioural, biological, cognitive, existential-humanistic, psychodynamic, systems,
and transpersonal psychology (Mahoney, 2003).

**Meaning of Change**

The thematic analysis from a narrative perspective has provided a set of meanings and themes that render the process of change. The resulting meanings regarding the process of change are not independent of each other in the sense of being reduced and compartmentalized factors, but rather they provide a cluster of interconnected meanings that share similar qualities.

This qualitative study of the process of change indicates that change involves a complex, dynamic, contextual, and unique process for each individual within the context of the relationship of how each element of change makes sense, becomes meaningful, progresses, and unfolds. Thus, the process of change was described by participants using various metaphors including a healing process, a growth process, a maturing process, and a recovery process. The themes that emerged were a cluster of meanings for each participant, and these themes were connected to each other to become further meaningful as their unique processes of change. The change process tends to be dynamic and fluid wherein each theme can resonate, stir up, flow, create sequences, and on some occasions, create conflict situated within a unique time and in the context of the individuals’ life to eventually generate a deeper and more profound meaning with respect to change. People may engage in one or multiple themes of change simultaneously, and any theme can have an influence on other themes.
Some of the process of change, such as learning about violence (thematic category 4[4]), becoming aware of one's issue (4[3]), and making sense (4[6]) were more cognitively oriented, whereas other themes of change such as hitting rock bottom (4[1]), finding purpose of life (4[13]), experience not being abandoned (4[16]), and resolving the roots of anger (4[8]) were related to emotional experience. Other themes of the process of change, such as relying on a higher power (4[14]), were spiritual in nature. However, again, in a strict sense, these categories cannot be organized into definite and absolute sets of factors. For instance, becoming aware of one's issue (4[3]) can be cognitively experienced, but in this study, it also provided intensely emotional experiences for some of the men reflecting back on how their violent and abusive behaviours had harmed their loved ones. More importantly, these themes should not be treated as factors but as a set of meanings that the participants created. These themes are bundles of meaning that create the stories of their journeys of change. Some of these themes were more meaningful for some participants than others.

Contrary to the general conception of change, which implies "evolution" and "improvement," the results showed that change does not simply represent a gain but that it can also involve a process of letting go, making distinctions, creating separation, or finding clarification regarding the differences among each experience. For instance, some of the men experienced confusion between their familiarity with past experiences of physical and emotional pain, which they had felt from the violence and abuse they themselves had received from their own parents' and caregivers', and a healthy type of physical and emotional pain. They could not make
the distinction between the two; for them both experiences held similar meanings. As such, it proved to be a profound experience for the men finally to understand the differences inherent in such experiences.

Some of the themes of change indicated the occurrence of a sequential series of meaningful points. For instance, their experiences of hitting rock bottom (4[1]) indicated a transition point from being violent and abusive to making a change away from these behaviours. It indicated a meaningful and cathartic point of change for the men. This crisis often led them to become aware of an issue affecting them (4[3]). However, unlike in the linear model, thematic category 4(1) did not suggest the only point of catharsis that could occur and does not indicate a causal or correlational relationship. For some men, themes like learning about violence (4[4]), connecting with others (4[12]), experiencing not being abandoned (4[16]), experiencing one's positive self (4[10]), and finding the purpose of life (4[13]) were also meaningful points to facilitate change. Learning about violence (4[4]) helped some men better understand their behaviours and emotional experiences, and the knowledge gained inspired them to reflect at a deeper level and moved them towards finding a deeper meaning with respect to their experience. Connecting with others (4[12]) helped men realize the impact of violence and abuse and also helped them take courage to move forward. Thematic categories 4(16) and 4(10) may have confronted them with the unsettling gap between their current situations and the situation they may have wanted for themselves. These experiences often inspired them to be courageous to face their own issues (4[2]), put what they learned in the group into action (4[5]), explore how they become violent (4[6]), and desire to resolve the roots of anger.
Facing one's own issues and change were challenging and painful for everyone, and it is a life-long commitment.

At this point, the male participants simultaneously moved forward by taking responsibility (4[7]) and making amends (4[9]). In general, taking responsibility should occur before the offenders reach out to their victims to reconnect and making amends (Radzik, 2004). Making amends can potentially be used for offenders' self-serving purposes, possibly to alleviate their own guilt feelings. This use can be seen in the results of my study when comparing emerged themes between the male and the female participants. The female participants emphasized taking responsibility as one of the most critical elements of the offenders' change process; they did not stress making amends.

Furthermore, some offenders might approach their victims prematurely, before they are fully aware of their responsibility to the degree that their victims want them to be. The occurrence of premature reaching out and the feedback they receive from their partners on this issue had the potential of motivating them to reflect even more deeply about themselves and their actions. This process then can also potentially lead them to realize the depth of their partners' and children's hurt and motivate them to take even more responsibility for their actions.

The results suggest that the depth and richness of each experienced meaning becomes important, and each one can further inspire the creation or revision of other meanings to enhance the process of change. Thus, the process of change is complex, dynamic, distinct, and has a level of fluidity which is unique to each context, and which is required to be conceptualized in a qualitative manner.
More importantly, the meaning of change should also be coconstructed between the men themselves and their female partners and children, as well as any other people who have been negatively affected by violence and abuse. Change has to make sense and be meaningful to all who have been affected. As the social constructionist theory denotes, the reality of change is constructed through social interactions. In this jointly engaged action, the meaning is created within the conjunctions and coordination of action-supplementary actions in the relationship that people engage (Gergen, 1999). In other words, it is not so much about how men's and women’s actions of change influence each other but rather that they coconstruct what change means to both of them. For instance, many of the female partners chose to sever their connections with the men who had abused them. Their choice of absence can be seen as an action they have taken and as such, they can be seen to be actively participating within the process of creating meaning. This absence, as a matter of fact, is an act of resistance against such oppression (Wade, 1997). These interactions of meaning can create a meaning of change.

The process of change needs to make sense and to be meaningful for both the male offenders as well as for those who have been affected by their violence and abuse. In addition, meaning that people make together is not fixed (Gergen, 1999). Meaning can be revised or continuously refashioned (Gergen, 1999). Such process of change is interpersonal, intrapersonal, and contextual. Making meaning of change involves personal appraisal of the events as well as a process of gaining meaning through the interaction with others.
Taking Responsibility

This study has addressed the dimension of both the perpetrator’s and victim’s coconstruction of meaning in terms of the importance of taking responsibility. Contrary to what was postulated, the results indicate that the focus of men’s taking responsibility only for their abusive and violent behaviours and for the impact these had on their victims was not sufficient, but that they also sought out an existential aspect of taking self-responsibility in their lives (4[7]). These included: (a) being honest and open to oneself, (b) taking responsibility for one’s life, and (c) being accountable to oneself. This type of taking responsibility challenged the ways in which they wanted to live their lives and reclaimed their self-authority over their lives. The male participants asked themselves questions such as

- "Is this how I want to live my life?"
- "Am I happy to feel this way?"
- "I know it is painful to face my own issues, but would I want to continue seeing my children and partner feeling sad, hurt, and fearful?"
- "What can I do to move forward?"
- "Who can make changes in my life?"

Through this process, they came to the realization that they were the only ones who are, and can be, responsible for their lives. As several existential theorists have acknowledged (Brennan, 2003; Cooper, 2003; Yalom, 1980), “[The] individual is free to define life’s direction through a continued succession of choices, but ...this freedom also gives the individual responsibility for the outcomes of personal decisions, so that freedom is a course of anguish and dread” (Brennan, 2003, p. 280). The men came to understand that being fulfilled and living a meaningful life depended solely on their own attitudes and actions. As such, they realized that no one but themselves can bring contentment and meaning to their lives, and the ways in
which they create their own lives is a matter of personal choice.

This realization also concurs with Jenkins' (2007) important notion of focusing on questions pertaining to a desired mode of existence and the quality of lives and relationships. Such questions concern how one might be, what one might be capable of, and what is possible (Jenkins, 2010). They are not restrained by ideas of how one should live but rather about expansiveness regarding the possibilities of life. "Becoming ethical evokes creative processes in which we search for and clarify what is important for ourselves, our families, communities, cultures, environments, spirituality, and so on" (Jenkins, 2007, p. xii).

The men were mindful not to use the idea of taking responsibility for secondary gain, such as for enticing their partners back to them or acting out of guilt. Rather, they realized that taking responsibility was for themselves, for regaining control in their lives. The result was in line with the Morita therapy's concept of life and responsible living, where human beings are seen as having a full and unceasing desire for life, which not only consists of a self-preserving and self-actualizing motivation and energy but also coexists with the fear regarding one’s own physical mortality and social failure (Ishiyama, 1983). According to this philosophy, living life implies taking action and recognizing one’s desire for life while at the same time, accepting the fear and anxiety which comes with it (Ishiyama, 1983).

Although many of the male participants had experienced difficult childhoods, they refused to continue taking on the role of victim for their past hurts. They accepted the fact of their past hurt but no longer lived with self-pity and blame. They found that although past hurts could affect their current lives and relationships,
their childhood experiences were not responsible for their violence and abuse. They came to understand that only they could take responsibility for taking care of themselves, seeking help, and healing.

When they took responsibility for themselves and their lives, it led to constructive choice-making, which then flowed into constructive behaviours-taking. They started reaching out to others who were struggling with similar issues. They became more willing and open to sharing their experiences with others. The men also became accountable for themselves and for their daily behaviours. They monitored themselves with respect to their emotions and behaviours, confronting themselves if necessary, being honest with themselves, and making amends when they digressed. As such, they were making self-directed choices and taking responsibility for how they conducted their lives. These decisions also inspired them to make amends. Taking responsibility was closely tied to the theme of making amends (4[9]). Making amends is not possible without taking responsibility.

Furthermore, taking responsibility must be viewed as a process. As Langton et al. (2008) have argued, taking responsibility should not be viewed as two distinct variables but as being a continuum. Langton et al. argued that "dichotomous variables (e.g., denier/admitter) are poor proxies in such investigations, because they fail to reflect important aspect of offenders' clinical presentations and unduly restrict the range of such variables in statistical analyses" (p. 72). When taking responsibility is considered as a continuous variable, it predicts recidivism. The results in this current qualitative study also indicate that the process of taking responsibility and the
values that come out of such a process of making sense and meaning from one’s life and experiences create a richness of meaning.

Taking responsibility also implies living with the consequences of one’s actions. All of the female participants reported that taking responsibility was one of the key elements regarding the changes made by men (4[2]). For the male participants, holding themselves accountable involved becoming the author and stakeholder of their own future choices, behaviours, and lives. In contrast, the female participants focused on the past harm that had been caused by the men. The female participants' theme of accountability (4[2]-c) involved not only developing a full understanding and acknowledgement of the impact and harm done to them, but also restitution for this harm. According to them, men themselves, as well as society in general, need to be held accountable for violence and abuse, and it needs to be acknowledged that violence and abuse are not acceptable.

The issue of violence and abuse in intimate relationships must be examined in terms of past offence, prevention of future offence, and current action-taking. Individuals do have choices, and they are active agents to take responsibility for the course of their own lives (Tomm, 1989). However, taking responsibility for the development of the problem and taking responsibility for participating in the survival of the problem, which means choosing whether or not to continue to let problems influence their lives (White & Epston, 1990) are distinctly different issues. As Michael White acknowledged, one narrative therapy technique, externalization, can probably aid in taking responsibility in the survival of the problem, but it may possibly diminish taking responsibility with respect to the development of the problem (as cited
in Matson, 2007). Violence is social in that at least two people are involved in their interactions (Coates & Wade, 2004), and perpetration can exist on its own, once it occurs (Radzik, 2004). Taking responsibility for violence and abuse requires one to take responsibility for one's past offences as well as to live with the consequences of being accountable for what one has done. Even if men take responsibility and change what they feel and do, it does not necessarily follow that the many ways in which their female partners and children were hurt will be healed or forgotten. Men need to be willing to make a conscious and constructive decision to live with the consequences of their actions.

The female participants also shared that taking responsibility means being respectful to women's choices in their lives (4[2]-d). After many years of exhausting battles of violence and abuse, all of the female participants had moved on. However, some of the women are still suffering from stalking. They have stated that they would like their ex-partners to respect their life choices, their decisions to end the relationship, and their boundaries. The women believed that their (ex-)partners would leave them alone and wish for their happiness if they could take full responsibility of their behaviours and accept the consequences of harm that they had caused them.

The results revealed multiple dimensions in terms of the qualities involved in taking responsibility and thus, taking responsibility requires not only taking responsibility for behaviours but also taking account of self-responsibility, responsibility for living authentically with consequences, and taking responsibility for change and solutions. More importantly, male offenders and those affected by their
violence and abuse need to coconstruct a meaning of taking responsibility.

With respect to this expanded meaning of taking responsibility, the relationship between recidivism rates and offenders' level of taking responsibility can be viewed differently. Denial, minimization, and blame for the other person’s behaviours, as well as denial, minimization, and displacement of one’s own self-responsibility, may have different meanings and effects in this context. Contrary to Maruna and Mann's (2006) notion that denial, minimization, and blame provide a protective function for the perpetrator’s self-esteem in terms of their alleviating their shame and embarrassment, taking existential and self-responsibility for one’s own life can still provoke shame and embarrassment, although it also can be empowering. "Negative" feelings, such as guilt, anxiety, despair, dread, unsettledness, and a sense of absurdity are simply responses to the reality of human existence, but the problem arises when people ignore these negative experiences and pretend that their lives are different from what they really are (Cooper, 2003). Denying and ignoring such "inconvenient feelings" (Ishiyama, 1990) can also result in minimizing the desire for life as it exists and can increase despair and reliance on aggression to ease the uncomfortable emotions that result (Takano & Ishiyama, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2013). This process involves denying authentic existence. People become authentic only when they commit themselves to their life’s meaning, and face their “negative” experiences (Cooper, 2003).

Making Amends

The theme of making amends was put forward by the male participants as one of the most important processes of change. The role of making amends has been
discussed in terms of recovery, especially in the field of addictions (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1981; Gorski, 1989). According to this theme, making amends involves both making amends with those whom the perpetrators of abuse and violence had hurt, as well as with those who had hurt them when they were growing up. Making amends is significantly related to the theme of taking responsibility (4[7]). Making amends cannot be meaningful without taking responsibility because taking responsibility can allow for the subthemes of (a) fully reflect on and understand one’s own behaviour and how it impacted and hurt one’s partner(s) and (c) apologizing, reconnecting and reconciling.

In order to properly apologize, first and foremost, a person who wronged others needs to fully understand the meaning and consequences of her or his wrongdoings. Wronging others implies that the perpetrator perceives the individual who has been harmed to be lower in value compared to the perpetrator (Radzik, 2004). To make amends, one must clearly communicate to victims with respect the following three elements: sincerity, empathy, and expression of regret with no excuse (Choi & Severson, 2009).

The results also revealed a difference between apology for wrongdoing and re-establishing trust. To make amends meaningful, one must take action. The male participants in this study actively engaged in the attempt to fulfill these subthemes: (d) rebuilding trust and nurturing, and respectful relationships with those people whom one has hurt, if they allow and (e) actively engaging in the healing process of their partners and children whenever possible. Making amends requires repentance, which means that one must "undergo a sincere change of heart" (Radzik, 2004, p.
It further involves "the remorseful acceptance of responsibility for one's wrongful and harmful actions, the repudiation of the aspects of one's character that generated the actions, [and] the resolve to do one's best to extirpate those aspects of one's character" (Murphy as cited in Radzik, 2004, p. 143). Radzik, however, argued that changing one's heart does not suffice because wrongdoing takes on a life of its own once it has been committed. Thus, making amends requires restitution. As such, "wrongdoers have an obligation willingly to undergo pain, exertion or sacrifice in proportion to their wrongful acts" (Radzik, 2004, p. 144). Such struggles often involve painful emotions of guilt and remorse and require providing restitution for the offence (Radzik, 2004).

However, it is important to note that making amends should be seen as being broader than reconciliation as wrongdoing has the potential of damaging other relationships in the related social relationships (Radzik, 2004). As Radzik wrote, "If a wrong is an insult and a threat that separates people from one another, then to right the wrong would be to repair this rupture" (p. 145). The goal is then a restoration of the moral relationship in which the community takes a position with respect to both the victim and the wrongdoer (Radzik, 2004). At a conference about compassion in the 21st century, Alicia Partnoy, former vice chair of the board of directors of Amnesty International USA and a victim of the "dirty war" in Argentina, argued this point. Partnoy contended that "what victims want ... is not that people suffer with them but that people work with them to achieve justice, the strongest yearning and deepest need of all victims" (as cited in Privett, 2014, p. 1). Making amends involves repairing the damage caused by one's behaviours and helping heal whatever
hurts that one has caused (Gorski, 1989). Thus, building trust and actively taking part in the healing process were important components for the male participants. As the results indicate, making amends relates to other themes of change, such as building connection with others (4[12]). The male participants shared their experiences of reaching out within society to those who are experiencing similar struggles in order to help pay back some of the help that had been given to them.

Another important component of making amends is in this subtheme: (b) experiencing forgiveness for oneself and others. The male participants recognized that forgiveness is essential for making amends. As such, they reported that they needed to forgive themselves for hurting their loved ones, to forgive those people who hurt them when growing up, and to forgive themselves for being victimized by the abuse that was perpetrated upon them as children. These series of forgiveness experiences were important steps for making amends. The men need to live with the consequences of their behaviours, but it is important that they live constructively with these consequences. This goal can be possible by working with forgiveness. Wrongdoers need to be reconciled with themselves, and they should not see themselves as either superior or inferior to their victims (Radzik, 2004).

Furthermore, making amends should not be used for the purpose of relieving offenders' feelings of guilt. The results indicated that making amends was part of the process of change that the men experienced and, thus, can easily become more meaningful to offenders and be confused with the goal of making amends for one's own gain. The primary purpose of making amends is not for men who have been violent and abusive to feel better about themselves but to redress and atone for
whatever hurt they caused (Gorski, 1989). Making amends is not a *requirement* based on external expectation and moral obligation but a *possibility* based on offenders' agency (Jenkins, 2006) and victims' desire. "The kind of apology that results tends to be based on a sense of appeasing the demands of others or a self-centred desire to be released from guilt and responsibility for one's actions; for a 'quick fix' of forgiveness and forgetting" (p. 155).

As a matter of fact, all of the female participants desired for their male partners to take full responsibility for their actions, but making amends was considered secondary. Some of the female participants felt that their partners owed them a sincere apology and the building of trust by respecting their lives of separation and staying away from them. Gorski (1989) suggested five steps to achieve the making of proper making of amends and recommended as a first step to be ready to accept that the people you hurt may guard themselves by refusing to accept your amends. Making amends requires the cooperation of both those who caused harm and those who were hurt by it. Although offenders may *offer* amends, it is up to the victim to accept that offer to complete the act of making amends (Radzik, 2009). Making amends should not simply be viewed as the independent cognitive restructuring and action taken by men, but rather as meaningful for their families who suffered from the men’s actions and behaviours.

**Discrepancies in the Use of Language**

One of the important contributions noted in this study was the use of language through which the men chose to tell their stories and describe their partners' experiences. At times, the use of language showed inconsistencies and
discrepancies in descriptions between the male participants' and the female participants' experiences. Language use is important when thinking about change. People use language purposefully to correspond with their stories, and the ways in which male offenders and female victims use language shapes the meaning and context of their stories. People use language to interact and the ways in which they merge language and action help them create their own constructions and views of the world they live in (Burr, 1995). For instance, one of the participants described his partner as "sensitive," whereas his partner would have said she was "frightened" of their experiences of being in violent and abusive relationships. In sharing his story, he stated that "we were having a rough night," whereas his partner might have said "he was violent and abusive and I was trying to escape."

Furthermore, one theme about their actual experiences of being abusive (1[2]) shared by the male participants had a subtheme of (b) Sense of control over one's own violence. Some of the men were aware that they were in "control" of their level of violence and abuse and were able to avoid going beyond the boundary and values that they had set. However, interestingly, the female participants' impressions were different. They described their partners' "control" as deliberate and manipulative (3[6]). In another instance, the male participants described their experience of "learning" emotions, violence, and abuse, but one of the female participants rephrased it as "understanding" emotions, violence, and abuse and "taking action".

As Todd (2010) suggested, the language used in responses can illuminate one's volition, choice, and agency, whereas the language of effects can indicate human actions, problems, and difficulties as a result of the cause and effect
The response-based approach (Richardson & Wade, 2010; Todd, 2010; Todd, Wade, & Renoux, 2004; Wade, 1997, 2007), which is founded on critical realism in terms of its examination of violence and abuse, proposes a nature of violence wherein "the individual responds to and resists subjugation, overtly and covertly, through a myriad of psychological and social tactics woven into the fabric of daily life" (Wade, 2007). The response-based approach proposes that one's use of language can respond to violence and abuse responsively resisting rather than being reactive (Todd, 2010). Depending on how people use language, (a) violence and abuse can be hidden or revealed, (b) the responsibility of the perpetrators becomes either blurred or apparent, (c) language can illuminate a victim’s resistance or illustrate them as passive victims, and (d) can serve to blame victims or help them resist false blame (Wade, 2007). As such, those men who were in the process of change and taking responsibility expressed response-based language indicating resistance and responsiveness to violence and abuse. Personal agency and responsibility are expressed in how individuals position themselves in their language. The term agency is used here to "evoke definitions of the subject as more active, more personally and morally involved in relation to the verb." (O'Connor, 2004, p. 39).

The participants chose to use language that fit with their stories. Interestingly, during the interview, when the language which female victims might chose to use was intentionally applied (e.g., "scared," "frightened", "emotional scar"), the male participants had difficulty integrating such choice of words into their coherent stories of change. Some forms of language were harder to implement because it was assumed that the words used were more direct and bluntly described
perpetrators' violence, responsibility, and the harm they had done to their partners and children. For instance, one of the female participants stated, "He became more physically violent. Verbally violent too. And then what he started doing, it was almost the same tactic as prisoners of war have" (emphasis added). The term "tactic" reveals more clearly the responsibility and deliberate action of men's violent behaviours and can be difficult to incorporate into men's change stories.

However, this linguistic shading that replaces a word or phrase with something close to it can result in the containment of a wide range of meanings and associations (Gergen, 1999). As such, it provides an opportunity for new possibilities for conversations and for the option of joining in the process of jointly constructing meaning (Gergen, 1999). Furthermore, this jointly engaged action within the conjunctions and coordination of action-supplementary actions in the relationship is essential for creating meaning. Language is a form of social action (Burr, 1995). "[T]he way people think, the very categories and concepts that provide a framework of meaning for them, are provided by the language that they use" (Burr, 1995, p. 7). In other words, the way in which people use language within a specific context has an effect on shaping the meaning they want to convey. People use language to interact with each other, and the interaction of language with action helps us construct our ideas of the world we live in (Burr, 1995).

Some of the interview interactions with Paul, for instance, displayed such jointly coconstructed and negotiation activities. In one interaction, I was actively attempting to use words and phrases that might have evoked his empathic understanding of his son's emotional state similarly to how Paul himself might have
felt when growing up. My intention was to have open talk about his empathic understanding of his son. More importantly, I was hoping to discuss how Paul is living today with a reality of seeing an impact of his violence and abuse toward his sons. Contrary to my intention, Paul integrated my challenge into a part of his story of successful change as him playing an active agent of breaking the cycle of intergenerational cycle of violence and abuse, instead of identifying himself as a person who hurt his children just like his father did to Paul. Individuals' stories about their lives are constructed in a way to make sense and are meaningful to them (Morgan, 2000). Individuals' self-narratives are produced through joint social interactions and negotiations (Burr, 1995).

**Birth of Power**

As various studies indicate, individuals who experience violence and abuse when growing up tend to develop negative emotional effects as adults (Dutton, 1995; Kropp, Hart, Webster, & Eaves, 1995). Most of the male participants in my study experienced difficult childhoods. The male participants shared their experiences of moving from being victims of violence and abuse when growing up to becoming perpetrators themselves. Their stories revealed how their being victims of abusive or violent experiences in childhood or how early significant violent incidences moved them towards becoming perpetrators of aggression, violence, and abusiveness. However, an understanding of their experiences requires a reading which moves beyond trauma, attachment issues, and social learning theory. My research pays attention to the meaning of power.

Distant relationships with their parents, experiencing sexual abuse by others,
witnessing violence at home, being bullied in school, and the loss of a loved one created a sense of confusion, self-hatred, desperation, fear for safety, helplessness, powerlessness, injustice, and in the violation of one’s own body. The male participants remember moments of extreme vulnerability and powerlessness. As young children, they did not know how to protect themselves from such power, and it made sense to them that the only way to protect themselves from being hurt again was to become stronger and more powerful than the people who abused their power over them. This meaningful state of transformation was described as "survival mode" and was one of the themes (3[1]). Don, for instance, said, "It kind of made me feel powerful. 'Don't sit too close to me.' Bam! The next day, you would stay away from me. The power of kick you in the face and then you don't bug me anymore."

Violence and abuse always involves fear, pain, deception, deliberative action, exploitation, and the use of force. The issue is not so much concerned with abandonment itself but with the person’s desperate and repeatedly unsuccessful attempts at gaining love and safety. They often felt helpless and powerless when they watched their loved ones being beaten up and abused. They experienced exploitive and frightening violence and abuse at home. They felt that none of their parents and family members cared enough to help them. These experiences not only damaged them cognitively and emotionally, but also damaged their souls. As children, they experienced such extreme power used over them that they were forced to learn to protect themselves. As such, those who eventually became perpetrators themselves had experienced extreme hurt in response to which they felt powerless
with respect to abusive, bullying, disrespectful, degrading, and humiliating treatment by others who were more powerful than they were (Kivel, 1992). Perpetrating violence and abuse was described as "a chance to counter our feeling of powerlessness by wielding power over someone else" (Kivel, 1992, p. 24).

Clinical Implications

The results of this study provide important clinical implications regarding ways to work with men who are violent and abusive toward their partners. First and foremost, the results indicate that the process of change involves many different themes and dimensions. Each theme may be meaningful for men in the process of change. It is important for therapists to be aware of where the men are with respect to the process of change and to organize treatment in a holistic manner. CBT is a current trend of treatment approach, but it should not be the only intervention used. This suggestion does not mean that CBT should be discarded and that a new approach should be undertaken; rather, it would likely be most effective to combine several different intervention approaches to put a more comprehensive treatment program in place.

Second, it is important to note that the men themselves struggled with their own violence and abusive behaviours, and they often tried to make sense of the reasons that they were angry and violent. The men were aware that they had problems, but it was overwhelming for them to face their issues and emotional pain. None of the participants were satisfied with their lives while violent and abusive, and all were aware of their positive and constructive intentions. It is important for therapists to tap into such positive and constructive intention.
results indicate that for true change to take place, taking responsibility is required not just for one's own behaviours but in terms of self-responsibility. This type of responsibility challenges the men with respect to how they would like to live their lives, regardless of the situation they are in.

In addition, in early stages of the therapeutic process, it could also be helpful to externalize violence and abuse and to avoid speaking about offenders in terms of a dichotomy (e.g., cause and effect, offenders and victims, responsibility and irresponsibility, etc). This suggestion does not mean to attempt to negate their responsibility for their violence and abuse, but to prepare them for facing their issues. This externalization process enables therapists to connect with the men as people and allows them to connect with their potential, possibilities, and agency. This externalization process also allows therapists to talk about the men's resistance against violence and abuse and provide an opportunity to tell their stories about how violence and abuse got into their lives. It is important to remember that men who end up perpetrating violence were also born as innocent children and that they did not know anything about violence and abuse at birth. As a result of specific reasons including the intergenerational cycle of violence, violence and abuse made their ways into, and strongly affected, their lives. All the male participants began their interviews with meaningful stories regarding their early lives. These stories can be seen as the first page they wrote describing how their stories began and are significant for therapists in understanding the current page that they are on. Thus, therapists can invite offenders to guide them to find the meaningful point of the introduction of violence and abuse into their lives. In this process, therapists could explore the
following questions.

• "I would like to talk about your life and life with violence and abuse. We just met and I do not know about you, and so, I would like you to guide me. We can start anywhere. I would like you to take me to the very beginning of your story with regard to violence and abuse. Where should we begin?"

• "Let's say, you are the author and writing your own book. Which chapter are you on right now? The first page of the chapter usually contains a very important message. If I read the first page of this chapter, what would I read? What is in there? What does it mean to you?"

• "For you to be able to consider me as your best friend, what are the three things that I should know about you? What are the important things that I should know about you?"

The results also indicate that one of the meanings that makes the process of change meaningful was taking responsibility. Contrary to current trends in treatment programs, taking responsibility requires inductive rather deductive discussions. In this way, people can engage in a process of taking responsibility on their own accord.

Furthermore, with the best and most productive timing, especially when taking responsibility starts to become meaningful for men, it is important for therapists to use the victims' language in their aim to coconstruct meaning with the men. This process would involve exploring the reasons why an individual uses certain words and actions, and what they mean to them. Engaging in dialogue is the place where therapists can enhance coconstruction of meaning.

Current violence treatment programs are often established as independent from other programs or approaches. The results from my study indicated that the process of change has multiple dimensions and context of offenders' lives. It is important for therapists to be mindful about where each offender is finding meaningful in the emerged themes in their process of change and provide necessary interventions in
timely fashion.

**Conclusion**

This study provides three main contributions. First, a concept of change needs to be viewed coconstructively among offenders, victims, and others who are involved in violence and abuse, and this involved group includes the community. Second, the concept of change requires multidimensional viewing points. Each dimension, which includes the quantitative, qualitative, criminal justice, counselling approach, various ontological, and epistemological understandings, provides kernels of truth because human beings are complex and exist within multiple contexts. Thus, as Frankl's dimensional ontology (1988) suggests, intervention requires one to perceive in a longitudinal and holistic manner, including through the use of biological, social, and spiritual approaches in time and context. The challenge is in the integration of such divergent dimensions.

**Limitations and Future Possibilities**

There are several limitations of this study to consider with respect to future research. First, as with previous studies that indicated a heterogeneity in terms of the male offenders (e.g., types and severity of offence, personality) (Holotzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994), this study did not extensively consider the heterogenic nature of male offenders of domestic violence and did not categorize or select participants based on such schema. It also has only limited information on participants' background and collateral information such as personality diagnosis, neuropsychological assessment, comprehensive risk assessment, criminal record information, victim statements, educational and employment records in order to
provide base-line information for the men participating in the study. As a narrative inquiry, this study relied solely on the accounts of the participants, and limited collateral information was provided. In order to strengthen its methodological approach, future studies would benefit from a mixture of the quantitative and qualitative approaches. Finally, this study could be followed up and further built upon if the original female partners of the male participants could participate in the study. However, arranging for this participation would be challenging with respect to my ethical obligation to protect the safety of the participants and their relationships.

Since the process of coconstructing was only briefly demonstrated in this study, it would be critical for future studies to continue examining the practice of coconstruction to arrive at deeper levels of meaning. As an initial step, male and female participants could be asked to take part in collaborative interpretation work for each other’s themes. These interactions should not be limited to the relationship between male offenders and female victims, but should also include their children. Their stories need to honoured and heard as well. Furthermore, the process of coconstruction can be more comprehensive if the researcher can recruit the original pairs of violent offenders and their victims for interviews.

The stories revealed in this study are the precious and authentic stories of each of the men and women who have been struggling in their lives with the cycle of violence and abuse. Their courage to be honest and willingness to share their personal stories made this study possible. Those who agreed to participate aimed, through their participation, to help others who face similar struggles. Violence and
abuse are brutal and hurtful. Once violence has occurred, beautiful and coherent reconciliation stories are very unlikely to take place. I concur with all the participants' wishes and sincerely hope that through greater understanding and hard work, violence and abuse can be relegated to the past and that all the families involved could feel safety, warmth, peace, and joy. Violence is real, not simply a story. People may be able to make amends, and they can be redeemable, but the act of violence exists as a reality for those people who are involved in violence and abuse. These are the stories of people who are living with such reality.
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Appendices

Appendix A

Excerpt from Spousal Abuse: A fact sheet from the Department of Justice Canada, Family Violence Initiative (2001)

"Spousal abuse" refers to the violence or mistreatment that a woman or a man may experience at the hands of a marital, common-law or same-sex partner. Spousal abuse may happen at any time during a relationship, including while it is breaking down, or after it has ended. There are many different forms of spousal abuse, and a person may be subjected to more than one form.

**Physical abuse** may consist of just one incident or it may happen repeatedly. It includes using physical force in a way that injures someone - or puts them at risk of being injured - including beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking, or assaulting with a weapon. Other forms of physical abuse may include, for example, rough handling, confinement, or any dangerous or harmful use of force or restraint.

**Sexual abuse and exploitation** includes all forms of sexual assault, sexual harassment or sexual exploitation. Forcing someone to participate in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity, or using ridicule or other tactics to try to denigrate, control or limit their sexuality or reproductive choices is sexual abuse.

**Emotional abuse** includes verbal attacks, such as yelling, screaming and name-calling. Using criticism, verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation or exploitation to dominate another person are other forms of emotional abuse. Criminal harassment or "stalking" may include threatening a person or their loved ones, damaging their possessions, or harming their pets.

**Economic or financial abuse** includes stealing from or defrauding a partner. Withholding money that is necessary to buy food or medical treatment, manipulating or exploiting a person for financial gain, denying them access to financial resources, or preventing them from working (or controlling their choice of occupation) are also forms of economic abuse.

**Spiritual abuse** includes using a person's religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate or control them. It may include preventing someone from engaging in spiritual or religious practices, or ridiculing their beliefs.

Abusive partners may use a number of different tactics to try to exert power and control over their victim. Abuse is a misuse of power and a violation of trust. The abuse may happen once, or it may occur in a repeated and escalating pattern over a period of months or years. The abuse may change form over time.
Appendix B

Six kinds of abuse and violence

1. Physical abuse:
   - Punching, slapping, spitting, kicking, pushing, tickling, holding, restraining, throwing things, blocking her way, elbowing, hair pulling, pinching, scratching, strangling, biting, burning, knitting, clubbing, shooting, burning with a cigarette, whipping, grabbing, squeezing, twisting arms or fingers, spraying with something, spanking, poking, locking in a room, shaking, throwing hot liquids, etc.

2. Sexual abuse
   - Forced sex (rape), forcing or demanding a type of sex she doesn't want, sex on your terms only, unwanted touching, not taking "no" for an answer, having sex that's painful without stopping, using S & M clothing or activities that she doesn't agree to, satisfying yourself only, knowingly having unprotected sex with others and then having sex with her, not telling her if a condom breaks or comes off during sex, not informing her that you have a sexually transmitted disease, etc.

3. Psychological-Emotional Abuse
   - Neglecting chores, ultimatums, threats, "leading her on", sexual withholding, being silent, threatening to leave. Insults about her: cooking, looks, language, intelligence, her family, parenting, children, clothing, opinions, beliefs, culture, sexuality, religion, addictions. Ignoring, excluding, withdrawing, swearing. Name-calling: "bitch, shut-up, cunt, cock sucker, lazy, stupid, good-for-nothing, fat slob, whore” etc. Driving the car recklessly with her in it. Threats to: divorce, leave, withhold money, harm, kill, beat-up, kick-out, get drunk, have an affair, take the kids, harm yourself, rape her. Leaving without saying where you are going, stalking, telling her to, "just get out." Restricting who she sees, controlling what she says. Insulting her in public, insulting her friends, yelling, leaving her in a bar, embarrassing her, finger pointing, glaring, giving her "the look", watching other women, hiding money, things, alcohol, keys etc., comparing her with past relationships. Making her account for her time, activities, friends. Snooping, extreme jealousy, denying affairs, lying, making her wait, being rigid, blaming her for all the relationship problems, telling her that your violence was her fault, blaming her for having to go to court or jail or counselling, putting down her counselling, making fun of her crying, etc.

4. Spiritual Abuse
   - Demanding that she participate in the church of your choice or your religious traditions, forbidding her to attend her church or practice her religious beliefs, making fun of her beliefs, telling her that she will go to hell for what she has
done or will not do, demanding that the children be raised in your religious tradition while ignoring hers, etc.

5. **Economic Abuse**
   - Not letting her have money of her own, making all financial decisions, running up credit cards and demanding that she pay them, not letting her work, taking money from her, demanding that she put her property in your name, gambling family money, demanding that she provide money for drugs or alcohol, buying things only for yourself and never for her, not seriously looking for work, expecting her to make all the money, etc.

6. **Destruction of Property or Pets**
   - Slamming doors, punching walls, breaking, smashing, cutting, tearing, burning, (pictures, papers, documents, clothing), breaking windows, selling off property, neglecting property or pets, kicking the dog/cat, not feeding pets, throwing dishes, ripping the phone out of the wall, driving her car roughly (beating it), damaging her car, neglecting the yard or house, etc.
   
(Stefanakis, 2013)
Appendix C

*The Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide (2nd edition) (Kropp & Hart, 2000, p. 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General violence risk factors</th>
<th>Spousal violence risk factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Past assault of family members</td>
<td>11. Past physical assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Past assault of strangers of acquaintances</td>
<td>12. Past sexual assault/sexual jealousy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Past violation of conditional release or community supervision</td>
<td>13. Past use of weapons and/or credible threats of death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recent relationship problems</td>
<td>14. Recent escalation in frequency or severity of assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Recent employment problems</td>
<td>15. Past violation of “no contact” orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Victim of and/or witness to family violence as a child or adolescent</td>
<td>16. Extreme minimization or denial of spousal assault history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Recent substance abuse/dependence</td>
<td>17. Attitudes that support or condone spousal assault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Recent suicidal or homicidal ideation/intent</td>
<td>18. Severe and/or sexual assault (most recent incident)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Recent psychotic and/or manic symptoms</td>
<td>19. Use of weapons and/or credible threats of death (most recent incident)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Personality disorder with anger, impulsivity, or behavioural instability</td>
<td>20. Violation of “no contact” order (most recent incident)</td>
</tr>
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Appendix D

Advertisement

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July 10, 2011

Research title: Stories of change in men who were violent and abusive to their partners

Cover letter to colleague (for male participants)

Dear Colleague:

We would appreciate your cooperation in distributing the following invitation letter to men who are categorized under the following:

1. Men who were violent and abusive to their partners in the past, but have, in your estimation, made a substantial change in their lives.
   • For the meaning of "substantial change", we would like to rely on your own guidelines of what a "substantial change" means, which may be based on your rich clinical experience of working with such clients and/or your theoretical orientation.

2. Those who have been abstinent from violent and abusive behaviours for more than 6 months and have completed at least one treatment program, or have completed or are currently participating in a series of individual counselling sessions.
3. Those whose violence and abuse were mainly directed towards intimate female partners.

4. Those whose acts of violence and abuse have not been induced by any apparent medical and/or physical problems, such as traumatic brain injuries, schizophrenia or psychotic reactions.

This research is a part of the requirements for completion of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia for Yoshi Takano. To challenge the current trend of conceptualizing change in a quantitative way or as a process independent of the men who were violent and abusive to their partners, this study will focus on the reflections of change created and shared by the men themselves. The aim is to understand the meaning of changes made in men's lives through their own stories of their journey. These men who have such experiences are being invited to take part in this study.

We appreciate your cooperation. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to get in touch with the co-investigator, Yoshi Takano (Tel: XXXXX; Email: XXXXX).

With best regards,

Yoshi Takano (Co-Investigator, Ph.D. Candidate)
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia,
Dear Potential Participant:

We would like to invite you to participate in a study of personal growth. This study explores the journey that men who used to be violent and abusive to their partners have made in their lives, and their reflections on the meaning of changes that they have gone through or are going through.

✔ **We are looking for male participants who meet the following 4 criteria:**

5. Men who were violent and abusive to their partners in the past, but have made or are making a change in their lives.

6. Those who have been abstinent from violent and abusive behaviours for more than 6 months and have completed at least one treatment program, or have completed or are currently participating in a series of individual counselling sessions.

7. Those whose violence and abuse were mainly directed towards intimate female partners.

8. Those whose acts of violence and abuse have not been induced by any apparent medical and/or physical problems, such as traumatic brain injuries, schizophrenia or psychotic reactions.
If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the co-investigator, Yoshi Takano, about the story of your journey to change, and will be asked to share what these changes have meant in your own life. The information obtained will be reviewed by the co-investigator who will work collaboratively with you to understand the meaning of your journey to change.

The total amount of time needed to participate fully in the study is approximately 10 hours, and meetings will take place about 4 to 6 times over the course of 3 months. Each participant will be asked to choose a convenient time and place for the interviews. Each interview will take about 90 minutes. In order to defray the costs of inconvenience/transportation, each participant will receive an honorarium in the amount of a $100 gift card of their choice.

This research is a part of the requirements for completion of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia for Yoshi Takano. To challenge the current trend of conceptualizing change as a process independent of the men who were violent and abusive to their partners, this study will focus on the reflections on change created and shared by the men themselves.

If you are interested, or if you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch with Yoshi Takano any time (Tel: XXXXX; Email: XXXXX).

With best wishes,

Yoshi Takano, Ph.D. (Candidate), Co-Investigator
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia, Faculty of Education
Cover letter to colleague (for female participants)

Dear Colleague:

We would appreciate your cooperation in distributing the following invitation letter to women who have the following experience:

✔ Women who have been victims of spousal abuse, but have experienced or observed substantial change in their male partners or restitution of such experiences.

Those women who are under the following categories CANNOT participate in this study:

❌ Currently in an abusive relationship.
❌ Have been victimized within the last 6 months.
❌ Have not received any support from local agencies in regards to the abuse.
❌ Could be potentially harmed in their primary relationship by participating in this study.

This research is a part of the requirements for completion of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia for Yoshi Takano. To challenge the current trend of conceptualizing change as a process independent of the men who were violent and abusive to their partners, this study will focus on the reflections of change created in relation to those people who were hurt by those men.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with Yoshi Takano (Tel: XXXXX; Email: XXXXX).
Thank you very much for your cooperation.

With best regards,

Yoshi Takano (Co-Investigator, Ph.D. Candidate)
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia
Research title: *Stories of change in men who were violent and abusive to their partners*

Invitation to participate in the study

Dear Potential Participant:

We would like to invite you to participate in a study to explore the change that men who used to be violent and abusive to their intimate partners have made in their lives. Men's change cannot be understood accurately without hearing the intimate partner's experience and it is essential that your voice be heard.

- **We are looking for women who have the following experiences:**
  - Who have been victims of spousal abuse, but have experienced or observed substantial change in their spouse or received restitution for such experiences.

- **You CANNOT participate in this study if you are:**
  - Currently in an abusive relationship.
  - Have been victimized within the last 6 months.
  - Have not received any support from local agencies in regards to the abuse.
  - Could be potentially harmed in your primary relationship by participating in this study.

The survey is simply 3 open-ended questions and will take about 40 minutes to complete. In order to defray the costs of inconvenience/transportation participants will receive an honorarium in the amount of a $20 gift card of their choice.

This research is a part of the requirements for completion of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia for Yoshi Takano. To challenge the current trend of conceptualizing change as a process independent of the men who were violent and abusive to their partners, this study will focus on the reflections of change created in relation to those people who...
were hurt by those men.

If you are interested in participating in this study or if you have any questions, please get in touch with Yoshi Takano (Tel: XXXXX; Email: XXXXX).

With best regards,

Yoshi Takano (Co-Investigator, Ph.D. Candidate)
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
University of British Columbia
Research title: *Stories of change in men who were violent and abusive to their partners*

**Invitation to participate in a study**

Dear Potential Participant:

We would like to invite you to participate in a study to explore the change that men who used to be violent and abusive to their intimate partners have made in their lives. To add more context and to enhance the understanding about the meaning of change, the researcher will conduct parallel surveys with helping professionals in the field of domestic violence to determine their thoughts about changes in formerly abusive men. This information will be used to enhance the researcher's understanding of the change process in these men.

The survey is simply 3 open-ended questions and will take about 40 minutes to complete. In order to defray the costs of inconvenience/transportation participants will receive an honorarium in the amount of a $20 gift card of their choice.

This research is a part of the requirements for completion of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia for Yoshi Takano. To challenge the current trend of conceptualizing change as a process independent of the men who were violent and abusive to their partners, this study will focus on the reflections of change created in relation to those people who were hurt by those men.

If you are interested in participating in this study or if you have any questions, please get in touch with Yoshi Takano *(Tel: XXXXX; Email: XXXXX)*.

With best regards,

Yoshi Takano (Co-Investigator, Ph.D. Candidate)
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
University of British Columbia
Appendix E

The pre-interview self-report

- Have you ever been diagnosed with any serious psychiatric illnesses and/or disorders (e.g., schizophrenia, psychosis)?
- Have you ever had any serious brain injury?
- Have you offended in a way that has involved any violent crime other than with the intimate partner of your relationship?
Appendix F

Informed consent forms

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
Faculty of Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: 604 822-0242
Fax: 604 822-3302
Web: www.ecps.educ.ubc.ca

July 10, 2011

Research title: Stories of change in men who were violent and abusive to their partners

Consent Form

Instruction to participants:

Please read following details about this study and your rights carefully. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the co-investigator, Yoshi Takano, anytime. After you read the following, if you would like to participate in this study, please sign at the bottom of this form. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study. Your signature below also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Ishu Ishiyama
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia,
Tel: XXXXX
Email: XXXXX
Co-Investigator(s):
Yoshi Takano, M.A., Ph.D. (Candidate)
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special
Education
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia
Tel: XXXXX
Email: XXXXX

❖ Because this research involves interviews and uses transcripts as a data
source, the principal researcher may use a transcriber to record the interviews.
In this case, the transcriber will be asked to sign a consent form to protect
your privacy

Purpose:
This research is a part of the requirements for completion of the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia for
Yoshi Takano. To challenge the current trend of conceptualizing change in a
quantitative way or as a process independent of the men who were violent and
abusive to their partners, this study will focus on the reflections of change created and
shared by the men themselves.

In personal terms, the aim is to understand the meaning of changes made in
your life through the stories of your own journey. The co-investigator is interested
in understanding your journey not only in terms of the forms it took in the past, but
also how it appears in the present, as well as how it will shape your future. You are
being invited to take part in this study because you have struggled with violence and
abuse, but made substantial changes in your life that may have value when
communicated to others.

Study Procedures:
If you choose to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the
co-investigator, Yoshi Takano, about the story of your journey to change. You will
be asked to share what these changes have meant in your own life. The interviews
will be audio- or video-taped and transcribed. If videotaping is used, the
co-investigator will ensure that you will not be identified (e.g., your face will not be
shown in the recording). The information obtained will be reviewed by the
co-investigator who will work collaboratively with you to understand the meaning of
your journey to change.

The total amount of time that will be asked of you to participate fully in the study is
approximately 10 hours and meetings will take place about 4 to 6 times in the course
of 3 months. You will be asked to choose a convenient time and place for the
interviews. If you elect to participate in this study, a demographic questionnaire will
first be administered for 5-10 minutes. Each interview will take about 90 minutes.
The interviews will be conducted in safe locations for your convenience and comfort. The sound proof research offices in UBC (Vancouver campus) will be available for you. There will also be some other confidential secure counselling offices in various locations in the lower mainland that we may use as meeting places.

**Potential Risks:**
There are no direct risks associated with this study. Discussion of your journey to change may cause emotional discomfort or comfort. If necessary, we will be able to provide you with appropriate resources and referrals to local support facilities.

**Potential Benefits:**
The potential benefit of the study is to allow you to reflect further on your experiences by interacting with the co-investigator; this process may, in turn, add clarification to your understanding of the changes you have achieved. The process, as a result, could be healing and therapeutic. Additionally, this project will allow your stories to be heard more widely, helping to inform the field of counselling psychology in its support of others. Importantly, it will also offer encouragement to those people who are in the midst of a struggle similar to your own.

**Confidentiality:**
All documents will be identified only by code number/pseudonym and kept in a locked filing cabinet in the co-investigator's office. Subjects will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. The interview will be audio- or video-recorded, and the tapes will also be stored and protected in locked safe storage in the office of the co-investigator. If video recording is used, it will be carried out so that the participants are not identified in the tapes (e.g., the participants’ faces will not be shown in the video). The recorded tapes may be used in the process of data analysis and in the co-investigator's oral defense of his dissertation study. At the end of the research, these tapes will be magnetically erased or shredded.

*There are limits of confidentiality where the researcher has a legal obligation to disclose information to an appropriate third party. These limits to confidentiality include*

- if a child is or may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or in need of protection;
- if a researcher believes that you or another person is in clear imminent danger of being harm;
- if a disclosure is required or authorized by legal order such as a subpoena to comply.

**Remuneration/Compensation:**
In order to defray the costs of inconvenience/transportation you will receive an honorarium in the amount of a $100 gift card of your choice.

**Contact for information about the study:**
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Yoshi Takano at XXXXX or Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, a research supervisor, at...
XXXXX at the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at XXXXX or e-mail XXXXX.

Voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or you may withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to access to further services from the community.

Consent to participate:
I consent to participate in this study.

______________________________________________
Signature of Participant                        Date

______________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
Consent Form

Instruction to participants:

Please read the following details about this study and your rights carefully. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the co-investigator, Yoshi Takano, anytime. After you read the following, if you would like to participate in this study, please sign at the bottom of this form. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study. Your signature below also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Ishu Ishiyama
The University of British Columbia
Department of Educational and Counselling psychology, and Special Education
Tel: XXXXX
Email: XXXXX

Co-Investigator(s):
Yoshi Takano, M.A., Ph.D. (Candidate)
The University of British Columbia
Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education
Tel: XXXXX
Email: XXXXX
Purpose:
This dissertation research is a part of the requirements for completion of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia for Yoshi Takano. To challenge the current trend of conceptualizing change in a quantitative way or as a process independent of the men who were violent and abusive to their partners, this study will focus on the reflections of change created and shared by the men themselves. The aim is to understand the meaning of change in their lives through the stories of their journey. In this, your insight as a woman who actually experienced abuse by their partner provides valuable information and context towards understanding these men's stories better. You are invited to take part in this research study because of your experience in this area.

Study Procedures:
If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out a simple questionnaire developed by the co-investigator, Yoshi Takano, regarding your understanding about the change in the men who are violent and abusive to their partners. You will also be asked to share how you came to understand the depth and substance of the change. The survey will be collected and categorized into themes. The information obtained will be read by the co-investigator.

The total amount of time that will be required of you to participate fully in the study is approximately 1 hour. If you choose to participate in this study, be informed that a demographic questionnaire will comprise the first part of the survey and will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. The remainder of the survey will take about 30 minutes to fill out. We will meet once at a time in safe locations for your convenience and comfort, or you can simply mail your answered survey back to the co-investigator. The sound proof research offices in UBC (Vancouver campus) will be available for you. There will also be some other confidential secure counselling offices in various locations in the lower mainland that we may use as meeting places.

Potential Risks:
There are no direct risks associated with this study. Discussion of your thoughts about the men's change may cause emotional discomfort. If necessary, we will be able to provide you with appropriate resources and referrals to local support facilities.

Potential Benefits:
The potential benefit of the study is to allow you to contribute to the field of treatment for men who are violent and abusive to their partners. Additionally, your valuable insights will help the researchers to understand the meaning of change better. As a result, your contribution will inform the field of counseling psychology and its practitioners working in particular on the issue of intimate violence and abuse. More importantly, your contribution will help to bring to an end such violence and abuse in the family and society.

Confidentiality:
All documents will be identified only by code number/pseudonym and kept in a
locked filing cabinet in the co-investigator's office. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. The questionnaire may be used in the process of data analysis, in an oral defense, and in a finished report. At the end of the research, your written questionnaire will be shredded.

There are limits of confidentiality where the researcher has a legal obligation to disclose information to an appropriate third party. These limits to confidentiality include

- if a child is or may be at risk of abuse or neglect, or in need of protection;
- if a researcher believes that you or another person is in clear imminent danger of being harm;
- if a disclosure is required or authorized by legal order such as a subpoena to comply.

Remuneration/Compensation:
In order to defray the costs of inconvenience/transportation you will receive an honorarium in the amount of $20 of a gift card of your choice.

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Yoshi Takano at XXXXX or Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, a research supervisor, at XXXXXX at the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at XXXXX or e-mail XXXXX.

Voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or you may withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardizing access to further services from the community.

Consent to participate:
I consent to participate in this study.

__________________________________ ____________________
Signature of Participant Date

________________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant
July 10, 2011

Research title: *Stories of change for the men who were violent and abusive to their partners*

Consent Form

Instruction to participants:

Please read following details about this study and your rights carefully. If you have any question, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the co-investigator, Yoshi Takano, anytime. After you read the following, if you would like to participate in this study, please sign at the bottom of this form. Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study. Your signature below also indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Ishu Ishiyama  
The University of British Columbia  
Department of Educational and Counselling psychology, and Special Education  
Tel: XXXXX  
Email: XXXXX

Co-Investigator(s):
Yoshi Takano, M.A., Ph.D. (Candidate)  
The University of British Columbia  
Department of Educational and Counselling psychology, and Special Education  
Tel: XXXXX  
Email: XXXXX
**Purpose:**
This dissertation research is a part of requirements for completion of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia for Yoshi Takano. To challenge the current trend of conceptualizing change in a quantitative way or as a process independent of the men who were violent and abusive to their partners, this study will focus on the reflections of change created and shared by the men themselves. The aim is to understand the meaning of change in their lives through the stories of their journey. Your insight as a professional who works closely with these men provides valuable information and context towards understanding their stories better. You are invited to take part in this research study because you are identified as a helping professional who provides support for those men and for victims of intimate violence and abuse.

**Study Procedures:**
If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out a simple questionnaire developed by the co-investigator, Yoshi Takano, regarding your understanding about the change in the men who are violent and abusive to their partners. You will also be asked to share how you came to understand the depth and substance of the change. The survey will be collected and categorized into themes. The information obtained will be read by the co-investigator.

The total amount of time that will be required of you to participate fully in the study is approximately 40 minutes. If you choose to participate in this study, a demographic questionnaire will comprise the first part of the survey and will take about 5-10 minutes to complete. The remainder of the survey will take about 30 minutes to fill out. We will meet once at a time and place at your convenience, or you can simply mail your answered survey back to the co-investigator.

**Potential Risks:**
There are no direct risks associated with this study.

**Potential Benefits:**
The potential benefit of the study is to lend support to your contribution to the field of treatment for men who are violent and abusive to their partners. Additionally, your insights, based on a rich clinical experience, will help researchers to understand the meaning of change better and will help to inform counseling psychology practitioners working in particular on the issue of intimate violence and abuse.

**Confidentiality:**
All documents will be identified only by code number/pseudonym and kept in a locked filing cabinet in the co-investigator's office. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. The questionnaire may be used in the process of data analysis, in an oral defense, and in a finished report. At the end of the research, your written questionnaire will be shredded.
Remuneration/Compensation:
In order to defray the costs of inconvenience/transportation you will receive an honorarium in the amount of $20 as a gift card of your choice.

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Yoshi Takano at XXXXX or Dr. Ishu Ishiyama, a research supervisor, at XXXXX at the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology and Special Education.

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at XXXXX or e-mail to XXXXX.

Voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to access to further services from the community.

Consent to participate:
I consent to participate in this study.

__________________________________ ____________________
Signature of Participant Date

_________________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant