A RETROSPECTIVE EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF GROUP TREATMENT ON MALE BATTERERS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the effects of a group therapy program on the male batterer's subjective perceptions of himself and his relationships. The four respondents voluntarily participated in twenty-four weeks of group therapy at a metropolitan family service agency. Qualitative, in-depth interviews were utilized three months post group participation. Grounded theory and the constant comparative method of data analysis were employed to generate preliminary themes and a beginning conceptual framework for further study. From the data analysis, a three stage change process emerged as representative of the respondents' perceptions. Results indicate that the group had a definite positive impact on the respondent's self-perception and his perceptions of relationships with significant others (family, partner, friends).

Further, all of the respondents were redefining their masculinity such that it was no longer rigid and one-dimensional but shifted to being inclusive of expressing emotions and interacting respectfully with others. The information obtained on outcome of the group process for male batterers who complete therapy can be utilized by social workers in the field of family violence to modify and enhance current interventions utilized with this client population and to conduct further research with male batterers.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This study proposed to investigate the impact of a group treatment program on males who assault their partners from a perspective which examines both the individual participant himself as well as his relationships with others. The question this thesis addressed was the male assaulter’s perceptions of the impact of the group therapy experience. The focus was on conceptualizing the male batterer’s understanding of the effects of the group therapy experience on his subjective thoughts and beliefs about himself and others. It is important to examine the phenomenon of wife assault from a perspective which is inclusive of the environment in which the male batterer functions as violence does not exist in isolation but is practiced and reinforced within society on a multitude of levels. This chapter will provide the historical and present day context of assault towards women in relationships in order to lay the foundation for the present study.

Historical Legacy

For centuries, the family has been considered as the most sacred group in society, cloistered from public view and accountable only to itself. What went on behind closed doors was not considered to be the public’s concern. While this reverence is being slowly eroded with the recent "discovery" of family violence in
the forms of child, woman, and elder abuse the historical legacy remains, tarnished but intact. The harsh reality is that physical violence towards women in intimate relationships was condoned by society for centuries (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hofeller, 1982). Throughout recorded history, the wife of a man was viewed as a subordinate, little more than a slave and probably worth less (Pressman, 1984). The male was considered the head of the household, the hub around which all other family members structured their lives. The husband/father was entitled to demand the satisfaction of all his needs and desires, without question.

The first reputed law of marriage proclaimed by Romulus in 753 B.C stated that "...married women were to conform themselves entirely to the tempers of their husbands and the husbands to rule their wives as necessary and inseparable possessions" (Pressman, 1984,p.3). The Roman legacy legitimizing the patriarchal order of society, continued into the middle ages and carried over into British common law, upon which Canada’s legal system evolved (Hutchings, 1988; Gelles and Cornell, 1990). Roy (1982), in her historical account of spousal assault, discusses how these oppressive laws, which made clear the infallible power of the human male, are still reflected in everyday life:

...the common expression heard so often in conversation today, *rule of thumb*, is derived from an amendment to a section of British common law legalizing the beating of wives by their husbands, provided that the switch or rod be *no thicker than his thumb*. (p. 13).

Social practices of the times were reflected in, and supported by the existence of laws
which legitimized male entitlement to the extent of regulating the types of physical assaults permissible.

The reality of the oppression and victimization of women by men in intimate relationships is in opposition to the illusion constructed over the centuries that characterizes family and the family home as a safe haven. This dichotomy between issues of male entitlement and superiority and the illusion of the family home as being one which offers comfort and security has been upheld throughout history and remains a strong influencing force in society.

These two historical legacies are still evident in the myths which surround issues of family violence today. People in the community want to believe that wife assault does not occur in their neighbourhood, to explain it away as something that only affects other people, people not like them. The reality is that wife assault is a pervasive part of the social fabric that affects families in every socioeconomic strata and ethnic background (Straus, 1980). The sacredness and sanctity of family life is an illusion which ignores the atrocities which occur behind closed doors, away from public view. While society continues to cling to an illusion, millions of women and children are being victimized each year across the world (Gelles and Cornell, 1983).

Incidence and Prevalence

In 1975, a ground-breaking national family violence survey was launched in the United States which conservatively estimated that two million women were
severely assaulted by their male partners annually (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). In Canada, researchers such as Kennedy and Dutton’s (1989) 1987 incidence survey in Alberta have found similar rates, with the exception of assaults with weapons. In a recent book, Macleod (1987) estimates that one in six women are battered in Canada. In 1985 alone, over 65,000 women requested emergency shelter due to physical assaults by a male partner (Health and Welfare Canada, 1989). Not only are women victims of physical assault, but many become a homicide statistic. The Globe and Mail (May 30, 1992) cites figures from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women in which it is reported that in 1989 a total of 119 women were murdered by current or former male partners. The picture in the United States is just as bleak: "every 15 seconds a woman is beaten in her home, some four million women - and four thousand are killed each year by a husband or male partner" (Goldner, 1992, p.58).

The prevalence of physical violence towards women in intimate relationships across North America speaks not only to the continued impact of our historical legacy legitimizing male violence towards women, but also to the urgent need to develop effective interventions to treat perpetrators of these abusive acts. While it is critical to offer services to the victims of the violence, it is just as important to treat the male perpetrator as the majority of them victimize more than one woman in their lifetime. When a woman eventually leaves him, the male batterer will typically go on to perpetrate more violence in a new relationship. Pagelow (1981), cites evidence that
men who are violent in one relationship are likely to be violent in another - up to 
86% of men have used violence against more than one woman.

A "treat the victim" mentality does little to address the issue of the existence 
of victims in the first place. The perpetrators of the violence must be held accountable 
for their acts in order for the staggering numbers of victims to decline in the future. 
The implication of this position is clear: all levels of both institutional and community 
structures need to become involved to combat this domestic war against women. One 
of the levels at which male violence against their female partners can be addressed is 
that of specialized therapeutic programs designed to treat the perpetrator. This 
exploratory-descriptive study explored the impact of one of these group programs on 
male assaulters who voluntarily participated in a group offered by a metropolitan 
family service agency. This type of program is available to men across Canada and it 
is one of the mechanisms currently available to combat wife assault.

Programs

In the last ten years there has been an influx of services for male assaulters in 
Canada. Between 1987 and 1991 the number of programs available for male batterers 
soared from 45 to over 100 in Canada alone (Macleod, 1987; Fleischmann, 1991). It is 
interesting to note that while there are numerous programs available, the vast majority 
of research studies have focused exclusively or primarily upon the effectiveness of 
these programs at ending the man’s physical violence towards his partner (Farley and
Magill, 1988). While this is the primary raison d'être for the existence of such programs, other impacts of such intensive intervention with these men have not been explored. There are numerous goals and objectives guiding group programs for male assailters which go beyond the acts of violence. For example, Sinclair (1985) lists twenty-one goals of groups, which include: ending the violence; taking responsibility for his abusive behaviour; expanding his ability to identify and express a wide range of feelings; developing flexible definitions of male and female roles; decreasing social and emotional isolation; and developing the ability to nurture himself and others (p. 80-81). It is important to explore these program expectations with the male participants in order to develop a clearer understanding of the benefits of such an intervention. The intent of the present study is to broaden the knowledge base of the impact of group treatment, thereby adding to other research findings about men who choose to be violent in intimate relationships.

Practical Significance

Conceptualizing the male batterer’s understanding of the impact of group therapy on his subjective thoughts and beliefs about himself and others may provide information about the benefits of group therapy for this population. To gain an understanding of the impact of group treatment from the participant’s perspective can potentially benefit the individual, the agency, professionals in the field of family violence, and the community. However, it must be recognized that only the subjective
perspectives of four men who completed twenty-four weeks of group therapy are represented. Information from men who chose not to complete the program, or men who are court-mandated to attend treatment, are not represented in this research. Conceivable benefits are from a perspective of information obtained from male batterers who completed group therapy.

It was anticipated that respondents could benefit by the opportunity to explore significant changes in their life as a result of willingly obtaining outside help for their violent behaviour. Interviews may have provided them with a forum in which to safely examine their lives and relationships, to identify areas of continued support as well as issues still evident. Furthermore, their feedback on the program itself may be valuable for future clients as it will help to establish realistic outcome expectations.

This study may have provided the agency the opportunity to address issues of accountability to its client population. Acquisition of outcome information three months post intervention had the potential of providing information about the impact of the services received by clients who completed treatment. Further, it was anticipated that information about the group itself may assist the agency in establishment of a minimum standard of service delivery as well as provide information on how to deliver the most effective services possible. Group leaders would possibly benefit from this study by acquisition of knowledge of the most important aspects of the group for men in facilitating positive growth and aspects needing revision in order to address other issues.
Social workers and other professionals in the field of family violence may obtain knowledge of the perceptions of male batterers who complete therapy. Realistic service evaluation criteria with clients could potentially be established through an understanding of how this segment of the male batterer population defines growth and success. While the professional may have certain expectations of positive outcome given her/his previous knowledge and experience in the field, obtaining first-hand information from the male batterer himself may assist in determination of the compatibility of the two perspectives. This study may be utilized to disseminate information about group treatment to professional social workers in the field and aid the ongoing development of a comprehensive knowledge base of family violence.

Further, to gain an understanding of the male batterer's subjective perceptions of environmental influences in his choice to be abusive, areas for future research for both the prevention of violence and intervention with violent men may be identified.

At the community level it was anticipated that this research may be considered a small part of the education process about spousal assault. By asking the male batterer about himself, he becomes a "real" person rather than some "monster" out there. It may assist in the continuing struggle of demystifying wife assault and potentially provide some understanding of the issues in the male batterer's life. In this way, this research project may assist other men who are violent, in identifying dimensions which underlie the choice to be violent and the paths taken to desist from perpetrating violence. By examination of the factors involved in the change process
from violent to "nonviolent" for men who completed group therapy, a small piece of the solution to wife assault is being addressed so that future definitive steps may be taken to eradicate this pervasive phenomenon.

Terminology

There are a variety of definitions of battering, spousal assault, abuse, and violence. It is important to elucidate this researcher's own usage of these words to provide conceptual clarity to the reader, avoiding misconceptions, as well as establishing a beginning of the framework utilized for the present study. The debate over word usage is one of the many struggles in the field of family violence in its quest to be clear that the man is responsible for the violence as well as to reflect the fact that the vast majority of victims are women.

For example, the word assault has been used in a variety of ways. While some authors argue that the intent to do harm must be present, others believe that so long as physical injury is likely to result then an assault has occurred (Gelles and Cornell, 1983). Further, assault is often viewed as a subset of the more general term "violence". Straus and Gelles (1980) define violence as "...an act carried out with the intention of, or perceived as having the intention of physically hurting another person" (p.29). Bhola and Nelson (1990) further delineate violence as signifying "...crossing a boundary in which violations and degradation are now used as tools of power and coercion" (p.6). For the purposes of this study, violence and assault will be utilized to
denote the physical act, by a male, of harming or intending to harm the female partner, regardless of whether physical injury resulted. This definition is inclusive of threats to cause harm, and the destruction of property or pets.

While violence and spousal assault are indicative of a physical act perpetrated by one person towards another, usage of the word abuse typically denotes more inclusive criterion. Finkelhor (1984) defines abuse as "...a situation where a more powerful person takes advantage of a less powerful one" (p.18). Abuse is further specified as "...far more than a single event, even for the woman who is hit once, because it teaches a profound lesson about who controls a relationship and how that control will be exercised" (Bhola and Nelson, 1990, p.6). For the purposes of this study, abuse will be used to denote acts, either verbal or physical, where the man attains, or attempts to usurp the female partner's power and control in the relationship. This includes sexual, emotional, and material/financial forms of abuse. A man who physically assaults his partner is not only physically violent, but uses a range of abusive tactics to further enhance and protect his entitlement of power in the relationship. All of these abuses will be explored within the context of the interviews with the men in the present study.

Summary

This study sought to conceptualize the male batterer's understanding of the effects of the therapeutic process on his subjective thoughts and beliefs about himself.
and others. No other perspective, such as that of the female partner, was solicited. The findings must be interpreted as each person's unique perceptions and experiences and not be misrepresented as "fact" or representative of the male batterer population as a whole. It was this researcher's intent to explore the personal perceptions and meanings of the group experience with the individual male batterer who completed group therapy. The emergent themes represent the collection of experiences for the four men who participated in one twenty-four week group program at a family service agency. The next chapter will present an overview of previous research findings in the field of family violence, placing this research into the context of knowledge presently available.
In order to develop a conceptual understanding of the issue under investigation, it is important to establish the context of the present study within the field of family violence research. This chapter will provide a brief overview of the major perspectives of family violence which guided the present investigation. From these two types of group program models for male batterers will be presented, which are quite similar in terms of techniques utilized in service delivery for this client population. Previous research findings on domestic violence have been synthesized into five major areas, best representative of the content covered in the group program utilized for the present research as well as corresponding to this researcher's perspective on the multi-causal dimensions and mutually influential variables interacting within the male batterer's life on an ongoing basis. These five areas served as the framework for the implementation of the present study.

Theoretical Overview

The early clinical theories of the causes of male violence towards women focussed on individual pathology as the unitary cause of male violence (Gelles and Cornell, 1990; Russell, 1988). These early theories were found to be insufficient explanations of the domestic violence phenomenon and have been largely discarded by
the research community due to their failure to account for the social context in which violence exists (Macleod and Cadieux, 1980; Pahl, 1985). Partially in response to these individually focussed psychoanalytic theories, a second perspective evolved (Gelles, 1985). Whereas the early theories looked towards characteristics within the individual, the second wave of theories seeking to explain the causes of assault against women focus primarily upon the socialization aspects of domestic violence. According to this perspective, violence is learned through experiences in the family of origin and reinforced by the community; both reward the expression of aggression by males. This idea of the effects of family and the broader community in condoning violence contributed to the decision to investigate familial and peer influences in the male batterer’s life and constitute two of the five areas under investigation. Many of the more recent theories of family violence look towards rigid sex role socialization as being a major contributing factor of male violence (Gelles, 1979; Straus and Hotaling, 1980). That is, men who use violence against their partners have an almost single rigid dimensional perception of what constitutes appropriate male and female behaviour. Males are powerful, aggressive, and distant whereas females are submissive, and emotionally reactive. This conceptual framework has been synthesized and taken one step further by researchers adopting a feminist framework to family violence.

The feminist or sociopolitical model of family violence, represented most notably by Dobash and Dobash (1979), includes the historical legacy of violence
against women as well as a socialization perspective towards an explanation of the causality of violence. According to this perspective, violence is a manifestation of the patriarchy rooted in the oppression of women through the centuries. The real issue is in the inordinate amount of power assumed by men in this society and the subordination of women to this power in all aspects of the social environment, of which the intimate relationship is but one example (Pagelow, 1981; Kincaid, 1982; Freedman, 1985). In order to understand wife assault, one must look at the social milieu in which it exists and flourishes (Bograd, 1984). The cause of men assaulting women in relationships centres in the concept of power in which such dictates as "the man is the head of the household" or "the man rules the roost" exist and are a true reflection of the sexist society in which men and women live. The economic, legal, and political structures in society serve to further reinforce the patriarchy (Gondolf, 1985).

While both psychological and sociological perspectives alone are insufficient explanations of the causality of family violence, a feminist perspective, within a social work framework can more fully address the issue of assault against women. It is this researcher's belief that a social work framework means attending not only to the individual, but also to the environment in which the individual lives. Therefore, this study moved beyond a strictly psychological or sociological focus to be inclusive of a number of different environmental influences impacting the male batterer. A feminist perspective adds to this person-in-environment focus by stressing the importance of
gender and power in relationships. It is this perspective which guides the family violence program utilized in the present study and one in which this researcher believes to be the most accurate representation of the causes of family violence. All of these perspectives on domestic violence have had a definite impact on the development of treatment models for male assailters; in terms of intervention goals and the means or techniques in which to achieve them.

Programs for Assaulters

There are two types of programs commonly used to treat men who are violent towards their female partners. Both have similar goals and objectives arising out of the believed causality of domestic violence. These goals are: to increase personal responsibility for the violence (Ganley, 1981), to learn to express emotions and thoughts constructively, to make victim blaming and minimization more difficult (Savage, 1987), to offset isolation and increase support (Flazner, 1982), to expose them to a variety of opinions and role models (Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989), and to provide a sentencing alternative for judges (Dutton, 1988). There are some programs which advocate couple counselling (Harris, 1986; Gelles and Maynard, 1987), but most practitioners agree that this is not feasible until there is no threat of violence towards the woman. The group formats used with male batterers share the position that the man is solely responsible for his violence, that violence is a learned behaviour which can be "unlearned" and replaced with constructive alternatives, and
all use a didactic format.

The two types of programs are cognitive-behavioral and profeminist (Adams, 1986). The profeminist model will be elaborated upon as it is this model which is utilized in the group program in which respondents in this study participated.

Cognitive-Behavioral Group Programs

The cognitive-behavioral model perceives violence as a learned and self-reinforcing behaviour (Sonkin et al., 1985). The basic tenet to this approach is cognitive restructuring - to impart skills which will be incompatible with violence (Saunders and Hanusa, 1984). The male batterer is perceived as having difficulties with appropriately expressing assertiveness, developing intimacy, and has low self-esteem (Faulkner, 1992). The objective of this approach is to point out the self-defeating nature of violent behaviour through learning of new thought and behaviour patterns (Edleson, Miller, and Stone, 1983). The techniques utilized in this type of group program may include: anger logs, time-outs, the buddy system for emotional support, relaxation training, and anger management (Sonkin and Durphy, 1982; Purdy and Nickle, 1981; Eddy and Myers, 1984; Margolin et al., 1989).

The major critique of this approach lies in their perception of the male batterer as having some form of coping or social skills deficit. Adams (1988), states that "...[r]ather than reflecting a coping skills deficit, the violent husband’s selectively abusive behaviour indicates an established set of control skills" (p.16). Further, by focussing upon the individual and ignoring the social-political sexist structures, these
approaches fail to address the larger issues in family violence (Bograd, 1984; Schecter, 1982).

**Profeminist Programs**

Group programs which employ a profeminist approach to intervention with male batterers, such as the one used for the present study, differs from the other model in its belief that any intervention with male batterers must address the underlying rigid gender beliefs and the issue of power in the relationship (Bograd, 1984; Currie, 1988). The profeminist model believes that unless the male batterer’s underlying rigid gender beliefs are addressed in the therapeutic process, the perpetuation of violence will continue. According to this model, these men hold strong beliefs about their rights or entitlement to have all their needs and desires met by their partners (Currie, 1988). It is therefore the responsibility of the female to meet these demands. The use of violence by men is but one mechanism by which to ensure the perpetuation of the power imbalance in the relationship (Adams, 1988). Gender beliefs about male entitlement are strongly connected to the inordinate amount of power male assaulters have in the battering relationship.

Although all group programs perceive the man as responsible for the violence, the profeminist model is further guided by the principle that all persons have the right to safety. When violence occurs, all family members, including the perpetrator, are at risk for injury. Both safety and male entitlement through socialization are addressed in the profeminist group format. For instance, in the men’s group program used for the
In summary, models of intervention with male batterers are driven by different philosophical positions. While both perceive success as the ending of the man’s physical violence towards his partner, the profeminist objectives also include ending the psychological and emotional abuse as well as changing the power and control in the relationship through altering the man’s belief systems about men and women in society. The program utilized for the present study is guided by a profeminist position to family violence but the topics covered within the group format is representative of a synthesis of a number of pieces of differing theoretical perspectives and past research findings in the field of family violence.

The literature relevant for the present study has been synthesized into five major areas. The first, the psychological profile of the male batterer, is a reflection of the early clinical "deficit" theories which largely contributed to the development of group programs for this population. The second area, of the intimate relationship, is discussed in terms of how the batterer’s rigid definitions of masculinity become manifested in this relationship such that abuse and violence results. The family of origin is the third body of literature in family violence research in which the
socialization theories of family violence are clearly influential and provide the
historical context from which violence emerges. The fourth area, the peer network,
has only recently been put forth as being relevant to the individual’s ability to sustain
change and is significant in its ability to further typify and reinforce a rigid masculine
identity. The final area explored within the research literature is that of outcome and
process issues involved in group therapy for men who assault their female partners.
All five of these areas will be discussed, the connections between them and the male
batterer be made explicit, and their significance to the present study will be
articulated.

Psychological Profile of a Male Batterer

Research conducted directly with male batterers is a relatively recent
phenomenon (Star, 1983; Ptacek, 1984; Gondolf, 1985), roughly corresponding to the
development of treatment specifically aimed at the male batterer (Sonkin et. al, 1985).
Prior to this, information about the man was largely obtained through interviews with
the female partners who were staying in shelters. Once treatment programs were
offered for the perpetrator of the violence, the male batterer population became
accessible to researchers (Dutton, 1988) and make the present study possible. This
early research attempted to determine if there was something unique within the male
batterer population which set them apart from the general population. This
psychological perspective is significant to group treatment models as it is the basis
from which specific intervention techniques evolved. The results of these types of investigations was the development of the batterer's profile which articulated "typical" characteristics of men who assault their partners. The profile of the male batterer may include the following characteristics:

**Desire for Control**

The literature on the male batterer's profile indicates that these men have a strong need to control their partners. The male batterer often uses threats and intimidation towards his partner when he perceives himself as no longer having the control or power in the relationship (Sonkin et. al, 1985). This intense desire or need to control has been hypothesized as evolving out of a sense of insecurity and an almost obsessive fear of losing his partner, either to another man or even to her family members (Deschner, 1984; Harris and Sinclair, 1981; Pressman, 1984). If the batterer perceives himself as losing control in interactions with his partner, acts of physical violence are an immediate way of regaining control in the relationship. In treatment, issues of power and control are central to a profeminist perspective to family violence and are attended to throughout the group program, including the check-ins at the beginning of each session when the men discuss their actions for the previous week. According to this perspective, in order for change to occur, the male batterer must attend to these personal issues in an ongoing manner (Adams, 1988).

**Externalization of Responsibility**

Externalization of responsibility is another major dimension of the male
batterer profile identified in the literature. The externalization of responsibility for individual actions is directly connected with the male batterer's need for control. As the means for obtaining control is through external behavioral patterns, it logically follows that the responsibility for those actions are also external to the male batterer himself. The results of this type of externalization lies in blaming the partner ("she asked for it"), minimizing the violence, and using other excuses to rationalize his behaviour (Purdy and Nickle, 1981; Walker, 1979; Straus, 1986). This is an important issue for group programs as it is generally agreed in the family violence professional community that the first step to change is taking full responsibility for one's own actions (Dutton, 1986; Neidig and Friedman, 1984). For many men, the incentive or motivation for entering therapy is either because they are coerced through the courts; seek couple counselling and are refused because of the violence; or are given an ultimatum by their partner who threatens to leave if help is not sought (Brisson, 1982; Tolman and Bhosley, 1990). It is assumed for the present study that all respondents have taken some degree of responsibility for their violent and controlling behaviour or they would not have voluntarily attended twenty-four weeks of treatment. However, it is important to realize that recognition does not necessarily imply change.

**Emotional Constrictiveness**

The final component of the male batterer profile identified in the literature is emotional constrictiveness. These men are typically socially isolated, and do not
express emotions other than anger which is expressed through verbal aggression and violence rather than through clear verbal communication (Sinclair, 1985; Ganley, 1981; Straus, 1986). While these men may feel hurt and pain, the only emotion they consider to be acceptable for men to express is anger and rage. The expression of any other emotion is contrary to their rigid perceptions of masculinity. Issues of emotional constraint, and communication of thoughts and feelings are important elements which are routinely addressed in a profeminist group program model.

One of the rationales for utilizing a group treatment approach in working with male batterers is to offset the isolation, improve social and communication skills, and to learn to express a range of emotions in a non-threatening manner. Being able to express their emotions to other men is one way in which the emotional constrictiveness arising out of rigid definitions of masculinity may be shifted. This early research specifying individual characteristics of the male batterer population are what contributed to tailored interventions for use with this client population (Sonkin et al., 1985). Furthermore, it is these characteristics which are played out in the intimate relationship and therefore contribute greatly to the dynamics which occur within the relationship.

Rigid Masculinity Manifested in the Intimate Relationship

The characteristics of the individual male batterer do not exist in isolation but rather become increasingly evident when perceived in the context of the intimate
relationship. It is interesting to note that within the family violence literature, very little has been written on the relationships of male assailters, from the man's perspective. Walker (1979) contributed a great deal to the field with the identification of a cycle of violence in which there is tension, followed by a violent episode and a subsequent honeymoon period in which the male is contrite and courts his partner, out of a sense of guilt and shame for his actions. This cycle is largely understood from the woman's perspective during each phase but there is a clear absence in the literature of the processes the man is going through during this cycle and nothing on the man's responsibility in breaking the cycle of violence. What results then is an abundance of literature geared toward assisting the woman in "breaking free" of this potentially lethal behaviour (Carew-Jones and Watson, 1985; Gondolf, 1989; Harley, 1988). While group programs for male batterers perceive the man as responsible for his violence, the message in the literature is that it is somehow the victim's responsibility to break from the pattern.

What is written about the intimate violent relationship is in terms of how societal expectations of gender roles become rigid within these relationships (Power, 1988). Tolman and Bennett (1990) hypothesize that "...men who believe they do not live up to societal notions about their gender role behaviour may compensate through aggressive behaviour toward their partner to bolster their masculine images " (p. 96). While the physical violence rarely occurs on a daily basis, other forms of verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse may be continually present (Straus, 1986). "The
commission of violent behaviour represents a small part in an ongoing series of activities that characterize the encounter between victim and victimizer" (Steffen, 1982, p.60). The ongoing activities however are not elaborated upon and may provide valuable information about the relationship for future investigations. The individual male batterer does not exist in isolation as the profile of this type of man is one in which interactions must occur in order to identify control issues and rigid belief systems. It is the aim of this researcher to explore the intimate relationship in the interview process in order to place the respondent in the context of his environment, of which the intimate relationship is one aspect.

In order to understand the effects of group treatment on the male batterer, it is important to have a conceptualization of the environment in which he will "test" his new abilities as well as be the most likely to resort to his "old" patterns of violence. This dimension will assist in knowledge about the effects of group treatment, particularly what new patterns emerge as replacements for the cycle of violence. "With discontinuance comes the difficult work of identity transformation and establishing new social definitions of behaviour and relations to reinforce them" (Fagan, 1987,p.33). In exploring the intimate relationship with male batterers a preliminary conceptual understanding of the processes involved in this identity transformation, from the man's perspective, will begin to emerge. While individual characteristics are played out in the intimate relationship, family relationships are the first foundation in the individual's identity formation and are influential in teachings
of gender roles to children. The experiences in family are significant in the
development of the male batterer’s rigid definitions of gender role behaviour.

Family Of Origin Models Male Entitlement

The literature on male batterer’s family of origin suggests that it is within this
arena that rigid definitions of masculinity are first learned.

Experience in the family of origin is not only externalized and seen as
consistent with masculine behaviour, but provides the men with a
restricted repertoire of behavioral and social skills which equates
intense anger with violent behaviours.

Nosko and Wallace, 1988, p.41.

Pressman (1983), cites studies in which 80% of offenders witnessed violence in their
families of origin as evidence of the intergenerational aspect of violence. Other
researchers have also found this tendency in the male batterer population
(Gondolf, 1985; Macleod, 1987; Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986). The profeminists
perceive this as being more than just pointing to the intergenerational component of
family violence but that it also sends a clear message to boys about power in male-
female relationships (Bograd, 1984). What occurs in the family of origin influences
both the individual’s identity as well as the perception of intimate relationships in
general. This early learning becomes modelled in later life and increases the
likelihood that anger will be expressed as aggression (Tolman and Bennett, 1990).

To understand the individual, it is important to have knowledge of that person’s life
history in order to place the influence of the past in the context of the present
(Steffen, 1982). It is not to blame the family for the batterer’s present behaviour but rather to provide him with some understanding of the historical roots of his violence.

The notions of modelling and reinforcement in childhood that it is acceptable for men to be violent and aggressive has been adopted in the present study as the third area for exploration. The family of origin is the arena where socialization occurs and much of an individual’s identity is formed. This piece of research conducted in the field of family violence has been influenced by a social learning and family systems perspective in which behavioral modelling of gender roles and the intergenerational aspects of violence are addressed. While family systems theory stresses the importance of family members’ influence on each individual, it is deficit in its failure to recognize the reality of power and gender differences in families. This is why it is important to apply a feminist perspective to any research conducted on violence against women. This perspective is incorporated into the profeminist group program utilized in the present study; some of the content of the group program explores family relationships as one area in which definitions of masculinity evolve. As it is content covered within the group program utilized for the present study, it is an area in which respondents will be familiar. Further, if respondents have processed some of the group learning, it is hypothesized that their perceptions of "family" will have been affected by this new knowledge. This area is connected to the first two areas discussed as it is experiences in the family or origin which influenced the development of the male batterer’s profile which in turn becomes destructively evident.
in the intimate relationship. Each system to be explored in the present study interacts in a multitude of ways in the male batterer’s life. An additional relational system considered to influence the male batterer by this researcher and by the group program is that of the friendship/peer network.

Peers Support Traditional Masculinity

The literature suggests that the peer network is an important system which influences an individual’s identity. Human beings tend to seek out other people which will most support our way of being in the world, as a form of validation of self (Fagan, 1987). Applying this sociological tenet to male batterers, it can be hypothesized that these men would be most likely to have friendships which tend to support their traditional definitions of masculinity. This is important as the peer network is a reflection of societal structures which support aggression and violence in men and submission in women.

Gondolf and Hanneken (1987) in interviews with 51 men who participated in a treatment group for assailters, found that for more than 60% of the men, the social aspects of the group (sharing opinions and emotions, making friends, and talking with others) were the most significant components of the group. Fagan (1987), in writing about the desistance of violence in this population of men, states:

...if violence is supported through peer cultures...then the development of "immunities" to those influences is critical... Development of new social peers is critical to support a new social [non-violent] identity. (p.32).
Attending an all-male treatment group provides men with the opportunity to experience male interaction at a new, more intimate and emotional level, one in which masculinity is not equated with aggressiveness but with support and understanding (Kaplan, 1975). If this new definition of what constitutes masculinity is processed by participants, then it follows that their former peer network would no longer meet their relational needs. This area is important to investigate with respondents in the present study as it is one indicator of changing beliefs about male friendships as well as a recognition on the part of respondents that there is a different way of connecting with other men that is respectful and emotionally satisfying and may be an area for further exploration of self in relationships (Jenkins, 1991).

In summary, the present study is an attempt to explore the significance of the group experience on the individual male batterer's sense of self, which includes definitions of masculinity, self-responsibility and ownership of the violence, and effects on self-concept. That is, does the male batterer perceive himself in a more favourable way (competent, emotionally stable, less dependent on "other" for meeting "self" needs) after completing a group therapy program. This exploration is directly tied to the "deficits" identified in the literature focusing on the individual male batterer. In order to gain a beginning understanding of how changes in self influence interaction with and perception of others, three relational systems will be explored: family, intimate relationship, and peer network. This is important as it provides the life history of the individual within the present context of his life. These content areas
have been influenced by family systems, social learning, and the emergent men's movement literature. The focus on the individual in his environment is consistent with the pro-feminist treatment model utilized in the agency from which the sample was drawn, and all areas are addressed within the group setting and therefore are deemed to be the most representative of the potential impacts of the group program in the respondent's lives. In addition to the research literature available on the male batterer and his relationships with others, a fifth body of literature addresses process and outcome issues of group therapy with this population.

Outcome and Process of Group Treatment

The fifth area of exploration for the present study was primarily influenced by literature on studies of outcome for male batterers who receive therapeutic intervention for their violence. This body of literature is important for the present study as the respondents had all completed twenty-four weeks of group therapy. There have been a number of studies which have explored the outcome of treatment with male batterers (Tolman and Bennett, 1990). These studies have been largely quantitative in nature and specifically focussed on the success of these groups at ending the man's physical violence towards his partner. Success rates have been reported as ranging from 66% to 85% depending upon the inclusion of reports from partners (Eisikovits and Edleson, 1989; Tolman, Beeman, and Mendoza, 1987). While these findings are significant, the narrow definition of success limits their
applicability to professionals in the field as they do not explore other potential outcomes of therapeutic interventions with the male batterer population.

A second body of literature on outcome consists of a more inclusive focus of outcome for male batterers who participate in group treatment. These studies have found general increases in the expression of feelings and positive negotiations of conflict (Farley and Magill, 1988); significant decreases in depression and negative attitudes towards women (Saunders and Hanusa, 1986); and increases in assertiveness (Douglas and Perrin, 1990) with men completing treatment. The most common element of outcome studies is the primary focus on the individual himself, with little or no reference made to the context in which he exists. The present study attempted to address the context of the male batterer’s relationships from his perspective. The respondent’s self-perception of change may provide information for further exploration.

Another body of literature addresses the potential impact of group process on facilitation of positive outcome. Researchers in this area have consistently found that it is the process of group interaction which is the most positively influencing aspect for the men and not the content of the sessions (Gondolf and Hanneken, 1987; Gondolf, 1985). Eisikovits and Edleson (1989) in their review of the literature, conclude:

The sheer number of techniques employed in the men’s groups makes it difficult to interpret what, if any, procedures are critical to the success of treatment. [Further], there is a need to look more closely at what aspects of group treatment are both productive and counter productive.
This study addressed this issue by incorporating questions about what the significant aspects of the group were as part of the interview process. What male batterer’s who completed treatment consider to be the most important aspects of the group may assist professionals in consideration of minimum standards for program delivery with this client population.

Employing an eclectic approach which utilizes a number of different theoretical tenets within a profeminist perspective allowed for a broad and inclusive exploration of the effects of the group experience on the male batterer’s subjective perceptions of himself and others. This is significant as it may assist in the discovery of other areas for future investigations with men who assault their partners.

The following chapter on methodology will specify the interview procedures, sample characteristics, and data analysis techniques employed in this investigation with male batterers who voluntarily completed twenty four weeks of group treatment at a metropolitan family service agency. Chapters four through six will present the stages of the change process which unfolded during the data analysis and include a discussion of the significant themes evolving directly from the data. This will assist the reader in an understanding of the entire process and the linkages between the stages as well as provide a general discussion of indicators of movement from one stage to the next. Lastly, chapter seven will identify some areas for further investigation as well as draw some tentative conclusions based on the male batterer’s
subjective perceptions of the effects of group therapy.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Method

The intent of this study was to conceptualize the effects of the group experience on the male batterer’s subjective thoughts and beliefs about himself and others. The research purpose is to explore the personal subjective perceptions of male batterers who voluntarily completed twenty-four weeks of a group therapy program in order to gain a preliminary conceptual understanding of treatment effects. This study was guided largely by the assumptions that men who completed the program would be able to identify some definite changes in themselves as a result of their willing participation and secondly, a process is involved in integrating these self-identified changes into their daily lives.

There were two main reasons which guided the decision to employ a qualitative approach to study the impact of group treatment on male batterers. First, the literature review revealed few in-depth follow-up studies of male batterers who voluntarily participate in treatment groups and none which attempt to explore the personal perceptions and meanings of the group experience for the population under study. Further, as the group treatment approach for male batterers is a relatively understudied phenomenon, the exploratory focus of this study was largely inductive, aimed at theory building rather than theory verification.
The strategy of inductive designs is to allow the important dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be.

Patton, 1990, p.44.

While there is a conceptual framework which guides the decision of what to study and how to study it, the themes and concepts which emerged within the parameters of this study evolved directly from the data.

The second reason which guided the decision to conduct a qualitative study with self-identified male batterers was the nature of the philosophical position guiding the program's treatment model. As the program's profeminist orientation to family violence emphasizes communication skills and interaction with others, a qualitative study was the most appropriate method to explore the impact of the group experiences with male respondents. Qualitative measurements "...find out what people's lives, experiences, and interactions mean to them in their own terms" (Patton, 1990, p.22). This design was congruent to both the goals of the agency program and to conducting research in areas in which there is little knowledge presently available.

Data collection for the study was through in-person interviews. Interviews allow for: ease of audiotaping to ensure accuracy of data collected; paralleling of the objectives of the group program (increasing communication and social interaction skills); and an understanding of how people make meaning out of their experiences.

As McCracken states:

The long interview is one of the most powerful tools in the qualitative armory...The method can take us into the mental world of the
individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the lifeworld of the individual, to see content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview allows us...to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do...

(1988, p.9.)

The focus was on conceptualizing the respondent’s understanding of the effects of the group experience on his subjective thoughts and beliefs about himself and others.

The in-person interview was deemed to be the most suitable method for obtaining this personalized information.

Subject Selection

The sampling procedure was purposive.

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research.

(Patton, 1990, p.69).

The male batterer population from which the sample was drawn had voluntarily participated in a group treatment program at a metropolitan family service agency. This agency was chosen as it is the only agency which provides services for the voluntary male batterer treatment population. The sample selected for study was from a group of men with which this researcher had no previous therapeutic involvement or knowledge of their personal stories. Inclusion criteria for this study arose out of the program’s criteria for group participation. The man must have: committed at least
one act of physical violence towards his female partner (kicking, slapping, pinching, etc.), have no current drug or alcohol dependency problems, have no active assault charges against him, have not re-offended, and attended a minimum of eighteen out of the twenty-four group therapy sessions (Refer to Appendix A for a description of the program).

All the men were drawn from one therapy group which ended three months prior to the interviews. The three month period was assumed to be beneficial as it allowed for a longer time period for the integration of group learning into the individual respondent’s life. Choosing a homogeneous group who had been exposed to the same two group leaders, content and range of perspectives was assumed to enable a more complete picture of the group experience across the interviews as well as permit the researcher to more readily probe for different interpretations of the same event within the group. While this decision limits the generalizability of the sample, the depth and richness of information obtained about this single group was assumed to provide valuable insight into the male batterer’s experiences of group treatment and therefore supported the intent of the study. Of the sixteen men initially assessed, ten began the first twelve week phase, eight continued into the second component of group treatment, and seven completed the entire eight month program. Of the seven male group completers, five met the study’s inclusion criteria. Four of the five men agreed to be interviewed with the fifth man unable to be contacted at his last known address. Table one presents an overview of the sample’s characteristics.
TABLE ONE: Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONDENT</th>
<th>01</th>
<th>02</th>
<th>03</th>
<th>04</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELATIONSHIP STATUS</td>
<td>SEPARATED 9 MONTHS</td>
<td>MARRIED 9 YEARS</td>
<td>SEPARATED 15 MONTHS</td>
<td>COMMON-LAW 3 YEARS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHILDREN</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCCUPATION</td>
<td>ACTOR</td>
<td>BUSINESS REP.</td>
<td>UNEMPLOYED</td>
<td>UNEMPLOYED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOST RECENT INCIDENT OF VERBAL ABUSE</td>
<td>3 MONTHS PRIOR TO INTERVIEW</td>
<td>1 MONTH PRIOR TO INTERVIEW</td>
<td>6 MONTHS PRIOR TO INTERVIEW</td>
<td>9 MONTHS PRIOR TO INTERVIEW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOST RECENT INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL ASSAULT</td>
<td>1 MONTH PRIOR TO GROUP</td>
<td>1 WEEK PRIOR TO GROUP</td>
<td>2 MONTHS PRIOR TO GROUP</td>
<td>4 DAYS PRIOR TO GROUP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The female partner's perspective was not solicited. It has been reported in other studies that the male assaulter has a tendency to underreport his abuse while the female partner tends to be more accurate or over-report the frequency and severity of her male partner's abuse towards her (Dutton, 1988; Fischer, 1987). While obtaining her perspective of the male batterer would have increased the validity of findings, this was not assessed because: the focus of this research was not on the specific incidence of violence in the relationship; it was not the intention of this researcher to establish the truth of what the men shared but to understand how they have applied meaning to their experiences; perceptions of "self" and how others perceive you may not be congruent but does not render either invalid; an adequate exploration of the female's perspective would be a separate study. While this lack of concurrent validation is a limitation, the decision was deemed to be the most appropriate given the intent and parameters of the study.

The major limitation of the sample is in both its representativeness and its generalizablitly. As is evident by the attrition rate in this program (on average 30-40% per group), the set of respondents may not be representative of the male batterers who utilize this particular service agency or of male batterers in general. While the subjective perceptions of this subset of the male batterer population may potentially be suggestive of the perceptions and experiences of group completers in general, this was not determined. It was the intent of this study to explore the impact of the group experiences on the individual male batterer and not to presume this perspective to be
representative of anything other than that individual's personal perceptions. Given the
purposive nature of the sample under study, its generalizability can not be determined.

The purpose of an in-depth study is to understand the experience of those who are being interviewed; the issue is not whether the researcher can generalize the finding; Instead the researcher's task is to present the experience of the people...in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects.


This research was exploratory in nature and would require further investigation to determine the applicability of identified variables and test their generalizability to the overall male batterer population or to the segment which voluntarily completes group treatment.

Data Collection

Data was collected through in-person interviews utilizing an interview guide. The process of providing structure to each interview involved limiting the amount of information collected by developing a number of different interview topic areas, and structuring of a general interview guide to facilitate consistency in the type of information obtained from each respondent (Appendix B: Interview Guide).

Content Areas

There were five major content areas delineated within the interview guide to explore the subjective perceptions of the male batterer.

personal change. A series of questions about changes in self-perception and
self-concept were based on the aims of the group program in which respondents participated. These aims were: taking responsibility for one’s own behaviour without blaming others; learning about physiological signs of anger and destructive thought processes; and learning to express emotions appropriately without the use of violence. This focus on perception of changes in self was reflected in questions such as: thinking back before you became involved in the group, how do you think you would have described yourself then? Probes were included around beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. The respondent was then asked to describe himself now. How would you describe yourself now that you have completed the group program? How is that different than before the group?

intimate relationship. Questions were asked about the male batterer’s relationship with his current or previous female partner to elicit information about how he perceives his personal changes as having influenced his perception of and behaviour in the relationship. It was assumed that this series of questions would elicit further discussion of issues discussed in group and serve as a practice arena for "new" behaviour. Sample questions asked in this section included: How would you have described your relationship with your partner before the group? How would you describe it now? Can you think of experiences you had in the group that have influenced your perceptions of your intimate relationship?

family relationships. The third major topic area explored with respondents was that of family. This was largely due to the literature which cites the intergenerational
nature of spousal assault; incorporated into the conceptual framework utilized in this study as well as this researcher's personal experience in the family violence field in which the family is either a major support in change or a liability for sustaining positive change. The effects of family modelling violence by men as acceptable behaviour towards women is a topic in the second phase of the group program and therefore was assumed to have been thought about by each respondent as he went through the program. Questions about family included: Do you perceive members of your family differently now than before the group? How are they acting differently towards you? How are you treating them differently? These questions were designed to gain an understanding of the family environment and history of the individual respondent.

peer network. Questions about friendships and working relationships were asked due to knowledge of the socialization process. People tend to seek out environments which support their way of being in the world, and the literature demonstrates the isolation of these men from positive outside contact. It was also assumed that if these men previously had relationships which supported violence and aggression by men, then any changes in self would cause them to no longer identify as strongly with this type of peer group; that is that these relationships would no longer satisfy their social needs. Sample questions utilized are: How have your relationships with friends/coworkers been affected by your personal changes? Do you relate to them differently now than before your participation in the group? It was
hoped that these questions would elicit information about the larger social milieu with which the individual was involved.

**group process and outcome.** In addition to specifying the content to be covered in each interview, the questions in each topic area were further divided into pre and post group reflections. For example, the respondent was asked to describe himself before participating in group and after group participation. This type of pre and post group reflection was used in each section of the interview and was designed to facilitate some reflection on any changes as well as provide some idea to the researcher about where this person was at and where he is now. While this is by no means an objective measure of the degree of change, it assisted in enabling the respondent to make comparisons between the two time periods, thereby encouraging an insightful dialogue about what exactly he perceives as having changed.

The second structural component added to the interview guide in addition to topic areas and pre and post group retrospection was that of probing for specific sessions or elements which most influenced the perceived changes. Within each topic section, the respondent was asked to articulate anything about the group which he believed to have been the most influential in assisting him in making the change. This structural component was added upon reflection about what social workers in the field most need to know about the group experiences. It was decided that the most immediately useful information for social workers would be consideration of core components necessary for male batterers to be more likely to stay in group and
make positive changes in their lives.

It is important to note that while the interview guide served to provide focus to the interview, it served as a guide only and therefore questions were not necessarily asked in the same order or with precisely the same wording in each interview although all topic areas were covered with each respondent.

The interview guide serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered. The interviewer is required to adapt both the wording and the sequence of questions to specific responses in the context of the actual interview.

(Patton, 1980, p. 198).

This flexibility allowed the researcher to use the constructs of the respondent, and speak to him using his language, thereby keeping information in context. This enhanced the measurement instrument's internal validity which is based on the extent to which the results reflect the reality of what you are studying (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The guide then, served to provide a degree of focus and structure to the interview while at the same time allowing for flexibility and exploration.

Questions posed to respondents were open-ended, encouraging them to share their experiences on their own terms, to answer with as much detail as they chose, and to assisted this researcher in assuming a non-judgmental position in the interview. As Seidman states, "[a]n open-ended question, unlike a leading question, establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants. It does not presume an answer" (1991, p. 62). Interviews always began with the least restrictive question, probing for more detail as required and questions only
became more specific if not understood by the respondent or the answer seemed vague to the researcher. This position is consistent with the intent of the study which is to gain some understanding of how the male batterer subjectively integrates the group experience into his daily life.

**Procedures**

Potential respondents were recruited through an initial contact letter introducing the researcher and the study (Appendix C: Contact Letter). Also included was a synopsis of the topics to be covered in the interview (Appendix D: Topic Areas). This was included to ensure completely informed consent as well as to allow respondents pre-interview reflection of their experiences, thereby encouraging insightful responses to questions posed.

Researchers are more likely to get good data, and know what data they are getting, if the interviewees are told at the outset what the research topic is, even if initially in relatively broad terms, and why the topic is of interest. (Walker, 1985, p.48).

The initial package also consisted of an interview consent form and research approval certificate (Appendix E: Consent Form and Research Approval Certificate).

Respondents were then contacted by phone two weeks after mailing of the initial package for interview times to be arranged. Each respondent was interviewed at the metropolitan family service agency in which he had attended group. This was assumed to be of benefit in immediacy of recall of group experiences. Upon introductions, the respondent was requested to sign a consent form, of which he received a copy, detailing the study and ensuring confidentiality of information and
anonymity of identity, even to group leaders, which appeared to be of some relief to
the men. This researcher’s involvement in the family violence program was also
explained, as was the need to audiotape. Each interview lasted approximately one and
one half hours, with the longest being of two hour duration. After the first interview,
the questions about gender beliefs were modified to be included in the topic of
intimate relationship as it became evident early on that beliefs about men and women
were played out in this relationship. This modification added some continuity and
flow to the format of the interview itself as it appeared to naturally flow with the
interview dialogue. Respondents were also requested to complete a demographic
sheet upon interview completion (Appendix F: Demographic Questions).

The dilemma of a female interviewing men about their personal selves was
also attended to in the context of the interviews and was openly addressed with each
respondent. All of the men interviewed reported having no discomfort sharing with a
female and one reported feeling more at ease discussing feelings with a woman than
had it been a man conducting the interview.

All the interviews occurred in the same setting, including the same room and
were conducted over a one month period. Care was taken to ensure respondents were
given the same set of instructions and introductory statements about the research
purpose. Notes were taken after each interview to account for modifications and to
record preliminary impressions of the interview process. Each interview was
transcribed verbatim. This enhanced the researcher’s ability to be consistent within
each interview as well as to improve the quality of each successive interview. The fact that all respondents participated in the same group enabled the researcher to probe for different perspectives on the same experience, providing valuable information about the group process. Marshall and Rossman suggest this type of rigour to enhance the replicability of qualitative research.

...keeping thorough notes...that records each decision and the rationale behind it, researchers allow others to inspect their procedures, protocols, and decisions...by keeping all collected data in well-organized, retrievable form.


Careful recording of procedures as well as documenting modifications made between interviews, audiotaping each interview, and addressing potentially biasing issues such as gender of the researcher, enhanced the potential replicability of this research.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method of data analysis (CCM) in grounded theory (Glaser and Straus, 1967). This method is for generating a theory directly from the data; a tentative theory that is "...integrated, consistent, plausible, close to the data, in a form clear enough to be readily, if only partially, operationalized for testing in quantitative research" (Glaser and Straus, 1967,p.35). The analysis consisted of both inductive and deductive processes. Inductive as the resultant themes and stages arose directly from the data, deductive as this researcher's conceptual framework influenced both what questions were asked and how the data
was later perceived. This interactional process is consistent with that advocated by Straus and Corbin (1990).

The process of analyzing data with the CCM involved a number of interactive, simultaneous occurring procedures involving codes, memos, and basic social processes (BSP’s). Specification of types, dimensions, properties, and categories utilized by Glaser and Straus have been modified for the present analysis. This modification best fit with this researcher’s conceptualization of the interviews. Respondents related stories of change and this researcher believes that themes and elements, as opposed to dimensions and properties, are what emerge out of storytelling. Elements, themes, and stages best represent the increasing levels of abstraction of the data obtained in this study. A code is defined as "...an abbreviation or symbol applied to a segment of words - most often a sentence or paragraph of transcribed field notes in order to classify the words" (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p.56). For example, when one respondent was asked about his beliefs about women, he responded:

Well, not being able to have women as friends, like women were for sex and nothing else...everything really like possession and jealousy.

This statement was coded in the margins as objectification of women and women as property. The code then, represents the respondent’s words at a slightly more abstract level than he articulated while still capturing the essence of his words. The entire transcript was coded in this manner (Appendix G: Coded Transcript).

Memos were also utilized during the process of coding each transcript. Glaser
defines a memo as "...the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding. Memos lead, naturally to abstraction or ideation" (1978, p. 83). For example, in the same area of the above transcript, in his discussion of beliefs about women before group participation, a memo in the margin was written as Note: women as objects and therefore one-dimensional, is this construct, which appears to prevent an identification with the female partner a prerequisite to committing violence such that breaking these rigid constructs would make violence less likely? Memos such as this appear throughout the transcripts and serve to make connections or links between the words of the respondents and the emergent concepts. The memo and coding processes encouraged the interplay of the inductive and deductive levels of analysis, such that increasingly levels of abstraction were achieved which are a reflection of concepts grounded within the actual data. As this coding process occurred, beginning conceptualizations of themes and their elements also become increasingly evident.

The entire data analysis involved the following steps: each transcript was open coded and then a list of potential elements and themes were established from a grouping of similar codes. This process was then conducted in the reverse such that the elements and themes which emerged were again compared to the codes, then compared with the verbatim transcript for both their conceptual clarity and for the best fit or representation of the data. To assist in obtaining the best fit of themes to codes, there was ongoing consultation with the group leaders and other persons.
independent of the program throughout the data analysis process. This was important as it permitted this researcher to "check-out" the logic and conceptualization of emergent elements and themes with persons who had little vested interest in the project. This process of continual revision and modification of codes, elements and themes was conducted until theoretical saturation had been achieved. Straus states that theoretical saturation has been reached when "...additional analysis no longer contributes to discovering anything new about a category" (1987, p.21). As this iterative process occurred with each successive transcript, three stages emerged from a list of eleven themes and numerous coded groupings. These three stages comprised a Basic Social Process (BSP) which is "...conceptually developed to account for the organization of social behaviour as it occurs over time" (Bigus, Haden, & Glaser, 1982). The BSP which emerged represents both stages in the respondent’s development as well as a process of movement from one stage to the next.

The next chapter will present an overview of the BSP which emerged and the elements and themes within each stage. Following this, the first stage will be presented using verbatim quotations from the transcripts which provide evidence for each theoretical level and the linkages or connections between them.
CHAPTER FOUR
STAGE ONE: ESTABLISHING A ONE DIMENSIONAL MASCULINE IMAGE

Analysis of the four transcripts revealed a Basic Social Process which is comprised of three stages representative of the change process for male batterers who completed twenty-four weeks of group treatment. The three stages which emerged are: Establishing a One Dimensional Masculine Image, Erosion of Rigid Masculine Image, and Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity into Relationships. Each stage is indicative of different developmental stages within the respondents' lives. The first stage conceptualizes the historical context of each man prior to his entry into group therapy and includes themes of: Family Models Male Violence, Self-Perception as Worthless and Rejected, Dependence on Woman for Construction of Self-Worth, and Peers Support Male Violence. These themes emerged from the respondents' stories which they related when asked to describe themselves and their relationships prior to therapy. Each theme also includes elements, which are more specific and less abstract characterizations of respondents' stories. For example, the theme Family Models Male Violence contains the elements of: abusive fathers, unavailable mothers, and male dominance and female victimization. Figure one visually depicts each stage, the corresponding themes, and their elements.
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FIGURE ONE: The stages of the Change Process for Male Batterers
While each theme stands alone as a conceptual element, the emergence of each stage is dependent upon the presence of all the themes. Movement from one stage to the next is dependent upon certain conditions being met and is a cumulative process such that respondents may fluctuate backwards and forwards from one theme to the next, and for any one individual respondent, the themes may not occur in precisely the same order. For example, the second stage, *Erosion of Rigid Masculine Image* contains the themes of: *External vs Internal Help-Seeking Behaviour*, *Group Process as Alternate Model of Male Relationships*, and *Increased Self-Confidence through Self-Reflection*. While one respondent may have experienced increases in self-confidence early on in the group program, another may have not realized his own confidence until well into the program. For example, if the man continued to be wife-mandated and did not recognize his responsibility in ending the violence and abuse it is less likely that he will have positively perceived the group as providing him the opportunity to experience male relationships in a different way. Also, without some degree of self-reflection, this stage is less likely to have emerged. Figure two depicts the interaction of each stage and their themes as the men move from one stage to the next in their quest to develop non-abusive identities.

The movement from one stage to the next is also a temporal process. For example, while the first stage is representative of the pre-group histories of the respondents, the second stage is representative of the processes occurring during their participation in the group. The third stage, of *Instituting New Definitions of*
STAGE ONE: ESTABLISHING ONE DIMENSIONAL MASCULINE IMAGE

FAMILY MODELS
MALE VIOLENCE

DEPENDENCE ON WOMAN FOR CONSTRUCTION OF SELF-WORTH

PEERS SUPPORT MALE VIOLENCE

SELF-PERCEPTION AS WORTHLESS AND REJECTED

STAGE TWO: EROSION OF RIGID MASCULINE IMAGE

EXTERNAL VS INTERNAL HELP-SEEKING MOTIVATION

GROUP PROCESS AS ALTERNATE MODEL OF MALE RELATIONSHIPS

INCREASED SELF-CONFIDENCE THROUGH SELF-REFLECTION

STAGE THREE: INSTITUTING NEW DEFINITIONS OF MASCULINITY INTO RELATIONSHIPS

FREEING SELF FROM NEGATIVE FAMILY IMAGE

RECONSTRUCTING MALE PEER NETWORK

STRUGGLE TO TREAT WOMEN DIFFERENTLY

FIGURE TWO: The Change Process for Male Batterers
Masculinity into Relationships occurs both after the group as well as during the group as the men began to examine their relationships with significant others. While the first and second stage have definite endings to them in time, either the beginning or ending of group treatment, the third stage is still unfolding in the respondents lives as they struggle with the development of new ways of being in relationships with others.

This chapter will present the findings of the first stage of the change process for male batterers who voluntarily completed twenty-four weeks of group therapy. This first stage ends where help seeking behaviour begins. Each theme will be discussed in turn, with its corresponding elements. The linkages or connections of each theme to the development of this stage will also be made explicit. Figure three presents this first stage, its themes, and elements as well as the corresponding piece of the change process which depicts the relationships between the themes in the male batterer’s development.

Family Models Male Violence

The first theme in this stage represents the respondents’ perceptions of their family relationships in childhood and prior to entering the group program. What is evident in the elements of this theme, abusive father/unavailable mother, male dominance/female victimization is the rigid notions of gender and more specifically, male entitlement the families of these men modelled.
The Change Process

**Stage One: Establishing One Dimensional Masculine Image**

- dependence on woman for construction of self-worth
- family models male violence
- peers support male violence
- self-perception as worthless and rejected

(beginning of stage two)

**FIGURE THREE:** Establishing One Dimensional Masculine Image
Abusive Fathers

The parents’ characteristics were significant to respondents. The father was typically described as being emotionally, and often, physically unavailable to them in childhood other than for disciplinary measures. Three of the four respondents came from intact homes with the fourth being unable to remember his father, who had deserted the family when he was three years old. However, for this respondent, a grandfather played a significant role in his life. When asked about their relationships with their fathers in childhood, respondents related the following:

It never really felt like I lived up to his expectations, that he would rather have somebody else for a son. He was always saying, why can’t you be more like..., why can’t you do this..., why are you so retarded, why are you so slow. He was critical and sarcastic and abusive in that way, I don’t think I’ve ever been sexually abused, but definitely physically and emotionally and I’ve learned that people who are abused turn out to be abusers.

When I was growing up he [father] would say "do it" and I wouldn’t do it. I got the strap, the wooden spoons, I don’t know how many wooden spoons were broken over me. I got the leather belt...I got fists, open palm, you know...back of his hand; basically anything that was within reach.

He [father] was never around for me. Whenever he came home the kids would scatter, you know, just in case he was in a bad mood. I guess it was our way of keeping ourselves safe from his temper...abuses.

While these respondents related stories of abuse as representative of their relationship with their fathers in childhood, the fourth respondent related a different, yet still violent story about his grandfather.

When I was twelve, my grandfather went away...I guess you can presume he’s dead. He was in a hunting accident so, nobody knew
what happened really because they didn’t find any remains. They found his gun and that’s it. I don’t think he’s dead. I think he just wanted to get away.

The thread which links the respondent’s stories is that of violence being associated with being male. In all of these instances, the father, or father figure was associated with violent behaviour. None of the stories are representative of love, nurturing, or acceptance, which becomes very significant in the development of self-perception as worthless and rejected later in this stage.

Unavailable Mothers

Stories about mother’s characteristics typically had more of an emotional component to them, that all the mothers had "failed" at meeting the emotional needs of their sons. What is significant about these stories is how role perception becomes further defined along rigid gender lines.

Coming from a large family it’s only a numbers game, there’s only so much love and attention to go around. I begged my mother to give me more time and attention and affection and stuff, and she, she never showed any physical attention...I almost begged her for it at one point and then she, just couldn’t deal with it, so I had to accept that.

I really hated my mother for a long time. I would go and talk to her about my problems and stuff and she would just shut me out. I had alot of anger towards her for that. She was supposed to comfort me and she never did. We didn’t even speak for years because this one time, when my father put me down, she never defended me or anything, never stood up for me. I never forgave her for letting my father do that to me.

This story is representative of the idea that it is the female’s responsibility to meet the emotionally needs of the child. No reference was made to the father’s failing, as
though it was more acceptable for him to be abusive or absent from the home. The second story implies that the mother was somehow responsible for the father’s behaviour. The anger was directed toward mother rather than holding the father responsible for his abusive behaviour. These characteristics of mother and father become very significant in the development of an abusive relationship later in the respondent’s life.

**Male Dominance/Female Victimization**

Another element of *Family Models Male Violence* is that of male dominance and female victimization. As is evident in discussion of the parents’ characteristics, roles were strictly defined along gender lines, to the point that one respondent was labelled as being "just like his grandfather", giving him permission to be abusive.

I’ve got my dad’s temperament, or my grandfather’s temperament. I’ve got my grandfather’s mannerisms right...the wine women, song type of thing. I like my women, and I like to drink too. And I’ve got a bad temper and he had a bad temper. And it was like he was king of the roost and I feel like I’m king of the roost. I’ve got a lot of my grandfather’s traits.

The superiority of the man in the household is a theme which links all the respondent’s early childhood stories. Three of the four reported being abusive to their mothers and female siblings long before being abusive in their intimate relationship. What was established early on then was the idea that it was acceptable for men to "lose it" and that women were the appropriate victims.

I hit my mother hard...once. I’m not proud of that. I guess I did it because my dad hit her. It was the last time she tried to ground me.
There is one sister I have that I was physically abusive towards. It wasn’t when we were young either, it was when I was older. She won’t forgive me, she just won’t forgive me. We don’t speak.

I was taking alot of shit out on her [mother]. I was treating her, not as bad as everyone else did, but bad. I talked down to her...making her think I didn’t love her. There’s been some occasions where I treated her like shit, like she was a nobody.

The two most significant themes which emerge out of respondent’s stories about family are definitions of male and female roles and acceptable interactions, in which violence and abusive behaviour become viable options in dealing with conflict and discomfort as it is a mechanism by which to maintain emotional distance. This then impacts the establishment of an abusive pattern in that the negative self perception, which slowly develops over time, is further reinforced and even enhanced in the abusive intimate relationship. Family experiences for these respondent’s sets the stage for years of abusive behaviour towards self and other significant people in the male batterer’s life. What is clearly evident in the analysis of the respondents’ family histories is that it is acceptable for the man to be abusive and demanding towards women, that women are the appropriate targets of negative behaviours and feelings in interactions, and that a part of being a man involves, to a large extent, unemotionality, distance, and aggression. Definitions of masculinity emerge condoning the use of violence and abuse early in childhood through role modelling and become a part of the respondent’s sense of himself, manifested behaviourally in other relationships.
Self-Perception as Worthless and Rejected

The extremely narrow and rigid definitions the respondents learned about masculinity had a negative impact on their self-perceptions in later life. As a part of an individual male's self-perception is his gender identity, the masculine image modelled by their fathers in childhood was internalized by the respondents.

Bottoming Out

The extreme negative childhood experiences were internalized by the respondents to form one part of a negative self-concept in which feelings of worthlessness and rejection become overriding themes in their descriptions of themselves prior to group therapy. This link is important as it is the starting point of a downward spiral into a repetitive cycle of violence as well as a cycle of self-abuse.

When asked to describe how they saw themselves prior to entering therapy, respondents told the following:

I was depressed, desperate, frustrated, like I was falling...things weren't getting any better...I was drinking alot...I was suicidal, not happy being alive, I was bottoming out.

I was very short-tempered. You know, always bouncing around, very hyper, I couldn’t sit still, you know, always gotta do something, and aggressive. ...I don’t give a shit type of attitude. My way or the highway type of thing. I had a selfish attitude.

I was an unhappy, abusive person. I knew what I was doing wasn’t cool but I keep right on doing it...being abusive. I was really depressed, not suicidal but let’s just say I wouldn’t have thrown myself out of the way of danger. I was asking to get hurt you know...like I deserved it. Yeah, I was really down on myself.

It is not known if these negative feelings about themselves were a cause or effect of
their abusive behaviour but this researcher would speculate that the negative feelings
were present before their intimate relationship, particularly as the messages they had
internalized from childhood experiences were clearly ones in which the interpretation
was that they were undeserving and worthless. These negative feelings about self
probably became even more exacerbated with each violent incident they perpetrated.
Each act of violence was further evidence to these men just how worthless they were
and became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Perceptions of Abandonment

Perceptions of abandonment are also connected to what was taught to them in
childhood, such that these male batterers describe feelings of not measuring up or
being abandoned by family members. One example of this is with the respondent who
was raised by his grandmother.

I have always lost people, you know, people that I loved, people that
supposedly loved me. Its probably about eighty percent my
responsibility. I lost my grandfather then I lost my dad, they were
separated when I was four, and then I lived with my grandparents and
then I lost him and then I lost my mom, and then I lost my girlfriends
and stuff like that. They would all leave. Which ever way they would
leave, they would still leave. .. I was thinking back then that nobody
wanted me, I'm nothing to them. So that's what I was thinking back
then. I know it didn't happen that way, but back then that was the only
way I was thinking.

The feelings of abandonment the respondents felt prior to entering therapy are a
reflection of their perceptions of their mothers being unavailable to them. The one
respondent felt abandoned by his mother when she did not "stick up" for him when

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his father was being abusive. This element of perceptions of abandonment further reinforced the respondents’ beliefs that they were worthless. Feeling abandoned is another means by which to ensure emotional distance in relationships.

Within the theme of self-perception as worthless and rejected, the impact of the lessons taught to respondents in their childhoods is clear. The messages they received were that they were worthless. These messages became their definition of self such that their actions in later life did much to reinforce this perception. The second lesson these men learned in childhood was that of men being entitled to victimized women. This further reinforced their negative perceptions of themselves such that with each act of abuse, the respondents internalized their worthlessness even further. Prior to therapy, respondents identified themselves as "bottoming out". It is interesting to note that while respondents only had one script for perceiving themselves which emerged in childhood, they were experiencing difficulty in being satisfied with this script. Their disillusionment with their way of being in the world becomes particularly obvious when placed in the context of the abusive intimate relationship prior to their participation in group therapy for male batterers.

Dependence on Woman for Construction of Self-Worth

The first two themes in this first stage lay the foundation for the formation of an abusive intimate relationship. Given their concepts of male-female relationships modelled to them in childhood, and their negative perception of themselves as being
worthless and therefore unworthy, the likelihood of these men perpetrating violence and abuse in their intimate relationships was high.

**Control Masks Dependency**

Three of the four respondents identified this linkage of their histories being played out with their partner such that no matter what she did, it was always wrong or "not enough". When asked to describe their relationship prior to participating in group therapy, one respondent was able to paint a vivid picture of a male batterer's control in the relationship.

It was a denial of basic human rights. I wouldn't let her have any friends, I wouldn't let her talk on the phone... I didn't like her being out anywhere I didn't know about. I took her for granted and at the same time I made demands on her financially and physically. I looked for my own happiness through her. We were so close I didn't know where I stopped and she started sometimes.... Like we were both struggling and hanging on to each other and both drowning at the same time... and neither of us floated.

There wasn't so much love as an addiction, it's a need, a desperate need, ...that I had to have my fix; that all my personal satisfaction, happiness, self-realization and everything was totally wrapped up in her ... I had no faith in myself... I depended on her, relied on her for everything.

Issues of dependency, possessiveness, jealousy, and profuse boundary diffusion are evident in this batterer's image of his relationship prior to therapy and also supports the batterer's profile identified in the literature. This story links the negative self-perception to issues of power and control in the relationship. The respondents all felt that they were undeserving or drove people away from them, in child and adulthood. One of the possible benefits of taking away "basic human rights" is that this person
will be so dependent on you she will be unable to leave. As one respondent said "It's like nailing a butterfly's wings to the wall". In this way, any opportunity for freedom is taken away, further adding to the male's power in the relationship. In actuality, this type of abusive behaviour is an indication of the male batterer's dependency on his female partner for feelings of self-worth.

**Violence as Acceptable Emotional Output**

Another form of power and control is in the use of violence. A strong cycle of violence was evident in all of the respondent's relationships prior to entering group therapy. Two of the respondent's were able to clearly articulate their own abusive patterns towards their partners.

Almost if anything went wrong per day it would happen. Poof! I would hold it in my pocket and it would make me feel deep hatred. Then it would build up and get worse and that is when I would explode. So there wouldn't be a pocket anymore, for a time. I was getting meaner, any little thing would set me off. I gotta get it out basically, I didn't care who it was. I mean it was a really bad situation now that I think about it...it just wasn't fair to the other people.

It's something that builds. It's like going up the hill and it builds and it builds...it's everything you know, it's like blood boiling red, an overwhelming feeling like your not even in your own body anymore. ...I didn't feel like it was me anymore...it built up like a volcano or a rollercoaster when it goes shreeew all the way down and it has to be released and you have to scream to get it out.

The expression of violence as a legitimate form of "getting it out" is directly linked to their experience of masculinity as children in their families where it was taught that violence is an acceptable form of expression by males. Violence is also a means of ensuring emotional distance in the relationship as it erodes the levels of trust.
and intimacy present. Furthermore, as the expression of emotions is unacceptable in males, according to the modelling provided, any feelings build up internally and only later become expressed, as anger. It is interesting to note that while the cycle of violence has traditionally been applied to abusive relationships, there is also evidence in these accounts of an internal process occurring within the individual male batterer, independent of his partner but one in which she ends up the victim when he chooses to externalize his internal processes.

**Objectification of Women**

One of the other elements to the theme of Dependence on Woman for Construction of Self-Worth is respondents’ perceptions of women. This is an important second dynamic as not only do male assailters believe that men are entitled to use any means necessary to maintain power in the relationship, but the grouping of women into a general category which objectifies and degrades them makes abuse even more probable, particularly with women as the appropriate victims. When asked about their beliefs towards women prior to entering therapy, respondents related the following:

No holds barred? I would think she’s a fine...a fine fiddle...fiddle to screw, that type of thing. That’s what they were there for...they were there for my pleasure, for my every bidding and asking and this kind of stuff.

I’ll probably always be on the prowl for women. I would go up and openly cop a feel here or there, you know, to women I didn’t even know. Or pinch them in the ass or rub them...I used to be pretty open with that.

I had some kind of hate out for them. I guess not, not like a real heavy hatred, but there had to be something wrong with them somewhere,
right...it doesn’t matter who it is, they’ve got something to come at me with right? That’s what I thought.

In terms of relating these stories to the perpetuation of violence, it appears that objectifying women and perceiving them as property would lessen the guilt and shame of perpetrating the abuse. That is, these men framed their beliefs about women to be complementary to their beliefs about men. If males are the entitled gender, then it would follow that women are not entitled to any power or control. Perceiving women as being good only for sexual pleasure is one way in which to ensure they are perceived as being powerless.

The major theme which characterizes this first stage of Establishing One Dimensional Masculine Image is that of gender role definition or more specifically, that of an almost unidimensional perception of masculinity and femininity. The idea of power and control being a man’s entitlement is learned early on in the male batterer’s life, and becomes evident in the formation of an abusive intimate relationship.

Peers Support Male Violence

Fagan’s (1987) notion that batterer’s, like other abusers, seek out peer groups which support violence and aggression in males is clearly evident in the accounts these respondents gave of their friendships with other men prior to group therapy. Tough Guy Image

The respondents told stories of relating to other men only in groups, in public places, such as drinking establishments and sporting events, and interacting with one
another at a superficial level.

Going out with the guys to watch hockey, drink beer and stuff. It's all very superficial, its on kind of a pseudo-macho level. You know where you don't want to be looked down upon by the other guys or be different from the other guys, you wanna be in control, be strong. Like typical, stereotypical, macho strong guy. ...Malboro man type of thing.

The people I hung out with when I was drinking and stuff, they had the real macho I don't give a shit attitude.

You had to present a mask. It's like the leather jacket, the boots, how you want others to see you, and you want to make sure its strong, powerful.

The respondents' male peer network prior to therapy were "safe" relationships in terms of reinforcing their already rigid perceptions of masculinity in which being distant and unemotional is the preferred interactional pattern with other men. Not relating to other men in an intimate, emotional fashion provided these men with further evidence that the "macho" image is what being a man is all about. None of the friendships these men had with other men in any way challenged or raised doubts about their abusive way of being in relationships. Clearly, these male peers served to further entrench the respondents' beliefs that being a man means being strong, tough, and unemotional.

Inability to Resolve Conflict

In addition to peer relations and the persona of macho-masculinity respondents presented as their public image, two of the four who were employed prior to participation in the family services group program also discussed how their inability to resolve conflict affected relationships with their co-workers.
I had this resentment to certain people as well. Before I used to hear "why don’t you get along with so-and-so or so-and-so" this kind of stuff. When anyone would say anything, I would automatically take sides, put myself in the middle of it right away.

Whenever I had issues, I wasn’t able to get them out. I hardly ever talked to anybody, I was just there, did my job, got angry and then I would say something. If I didn’t like the way I was being treated I would just walk in and clam up and give dirty looks, then walk back out and take off. They used to say I had a bad attitude.

The self-control these men exhibit in outside relationships speaks to their interpretation of violence only being permissible in the intimate relationship. These men experience conflicts in their intimate and working relationships, but choose violence as a destructive means of conflict resolution with their female partners only. Clearly, while these men identify themselves as "losing control" before being violent, they had sufficient enough control to not express themselves violently in other relationships, thereby contradicting the myth that male batterers can’t control themselves, and supporting Currie’s (1988) notion that these men actually selectively control themselves so that violence is manifested only with a perceived acceptable target, their female partner.

Summary

All of the findings in this stage are supported by previous research findings with the exception of peers support male violence, which has not to date been explored in the context of spousal assault. The major theme throughout this first stage which connects the various elements are beliefs and definitions of masculinity. What
is evident is that rigid masculinity traits were modelled to all respondents in their childhood through their families and reinforced in peer relationships. Images of self are connected to gender identification which in turn manifests itself in the intimate relationship resulting in increasing verbal and emotional abuse escalating into violence perpetrated by the male towards his intimate partner.

The first stage which emerged from an analysis of the interview data obtained from four men who participated in group therapy for male batterers is clearly supportive of the literature about the histories of men who choose to assault their partners. The accounts indicate a strong connection to a rigid, one-dimensional framework in which to express themselves without letting go of their "macho" images of masculinity. Data obtained about their families provides a context in which the learning occurred condoning aggression and violence in men and speaks to the intergenerational dimensions of spousal assault. Furthermore, the information about their experiences in childhood has tremendous implications for therapeutic interventions in family violence.

The four themes in this first stage in the change process for male batterers are not discrete entities but interact to produce a long history of abusive incidences, even prior to these men entering into an intimate relationship. This provides support for the profeminist position that the man is responsible for the violence, and that the violence is not out of control but is firmly within his control. Their long histories of abusive relationships, with mothers and female siblings makes a clear case for the
man's responsibility for the violence. It is not feasible that all the women in the male batterer's life acted in exactly the same fashion and therefore somehow "deserve" to be hit. There was a clear message in childhood that only women are appropriate targets of abuse and the man is to maintain the power in the relationship, at any cost. Further, the male batterers in this study experienced conflict in other relationships, such as with coworkers and yet they chose to ignore or only "give dirty looks" when conflict was experienced in these relationships. Therefore, there is evidence that these men are able to selectively control their violence. What serves to interweave these different dimensions is what these four men share in common: the development and maintenance of fixed ideas about masculinity, and a single way of relating to other people that is abusive and emotionally distant.

What is revealed in this first stage is the beginning of a process of interactions between different elements in these male batterers' lives which serve to connect the life history of the individual to his later help-seeking behaviour. This first stage, which is an identification of the scope, magnitude, and duration of abusive behaviour is important to conceptualizing the process of change for these men. This stage of Establishing a One Dimensional Masculine Image anchors the male batterer's journey in the context of his own life history, providing indicators or markers about how far he has come, and how much farther he has to go in the formation of a new, non-abusive identity.

An understanding of the individual prior to entering therapy is important as
the impact of the group is directly related to this pre-group picture. Prior to entering group, these men had only experienced themselves as incapable of relating to others in a respectful fashion, free of abuse. What was "normal" to them was an escalating cycle of abusive behaviour, feelings of worthlessness, depression, and desperation. Yet, given their abusive histories, all the men interviewed were able to seek help and begin the second stage of a difficult change process.
CHAPTER FIVE
STAGE TWO: EROSION OF RIGID MASCULINE IMAGE

The second stage of the Basic Social Process which emerged from coding of the transcript is *Erosion of Rigid Masculine Image*. While the first stage witnessed the development of a rigid, one dimensional masculine image, this second stage is about how these four respondents begin to dismantle this rigid perception of masculinity. There are three themes within this second stage. They are: *External vs Internal Help-Seeking Motivation*, *Group Process as Alternate Model of Male Relationships*, and *Increased Self-Confidence Through Self-Reflection*. The first theme depicts the respondent’s motivation for attending group therapy, which shifts from being wife-mandated to realization of self-responsibility. This theme also has the respondents shifting from a belief in uniqueness, or of being different from other abusers, to a sense of commonality. These elements have significant implications for the male batterer’s engagement in the group process. Figure four depicts this third stage, its themes, and corresponding elements as well as how the themes interact in the change process for male batterers. The second theme in the second stage of the change process is that of *Group Process as Alternate Model of Male Relationships*. The elements in this theme provided the respondents the opportunity to experience masculine relationships in a different way. The elements in this theme are:
The Change Process
Stage Two: Erosion of Rigid Masculine Image
(from stage one)

external vs internal help seeking motivation

increased self-confidence through self-reflection

(group process as alternate model of male relationships)

(73)
insignificance of content, nonjudgmental atmosphere, member’s emotional expressiveness, and benefits of group-think. The third theme in this stage is *Increased Self-Confidence through Self-Reflection*. This reflects the respondents relating of the group experience into their own sense of themselves, which becomes more positive as a result of the process of interaction with the group. The elements in this theme are: self-control of destructive anger, restructuring of destructive thought processes, and heightened self-awareness. This final theme, which involves the respondent’s internal self-evaluation, is the transition from group experiences to integrating these experiences into his relationships with others, the third stage of the change process for male batterers.

**External vs Internal Help-Seeking Motivation**

This theme is a reflection of the respondent’s motivation for seeking help to deal with his violence and abuse and how, as the group process evolved, this shifted to reflect the male batterer’s ownership or self-responsibility for his abusive behaviour.

**Wife-Mandated**

All four of the respondents had similar initial motivational factors for entering the group for men who batter. The men were all "wife-mandated". None of the men sought help for their violent behaviour prior to ultimatums or strong suggestions from their partners.
I didn’t really want to be in that first session because you know... I didn’t really care about what was going on. I did things half-heartedly, and it was "I’m here to please somebody" type of situation you know? Or I gotta be here cause something else is going to happen.

I told her [partner] that I would only go to get counselling if she went, and this is where my anger would always come up. It’s like, she would say you have to go see someone about your alcoholism and about your anger. Then if I would refuse she would start packing her bags, so I gave in. I thought I would be able to pacify her and keep our marriage together and heck, it was only once a week so why not?

It was when she became pregnant, I was still being abusive towards her and it was like "wow, what is it going to be like once the kid comes along", but one day I came home and she had packed her bags. Everything was gone except for my bed and the T.V. She had told me to get help before, even given me a list of numbers to call. After she left I figured if I went she would come back to me. Guess I was wrong.

I didn’t have a choice. It was either come to the group or the next time I’ll call the cops. I’ll press charges. I couldn’t let that happen, I mean I would lose my job and everything, so I came.

The initial motivation these men had in seeking treatment was not because they perceived themselves as having a problem, but because they perceived themselves as not having a choice. All of the men only sought treatment once they perceived themselves as having to face the consequences of their violence if they did not agree to seek help. This is consistent with the literature which identifies the "typical" male batterer as being coerced into treatment.

Realization of Self-Responsibility

While all the men interviewed were in some way coerced into seeking help, three of them talked about how this attitude that they were forced to attend changed at
the beginning of the second phase of group therapy, so that they now recognized that they did have a problem within them, independent of the relationship.

It was giving up the idea that I could get her back by doing this, you know, that I was doing it to better myself not to go for the carrot at the end of the stick, not to get her back; I had to be stronger myself.... After phase one everybody went around and that was basically the message I got, but I still hadn’t bought into it you know...so I guess it was when ...towards the end of group two they were saying the same thing. Ha, like wait a minute here. So yeah, it wasn’t until after the end of phase two. Even after being away from group that things sunk in.

It was towards the end of phase one that I realized that I had to go to group for me. We talked about the effects of abuse on children and I didn’t want my daughter to grow up that way or she’s going to feel like it’s ok for a guy to hit her, and I don’t want her to know that because it’s wrong....But if she sees me and [partner] or me and some other woman, with her in my presence, then she would grow up thinking it was ok to be done....I don’t want her to see that so she grows up thinking that.

When all the guys started talking about how they were treated as kids I realized that I had been treating [partner] the same way that I was treated. That shocked me but it made me understand why I needed the group. For me, not to please anybody else.

The shift in motivational factors in these men is indicative of a shift from blaming others to taking responsibility for their own abusive behaviour. This is an important difference as the prevailing clinical knowledge in this field is that one must first own the behaviour before change is possible. It also represents a beginning of breaking free from the batterer profile where blame and the externalization of responsibility is one of the mechanisms utilized by male batterers for justification and rationalization of their abusive behaviours. This also appeared to be a critical juncture
for the men in the group as the stories they related in talking about the group process arises out of issues discussed in the second phase of therapy. It is hypothesized that these men were more open to participation and identification with the group after taking some measure of self-responsibility and therefore the second phase had more meaning to them. One of the goals of the therapeutic process, of getting men to take ownership for their abusive behaviour, appears to have been realized with this particular group of men.

Belief in Uniqueness

A third element to External vs Internal Help-Seeking Motivation which may be linked to the initial external motivations respondents related to attending a voluntary therapy group for male batterers is the belief that they were somehow different or unique from other men who abuse their partners.

I was referred from a psychologist. Right at the beginning she said something about the men's group and right away I said no, no I don't want it, a group, I want individual counselling. And then she kind of went through it and said well this is the steps, that you go through right. And she...cause I was feeling like I was the only one, like there was nobody else that was... I was scared basically, to go into the group because I didn't know, I didn't figure these guys would've done the same things I done, know what I mean? But I found out we had a lot in common.

I've always had the impression it's only me that it doesn't happen to anyone else right? But I...in listening to the guys, the guys involved in the group, I learned that we all had different experiences but similar problems, it was really freaky, the way we would all just nod when someone was talking, like we had been there you know?

I was really nervous, I thought I would go in a sit down and listen to a bunch of wimps talk or whine about what was happening. I didn't think
I would fit right in - boy was I wrong, we really are alike, that’s for sure.

I was just a little uncertain at the beginning, although I wanted to open up. I still had preconceptions about these guys being beaters or idiots or stupid...you know, just anything to make them different from me, I was accusing everyone else and not being totally honest with myself.

The concept of feeling alone with a problem is not unique to the male batterer population but it has the added difficulty of assisting in the creation of a self-perception as worthless and rejected discussed in the first stage of the change process. Each man perceiving himself as unique or different from other men, particularly other men who abuse their partners, ensures a lack of identification with abusers, therefore assisting in avoiding ownership or responsibility for the violence in the relationship. It is evident in the latter part of each respondent’s story that identification with group members was important in the formation of a group identity; that they were all there to work on a common problem affecting their lives. It is the development of a shared group identity which is the indicator of the movement in this stage to a focus on the group itself. The group identity is significant as it signifies the beginning of a willingness to learn and share with other men from a position of commonality rather than differentness.

Group Process as Alternate Model of Male Relationships

The second theme in this stage which represents the respondent’s subjective perceptions of the effects of the group experience on his sense of self is Group
Process as Alternate Model of Male Relationships. This theme represents the experiences the respondents had while they were in group which they perceive as being significant in the facilitation of positive growth and change.

Insignificance of Content

As was mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the content of the group sessions was rarely mentioned by the respondents when asked about what aspects of the group they found beneficial in influencing change. Only one respondent out of the four mentioned any of the content covered by leaders in the group and he mentioned only the time-outs, and the assertiveness topics. In terms of the assertiveness topic, the respondent related the following:

Being aware of what I want, what I need, and not being afraid of putting it across in a non-threatening manner and being able and willing to have some give and take on it...in a cool way, without being intimidating or demanding, or whining.

What became clear during the interview process with all the respondents was that the most important pieces of the group were more difficult to articulate as they all related to components of process, or more specifically, group atmosphere, members emotional expressiveness, and benefits of group-think. The concept which serves to link these various pieces together is that of learning to relate to other men in a different manner, one which is contrary to the traditional rigid gender beliefs held by these men. The importance of process over content supports other qualitative studies with male batterers who participated in group therapy which have found the type and quality of interaction to be the most important elements in groups for male batterers.
**Nonjudgmental Atmosphere**

The supportive atmosphere of the group established the beginning of a respectful process of relating to one another. Respondents used such phrases as: "nonjudgmental, unconditional support, safety-net, safe place, supportive, and open to discussion" to talk about the atmosphere of the group. These words were often precursors used by the men to explain why it was "ok" to cry in the group or to openly talk about their struggles. This kind of atmosphere was a new experience for the respondents, one in which they enjoyed being able to talk freely about what was on their minds. One respondent made the following comparison between this support and support of friends after the men in the group had offered their phone numbers during a particularly difficult time in the respondent’s life:

They [group] provided that safety net, they really cared and they’d be there for me. Most friends I have they’re married and stuff and always busy and sometimes they don’t always take me seriously.... And they didn’t like my partner at the time either, so they couldn't be objective about it...the group was nonjudgemental, it was just an unconditional kind of support.

This kind of atmosphere made it easier for the men in the group to discuss personal and emotional issues without fear of being made fun of by others. A safe, secure atmosphere was an important precondition for these men to be able to experience male relationships in a different way than emotionally distant or closed to discussion at anything other than a "macho" superficial level.
Member’s Emotional Expressiveness

To be able to relate to other men at more than a superficial, businesslike level was an important new experience for the male batterers in this group program.

I find that being in these groups here, like we were able to talk about anything. And I always had the belief that you can’t tell a man something like that because you would be a woosie, a sissy, or you’d be a wimp, something like that you know. I find that alot of males, use, say the same thing, with the group I was able to speak emotionally to them.

We actually had guys crying in our group, break down and cry. And it was like, these guys are breaking down in front of me. Here’s me like trying to play Joe Cool, rough talk and all that kind of stuff and hey, here’s this guy, twice the size of me. I mean emotions came out. I mean we all have problems, we all have fears, we all want to cry, I mean it was no big deal.

Well, it’s like I cried in group, and I would never have cried in front of my buddies...it was a safe place to go and tell people how I was feeling and they were there, like somebody to hug you I guess, it’s like it was a hopeful thing, a positive thing.

Group leaders were also important in modelling different ways of expressing masculinity.

[The group leader] is so easy, laid back. I thought he was really cool. I don’t know him personally but he’s just laid back. He seemed like a really caring person, like he really wanted to listen. This was different, especially for a male doing that cause the only other person I’ve seen do that ..really cared, was female, my grandmother. But for a male, a male doing that it’s kinda neat. It’s like he sees my point but can put in his own perspective. I mean he was a lot different then the guys I used to hang out with.

The experience of relating to men in a way that connected rather than distanced or closed to the emotional level of interaction appears to have been an
important element for these respondents in beginning to perceive themselves differently. What this does then is provide alternatives for relating to others rather than from only a single script respondent's used prior to group therapy. It is interesting to note that the theme of rigid masculinity, pervasive throughout the stories identified in the first stage of the process, emerges as a strong theme for respondents in this second stage. This finding is directly related to that of cognitive dissonance discussed in the previous chapter. It appeared to be a relief to the respondents that they could be "real" with themselves in the presence of others. That is, to genuinely express and discuss what they feel and think, as opposed to presenting a "macho" facade was of great benefit to these respondents as it is this they chose to discuss in the three month post-group interview. The group itself provided these respondents with the opportunity to explore a more three dimensional type of masculinity, breaking free from their old scripts.

Benefits of Group-Think

In addition to strong themes of the necessity of a safe, supportive group atmosphere and new definitions of masculinity emerging from the data about the group process, the multitude of perspectives revealed as the group discussed issues was of critical importance to all four respondents.

It was like when I was taking about this one situation where I didn't call home when I said I would. All seven of them [group members] telling me what I should do. I mean seven to one people agreeing to this you know, so I had to take this into consideration, that these seven guys all think the same thing, that helped me.
We had a couple of facilitators there that let us discuss the situation of how each person would handle that situation. And what, what we got from that is we have not one or two heads working on one problem, but we got about ten people working on a problem and they got ten different ideas, so if one doesn’t work you try the next idea.

I gained a certain perspective on my own, own situation and showed certain similarities in behaviour patterns.... And seeing other members, how it affected them, and say whoa, wait a minute maybe this is my scenario too. And being able to take from their experiences and apply it to my own. One of the members said that he had finally had a blow-out and confronted his mother and he did it in a totally inappropriate way, but he got it out...and this was one of the things that inspired me to go on confronting my father.

We [group members] got to the point where we kind of...I’ve got to give [group leaders] alot of credit. I mean they had their agenda for like what was to be discussed. And...most of us in the group would show up five or ten minutes early and, and we were always outside having a smoke and we would discuss things beforehand, like how the week went and stuff. And what we felt like talking about that night. If there was three or four of us with the same issue, let’s say sex, then that’s what we would discuss, so it was possible to throw out the agenda, that was really important.

Like I said, when I had individual counselling and she mentioned the men’s group and like I said no right away. Now I’m glad I went...cause I don’t think the individual counselling would’ve went through all of that. Like it would’ve went through it but it wouldn’t be the same perspective so I’m actually, ya, I’m glad I went to the men’s group. Having other men there was a big plus.

The processes involved in a therapy group are important components of learning for these men, in a way that is different than just straight lectures. The interaction with other members, hearing their stories and providing feedback on actions taken were all significant experiences for the men. According to the perceptions of these men, it is not the tools or skills taught which is of paramount importance. What is important is
how the group is facilitated, in terms of giving men permission to tell their stories, to interact with one another, and to be flexible in conducting the group so that members' needs can be met. This emphasis by respondents on process over content has important implications for group leaders in the field of family violence. The concept which serves to link these different elements of the group process together is that of providing a forum for men who batter to be able to relate to other men in new, respectful, and supportive ways. This then illustrates to the participants that there are alternatives to violence as a means of communicating emotions and affords them the opportunity to utilize newly acquired social and communications skills in a safe and trusting environment. The group itself then becomes the strongest instrument in acquiring new knowledge. The third theme in this stage, Increased Self-confidence Through Self-Reflection, is distinct from the group process in that it represents more of the internal change processes occurring within the individual men as they participated in the group. While discussion of the group process is about the collective, self-reflection is about the individual male batterer's internal processes.

Increased Self-Confidence Through Self-Reflection

The data analysis of interview transcripts revealed a process for these four men of testing and integrating new knowledge provided by the group which resulted in an increase in self-confidence and their ability to relate to others in a respectful manner.
Restructuring Destructive Thought Processes

This element reflects the respondents' change in their perception of being in control of their reactions to events in their lives. For example, one respondent related a story in which his thought patterns have shifted from being one in which every uncomfortable incident in his life was directed at him personally, to a position now in which he is able to realistically reflect on certain incidents.

I was taking the grudge out against my mother and putting it on someone else. I've learnt that that's one of my big issues, was taking that and turning it onto someone else. Now I watch that, when I'm getting worked up I stop and think first about what it's really about. Like if someone cuts me off in traffic I used to think "the S.O.B, I'll get him for doing that to me". Now I can say to myself "what a jerk I bet he does that to everybody". I used to make everything my battle, now I don't. It's not worth it. I'm much more relaxed now compared to before.

Another respondent discussed how his aggressive behaviour in public has changed as a result of thinking through other peoples intentions rather than jumping to conclusions and "getting himself worked up" over it.

Like, they're always screwing up my pogie [unemployment] cheques and I used to march right down there and give them shit. Like it was the worker's fault for doing this to me. I would stew about it for days and finally work up the nerve to march down there and cause a scene. I don't know why I did that, they would just screw up the next month anyways. Now I can put it into perspective and realize that the government screws up with everything, especially paperwork. It doesn't bother me anymore, I just blow it off now.

The men are now able to put events in their lives into a realistic perspective rather than taking the slightest incident as a personal affront to them. Both of these stories indicate how these men are no longer letting themselves "get worked up"
unnecessarily. Both of these respondents are more in touch with how they can control their thought processes. The men are beginning to think about situations differently such that they are now able to exercise some self-control through thinking differently.

Self-Control of Destructive Anger

One of the elements in the increase in self-confidence these men experienced as a result of group experiences is in self-control of destructive anger. The ability to control themselves in situations which would have "set them off" prior to their participation in the group, is a large boost to their self-confidence.

I feel more confident about myself in situations. I feel I can handle it, I can basically take the name calling now. Basically I can take a stone being thrown at me and not even fidge. I feel I can hold back now, I've cut down alot. I'm just more at ease in situations now, even arguments.

I'm more mellow now, I'm more relaxed. I don't tense up as easy. I think before I get angry, whether it's the proper thing do or not...sometimes I jump off the handle, but not very often anymore, and never violently.

I'm more self-confident I guess...that's really confident hey? It's like I was in kind of a hibernation state, kind of hiding out...and not feeling...feeling disconnected from the big picture of society or whatever and my view of myself in the world has become alot more positive.... Before I just wanted out...I feel now that no matter what I do it does make a difference or it does have some impact on society or the big picture.

What appears the most evident in respondent's stories about the impact of the group on their sense of self is the increase in confidence. They perceive themselves as capable individuals, of being in control of their thoughts and actions. This is a step away from blaming others for negative thoughts and feelings and a step towards
taking some responsibility for self and one's own sense of well-being. All of the respondents were thinking about themselves differently such that the old scripts about self were discarded and new, more positive ones created in which they were in control of their thoughts and actions towards others.

**Heightened Self-Awareness**

The most significant testimony to the process of self-evaluation which emerged from the data arose out of a reading of the transcripts. The ability of all of the respondents to insightfully describe themselves before group and their motivations or thoughts behind certain behaviours speaks to at least a beginning of a process of heightened self-awareness. All respondents spoke about themselves in relation to others rather than just speaking about the other person in a discrete manner. Also, in descriptions of the most significant aspects of the group process, the respondents related stories of interaction with other men and their thoughts and feelings about this.

**Summary**

This second stage, *Erosion of Rigid Masculine Image*, began when the respondents, usually with pressure from significant others, reached out for help and entered into group therapy. While the motivation at first was external to them, the shift to realization that they really did have issues or problems to work through was when the most significant experiences occurred. Once a firm commitment had been
made to attend all twenty-four weeks of group therapy, the respondents proudly reported missing only one or none in the entire six month program.

What is most evident in this stage is that respondents did not focus on the content of the group learning, but rather on the process which evolved in the group amongst these male batterers. This notion that process is more important than content in evoking change, is supported in other qualitative interview studies with men who assault their female partners. What was significant about the group process was how it afforded these men the opportunity to experience themselves in male relationships in a different way. The men now have alternatives to their old script of the stereotypical "macho" male to male interaction. The group gave these men permission to develop their ability to express their thoughts and feelings from a position of mutual respect and openness.

What is elucidated in discussion of the group process was the tremendous impact of working in a collective with other men who shared the common problem of violence and other abusive behaviours. While the respondent's did not entirely "buy" into the traditional macho concept of masculinity, prior to the group they all subscribed to this rigid perception. Experiencing masculinity at an open, emotional and supportive level was new for these respondents and illustrated to them that there is more than one way of relating to the world. It appears that being able to openly talk with other men came with alot of relief to the male batterers interviewed. While the first stage saw the development of rigid definitions of masculinity, the second
stage, of group therapy, witnessed the erosion of this fixed identity so that
respondents were able to begin the formation of a new, non-abusive identity which rid
them of the necessity of maintaining a strong macho front to themselves and others.

*Increased Self-Confidence Through Self-Reflection* is an indicator of
movement from the second stage into the third stage of the change process for male
batterers. *Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity into Relationships* begins when
the experiences in the group become translated into the unprotected environment of
the outside world. That is, that the changes which occurred in the context of the
group setting is manifested outside of the therapeutic process. While the group
setting provides a safe, insulated place in which to learn new skills, the challenge for
these respondents was in taking these skills and applying them in their daily lives.
All the men were able to talk about how, because of their self- changes, their
relationships were also impacted. Much of the impact of the group experiences are
evident in the third and final stage of the change process. Changes in self, in terms of
thinking about themselves differently, and perceiving others in a new way propelled
these four respondents into the third stage of the challenging journey of becoming
non-abusive individuals in society.
CHAPTER SIX
STAGE THREE: INSTITUTING NEW DEFINITIONS OF
MASCULINITY INTO RELATIONSHIPS

The third and final stage of the Basic Social Process which emerged from the interviews with the four men who voluntarily completed twenty-four weeks of group therapy is that of Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity into Relationships. This stage moves beyond the group experience itself into an examination of the changes in the respondents’ perceptions of and behaviour in relationships with significant others. The three themes which emerged in this stage of the change process are: Freeing Self from Negative Family Image, Struggle to Treat Women Differently, and Reconstructing Male Peer Network. The first theme is about how these men perceive and interact with their family members in a different way as a result of the group experience and includes the elements of: parents as fallible individuals, healing childhood wounds, and respectful reciprocal interactions. All of the men in this study were reflecting upon their family history in a different way which allows them to begin to form their own identities.

The second theme in this third stage, Struggle to Treat Women Differently, gives evidence of the respondents’ continued struggles to change their internal beliefs about women even though they perceive their behaviour towards women as having shifted. The elements in this theme are: redefining healthy relationships, residuals of
objectifying women, letting go of old patterns, and struggles with sexual intimacy. All of these elements are linked to one another as each man continues to struggle with resolving the issues still present in his relationship with his partner or ex-partner.

The third theme in the final stage of the change process for male batterers is *Reconstructing Male Peer Network*. The elements in this third theme are acceptance of individual differences and breaking the tough guy image. All of the men were expressing their masculinity in male friendships differently such that intimacy and closeness rather than emotional distance were being achieved. Respondents appeared to be struggling less with their new masculine identities and more with restructuring their perceptions of women.

This third stage of *Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity in Relationships* is an incomplete picture as these men had finished group three months prior to the interviews but were continuing to integrate their new knowledge into their relationships. This is the least static of the three stages in the Basic Social Process and the one which is most likely to continue to evolve over time. This third stage in no way represents the final product of the change process for the men interviewed but rather is a reflection of their subjective perceptions at the time of the interviews. Figure five illustrates this third and final stage of the Basic Social Process revealed from the data analysis and includes the connections or linkages of the themes in this stage to the last theme of the second stage, *Increased Self-confidence Through Self-Reflection*. 

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The Change Process

**Stage Three:** Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity into Relationships

(from stage two)

- freeing self from negative family image
- reconstructing male peer network
- struggle to treat women differently

**FIGURE FIVE:** Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity into Relationships
Freeing of Self from Negative Family Image

All four of the respondents were thinking about their families and family experiences differently as a result of their participation in the therapy group.

Parents as Fallible Individuals

The men talked of understanding their parents better after realizing they also had abusive backgrounds.

I just put it all together...I felt like she [mother] was, like I thought about it and I figured out why she was doing it, and it was because she had been beaten and stuff like that and was probably taking it out on me because I was her oldest son. She couldn’t fight back to this other man that she was with that was doing it to her, so she would take it out on me, is what I think. Before that I thought she hated me, didn’t want me for her son.

I understand that he [father] had a bad time, he was beaten by his father and he....I don’t know how parents become parents without learning anything or doing anything, learning how to do it because they just carry on with the same shit and abuse they were taught. They move on to the next generation, and I have to, you know, I accept him for his shortcomings but I still can’t accept his put downs or treatment of me....There’s a certain respect for him but there’s also a certain sadness I feel for him too.

I don’t have the hidden anger for them. I don’t have the ...holding a grudge of whatever you want to call it. I respect them for what they are, who they are, and what they do, but I don’t accept their treatment of me when I was a kid.

The stories about perceiving parents in a different way indicates how the respondent’s are beginning to free themselves from their parents’ negative image of them, thereby increasing their positive perception of self and letting go of the negative
explanation they previously held for their parent’s abusive behaviour towards them, like “I’m not worth anything” or “she hates me”. Not only are respondents beginning to take responsibility for their own behaviour and treatment of others, but they are also giving their parents the responsibility for their behaviours. This is a dramatic shift from the earlier beliefs of internalizing their parents treatment of them as somehow being representative of their own self-worth. This represents the beginning of the healing process about the male batterer’s own childhood history. In this way, the respondents have been able to let go of much of the internalized anger they held about their pasts. They are also clear that understanding their parents does not mean accepting their behaviour. This is an important distinction for the men to make. It is hypothesized that prior to this reevaluation, they did accept their parents abusive behaviour, which gave them permission to also be abusive.

Healing Childhood Wounds

One of the respondents, upon perceiving his family in a new way, chose to confront his father on his abuses, who reacted in a very similar fashion to the batterer profile previously discussed.

Denial, denial, denial and then he walked away...said he’d not put up with any of that shit now...just defended himself, lied, and escaped....Patterns of shock, denial, and saying like..how could you use that language, rather than listening to the actual thing that’s being said.

Upon reflection, this respondent felt he had made a wise decision as it had a positive effect on his relationship with his father.
I felt bad afterwards, I felt like I hurt him...but it brought us to a new level I think, of understanding of you know...I’m not going to take your verbal abuse anymore...I’ll respect you as a father and I still love you but don’t put me down again....I don’t see him as often anymore...I’m I guess trying to work out my own identity from my own eyes, cause sometimes through his eyes I get a feeling of inadequacy. So there’s been a certain rift, but I think it’s healthy, for the most part.

The result of this respondent confronting his father on the effects of his abusive behaviour was a sense of finally being free of his father’s negative expectations. Further, confronting his father assisted this respondent in the development of a positive self-identity.

While none of the other respondents chose this type of confrontation as a means of repositioning themselves with family members, three of the respondents reported definite changes in interactions with family members as a result of the impact of group therapy. The fourth respondent had no contact with his family members at the time of the interview and therefore was unable to determine the impact of his changes on his family. He did however, like the other three, report thinking about his family in a different way.

Respectful Reciprocal Interactions

Three of the men were able to articulate some definite positive changes in interactions with family members.

Well, we’re [grandmother] open to each other a little more than we were before. Like, I never used to talk about my problems to her. She would ask and I would just get mad and say forget, you don’t need to know anyhow, or something like that. But now, I’m pretty open with her. We have a close relationship. I used to think she was nosey, but
now I know she asks because she cares about me. Sometimes it still irritates me, but I don't bark at her, like a dog, like get out of my territory, like I used to. Now I just say when I need to be alone to work and she understands that and when I'm finished then I'll go and talk with her. She used to get mad because I wouldn't explain myself. Now I do and she understands.

Well, the most difference I see is at my aunt's house. I've been staying there since me and [partner] split up. There's my two aunts and a ten-year old and a twenty-two year old. I never used to talk to them and now we have a better communication relationship. The twenty-two year old, we talk more. Before, we didn't even talk, we would just walk by each other and not even say hi,...we talk more and it's really great. Like we didn't even know each other right. It was like boom, walk by each other in the house and not say a word, don't even look at him right. I guess they feel better now that I'm talking, but I was really quiet around the house before. Do my things and get out of there. But ya, the relationships in that household are pretty relaxed, not tense like they used to be. I used to make it tense.

I'm alot more aware of my behaviour towards my siblings. I try not to be intimidating or threatening with them anymore...but there's still some members of my family that I don't really talk to, a couple of sisters that just don't get along with me at all....I think they're a little scared that I'm gonna,...what I'm going to do next really. Like pull all the skeletons out of the closet, things like that. You know, they're kind of on guard a bit and they said if I wanted to they would come into therapy with me. That's a big step for them.

_Freeing Self from Negative Family Image_ is about altering perceptions of family experiences and interacting in a different way. This is a reflection of the men starting to take some responsibility for their lives rather than angrily blaming others for their situations. All four of the men appear to have worked through some of the issues about family which were profoundly affecting how they saw themselves and relationships which has the effect of permitting them to form their own identities. It is also clear, particularly with the two respondents who were living with family
members, that one of the results of changing their own behaviours, was a lessening of tension in those relationships. The impact of group therapy, for these men, goes beyond just influencing the individual, but also impacts how the individual interacts with family members, in a respectful, open fashion. Another relationship which is definitely affected by the respondents’ participation in twenty-four weeks of group therapy is that with their female partners.

Struggle to Treat Women Differently

The second theme in this third stage of the change process for male batterers is about how therapeutic experiences impacted the way in which these men perceive of and interact in relationship with a woman. Two of the four respondents were not in a relationship at the time of the interview process but maintained contact with their ex-partner. Two of the men were still with the partner who they had abused.

Redefining Healthy Relationships

What is evident in examination of this property is how these men have redefined the components of a healthy relationship, particularly in regards to changing gender beliefs. All of the men reported perceiving the worth of women in a different way.

If I do get into another relationship with a female I’m really going to work at it and keep it like a human being relationship instead of what I used to consider me against a pile of shit right. You know you get to like it’s, you don’t abide by my rules, that’s it. I’m not going to be like that, I mean, we’re all individuals and human beings and I’ll treat her like that.
It's different. I treat her with respect, I give her the respect she deserves, and treat her like a real person. If there's arguments I sit down and talk about it instead of clamming up and haul off and hit her or walk out the door you know. Sit down and talk about it and get a conclusion....Just be happy and enjoy each other. It's more safe for her, for us both, to be able to communicate honestly without the abuse.

I've realized all women are not the same. I realized they're not all like my mother. I guess out to hurt me or whatever. I treat my wife, well this is my third wife actually, alot better. I sit and listen to what she has to say. I know it's not nagging and she's not a bitch, she's just trying her hardest with me because she cares.

I don't know, in hindsight, if I can say what we had before was love, I don't even know what love is anymore. I had a real twisted perception of our relationship, but right now I allow her to do whatever she wants as she does to me and I support her in any way I can...and there's clean lines between us...as individuals.

The respondents' stories are testimonials to their struggle to treat women differently, partially as though it's because they now recognize that they should, and partially out of a genuine desire to be different with women.

Residuals of Objectifying Women

Two of the respondent's reported that while their behaviour towards women may have changed, they still "caught" themselves thinking in the "old" ways about women as less worthy than men.

Every woman I see I'd like to have a piece of tail with, you know. I mean that's, that's in the back of my mind. Yes, their probably still in the back of my mind as a sex object. It's gonna take me a while to change that, I know it's not going to happen overnight.

I still have this voice in me sometimes, catching me from time to time. It's like an alarm that goes off going oops you can't say that. ...Like when you look at a woman and you figure like I wonder what she's like in bed you know...that women are for sex. So I've come to a place
now where there’s alot more respect, alot more acceptance.

While this may be perceived of as a failure, these men now are able to recognize their own thought patterns and are at least socially aware enough to recognize that their behaviour is not acceptable to the majority of society, rather than perceiving their misogyny as appropriate.

**Letting Go of Old Patterns**

Another element of these male respondents’ perceptions of intimate relationships is in letting go of either getting their ex-partner back, or in the case of the two men who remain with their partner, of the old and familiar patterns in the relationship.

It’s different for me because I realize that it didn’t happen that way. They left me because I either pushed them away, that was my girlfriends, or left because of other circumstances. It wasn’t their choice. Like, I can’t hold on to something forever if it ain’t there.

So..I don’t feel like I’m ready for a relationship yet, but it’s getting close, I’m almost over [partner] I mean it’s been awhile and now she’s dating other guys, it’s like, now it’s my turn to move on.

There’s a fear of going back to that place of abuse, so sometimes there’s an overcompensation or something. ...I give her so much space that I’m not there when she needs me.

I used to tell her well hey, that’s your job, you want it you do something about it. And now I say hey, we have a problem here, and we both got to work on it, I mean I know it’s not just her job to look out for the kids and stuff, so I really try to be involved now, but it’s hard, it’s like a huge lifestyle change or something.

All four respondents are re-thinking their relationships with their female partners.

There appears to be a dual process of mourning for the old, familiar ways and
struggling with taking responsibility in the relationship. It is evident that although the men have images or visions of a healthy relationship, they are uncertain as to how to achieve this. The respondents are beginning a process of letting go of their way of being in a relationship but at the time the interviews occurred, had not yet solidified their new identities in their relationships.

**Struggles with Sexual Intimacy**

The lack of clarity in intimate relationships is even more evident upon examination of another element of this particular theme. Two of the men reported struggles with sexual intimacy with their female partners. All of the men held rigid gender beliefs about women prior to the group and it is evident that having sex with women is one way of maintaining power or control in the relationship. It is interesting to note that while the men reported having these issues throughout their relationships, they discussed only when asked about the impact of the group therapy on their intimate relationship and therefore this dimension is included in this third stage, as an ongoing issue, as opposed to the first, pre-group stage. One respondent, who remained with his partner, had the following to say about his perception of this issue:

Sex was a big issue, how to go about getting it, I guess you want to call it. The fights and arguments over it. I never got enough, sex. It's that easy, we didn't get along when it came to that....I really wouldn't say I....I don't want to say I forced myself on her, because that wouldn't be very understanding. She would never just agree to having intercourse like ok, just do it.

He then talked about how it is still a major issue in their relationship and that at the time of the interview, "we weren't even doing it".
It's enough to tear my hair out, lose control verbally, it's a major frustration for me. I don't have to tell you that men don't like no. I keep hearing her say it, and then she tries to do nice things for me in different ways and I just say, fuck it I don't want it....it's gotten to the point that ... Now it's like I told her, if you want it, then you make the first move. It's been hard as hell...it's working but it just pisses me off. I just try to think of something else rather than dwelling on it.

For this man, it appears that when it comes to sex, he is still entitled to have it, on his terms. While some perceptions of his ideas about masculinity may have been positively affected as a result of the group experience, his reevaluation of gender interaction is minimal. This respondent does not appear to have processed his new ideas about gender relations to be inclusive of the woman's right to say no, without receiving any pressure or stress over her decision to take control over her own body.

The second respondent who discussed his issues around sex was at a different place than the first respondent. He was so aware of the power and control which is a part of sexual relations, as well as crossing a threshold prior to orgasm in which he "loses control". For this respondent there is a fear of engaging in sexual relations with a woman.

I've had a certain fear of being physical in any way. It's a real caution, ...fear of slipping back, fear of violence or abuse. She enjoys rough treatment sometimes...a little squeezing and pinching...I've been afraid of that, I've backed off from that. It's like I had that part of me cut out, lobotomized or something....I think partly there's a little mix-up with my transmitters or something...sexual foreplay isn't the same as violence, abuse, or intimidation.

For this respondent, the group therapy had, at the time of the interview, inhibited his own sexuality. The most plausible explanation for this type of aversion from having
sex is due to the teachings in the group about always being aware of when you are losing control and taking steps to ensure you are always in control. This respondent has generalized his new knowledge into his sexual relationship, such that he is extremely sensitive to any form of control or intimidation. While the first respondent’s solution to the sexual difficulties he was experiencing was to demand that his partner take control of initiating sexual contact, the second respondent was still struggling with finding a solution to his problem.

I have to keep the trust and respect is the bottom line and be able to satisfy or try to satisfy, fulfil her needs without infringing on my own...Knowing the context of which your operating, knowing when you’re playing and when you’re not playing when you’re being sexual...or when you’re using it for your own personal needs and when it’s done to inflict harm on her or trying to get your own thing.

The male batterer’s struggles with issues around sexual intimacy have not been explored in the literature, although the batterer’s profile does include a high sex drive in these men. While a more in-depth exploration of this issue is important, it is speculated that the issues identified by these respondents have to do with a struggle around women’s rights and male entitlement. The continuation of these issues three months post-group have important implications for professionals in the field of family violence, particularly as sexual abuse has traditionally been separated or perceived as distinct from domestic violence.

Reconstructing Male Peer Network

The third theme in this stage of Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity into...
Relationships involves the respondents’ changes in relating to other men in a way that becomes more supportive of their needs as well as their new ways of expressing their masculinity. For all four men, there has been a definite shift in how they interact with peers.

Acceptance of Individual Differences

For the two men who were working at the time of the interview, there has been a positive shift in their coworker relationships.

Now I see everybody as an individual person, everybody’s got different traits you got to accept, you can’t change it, they can only change themselves. It’s a matter of different styles...The group was like the people I work with right. Like we were together working as a group and everyone had different ideas. Ten heads are better than two and the same applies at the office. Like I was able to tell my boss what going on with me and we got to talking and everything. And we feel like we can talk more free, more open, not to just like letting everything stay inside like a bubble

Like my boss, I’ve been there three years now and for the first two I never talked to him. Now we get along great, we can joke and we laugh. I’m really open with him and he’s open with me. If I don’t like something I tell him so he knows....I basically have a good time at work now, when someone screws up I ask why happened rather than flying off the handle. I’m pretty sure they see the difference too cause they used to say I had a bad attitude and they haven’t said that for quite awhile. We joke and laugh and there was none of that before. These people are the group I work with and the group showed me that, I mean we worked as a group in counselling which showed me this is how I should with my employees. It eases things, it’s better to deal with, and work with each other.

Both of the men recognize how their changes have impacted their working relationships in a positive way. There are two themes evident in these stories. The first is how both men are now able to be accepting of other people’s differences and
because of this acceptance, have been able to form more open, respectful relationships with coworkers. The men are no longer "stuffing" their thoughts and feelings in the workplace. That is, these two men are not letting all their conflicts build until they inappropriately and abusively express themselves, but are now able to have constructive dialogue with other employees about any concerns they may have. The second theme in these stories is how the two men applied the group therapy experience into their workplaces. The respondents were able to perceive the therapy group as being similar to a group at work and have therefore learned to value the multitude of perspectives which comes from working with others on common issues.

Both of the men have been able to integrate their new knowledge into their daily work with others.

**Breaking the Tough Guy Image**

Another element of *Reconstructing Male Peer Network* is that of redefining masculinity. This component provides evidence to Fagan's (1987) hypothesis that a part of change in male batterers is in finding new ways of interacting with their peer network. For the four respondents in this study, the level of intimacy established in the group setting between the men made it difficult for them to gain satisfaction out of their old peer network. All the men have shifted their perspective of male to male friendships.

I see now that my old drinking buddies aren't going anywhere. They have the macho I don't give a shit attitude and they aren't going to change, at least that's my opinion. Now I have one close friend, he's not very educated or anything, but I can tell him my problems and he
can tell me his. He’s very understanding and soft-hearted and
sometimes it takes a while to explain things to him but he’s always
willing to listen. At least I can get things out with him and I don’t have
to pretend like nothing bothers me.

I just can’t relate to my buddies anymore like I used to. It’s like there
where they are and I’m where I am, and it just doesn’t meet. So I try
to talk to them at more of an emotional level you know, like not just
how’s it going and walking away, but it doesn’t work very well. I
really miss the guys in the group where we could like be that way. At
least I can talk to my brother now about stuff, and he seems to
understand where I’m coming from, the other guys don’t.

It’s ok to be intimate with the group but you can’t really go out and be
intimate with other men without a certain trust level, cause they’ll just,
whatever.... And outside you have to be a little discerning or
whatever.... They’re not receptive of responsive to certain things...fear
of looking too closely at their own thing. It’s funny...I think they’ve
gone through some changes as a result of the stuff I went through in
group because I sort of stepped out and broke the buddy circle they had
to kind of look at themselves...so they weren’t just stroking each
other’s egos...they’ve had to pay more attention to themselves, their
relationships.

I work so much I don’t really socialize much, I never have. I think it
would be neat to have like someone close to share with, you know
other than my mother, but it’s really hard. I mean most of the guys I
work with are the tough macho type who just sit around drinking after
work and talking about their old ladies. I guess my boss and I can talk
now when we have the time, I guess he’s like a friend now.

These four respondents who appreciated the ability to be open and candid in group
therapy, have been searching for ways in which to institute this interactional style
into the development of a support network. Changing friendships appears difficult for
these men, particularly as there is pressure to remain the same. As the one respondent
articulated, one person’s change can either force others in the network to look at their
own ways of acting or conversely, one person’s change can mean being cut-off from
old relationships, as was the case with one of the respondents. The construction of a male peer support network, while recognized by these particular men as something important to have in order to work through problems, appears difficult to obtain and is a slow, gradual process.

Summary

This third stage, of Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity into Relationships begins with the family and includes the intimate relationship and peer relationships. All of the respondents were thinking of their family histories in a new way which liberated them from the constraints of the traditional notions of masculinity. The theme of masculinity appears evident in the men’s intimate relationships such that while there is a struggle to be more emotionally open and available to their partners, in practice it has been very difficult for the men in this study to consistently maintain this. The least amount of shifting in their perceptions appears to be in regards to women. While the respondents talked about treating women differently, their underlying beliefs about the place of women in relationships had shifted very little at the time of the interviews. The process of integrating new non-abusive patterns into their relationships with others appears to be the largest struggle for these men. While the second stage revealed that they are thinking about themselves differently as a result of the group experience, the journey to the establishment of respect, healthy, and supportive relationships is lifelong.
What is most evident in this third stage is how respondents have been able to shift their perceptions of significant others in their lives. All four have reevaluated their relationships and three of them have clearly made definite positive changes in many of their relationships. This third stage, which involves the integration of knowledge and experiences of the group into their daily environments, is the least evident in literature on male batterers. Some of the research to date may examine the change in the intimate relationship as a result of the male perpetrator receiving group therapy, but none look at the overall impact of learning new skills and shifting perceptions. It is interesting to note that while this has not been a focus of family violence research, all the male respondents in this study were clear as to how their relationships with others have shifted to a place of mutual respect, understanding, and how they derive more satisfaction out of this type of interaction.

While the properties of the first stage are those most investigated by researchers to date, an understanding of all three stages is important in the development of a comprehensive knowledge base on family violence and the role of therapeutic interventions with the male perpetrators of the violence and abuse. What serves to connect the three stages of the change process is the respondents’ process of striving to achieve a healthy masculine identity in which mutually satisfying, respectful, non-abusive relationships will likely result. While this has not yet been achieved by any of the men interviewed for this study, there are clear indications that the beginning of a lifelong journey has begun. A process which emerged in talking
with these four men about their subjective perceptions of the effects of the group on their perceptions and beliefs about themselves and their relationships. This process involved an understanding of how their life stories laid the foundation for the Establishment of a One dimensional Masculine Image. From this, the group provided these men with alternatives to their rigid script such that there was an Erosion of the Rigid Masculine Image. The men now have a new, constructive foundation upon which to build as a result of their experiences in the group, Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity into Relationships. For the men interviewed in this study, the journey towards developing a positive, non-abusive identity has only just begun.

The final chapter will provide a framework in which to evaluate the significance of the findings of this study and provide directions for future research with male assaulters.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The intent of this study was to conceptualize the male batterer's understanding of the effects of the group experience on his subjective thoughts and beliefs about himself and others. The analysis of the interview data suggests that for the four men interviewed who completed twenty four weeks of voluntary group therapy for male batterers, there is a definite change process which unfolds. For each of the three stages in the change process, some tentative conclusions can be drawn as well as implications for further research. Social work can play a pivotal role in the continuing development of research, prevention strategies, and intervention programs with the male perpetrators of domestic assault.

No conclusions can be drawn about men who do not complete group treatment nor of the male batterer population which do not seek voluntary treatment for their violence. Any conclusions drawn from this study are tentative, no other perspective, such as the female partner or the group leaders was solicited. The implications and conclusions represent the subjective perspectives of the four men interviewed and this researcher. This chapter will discuss the implications and put forward some tentative conclusions evolving from each stage of the change process for male batterers who received group therapy as revealed by the data analysis.
Establishing One Dimensional Masculine Image

This first stage of the change process which conceptualizes the pre-group perceptions and experiences of the four men interviewed, provides important information for the prevention of domestic violence. This first stage in the change process for male batterers who completed group therapy suggests a need to broaden the scope of the focus of family violence research to move beyond the intimate relationship.

Stories about their family of origin suggest a long history of abuse and violence towards women, beginning in childhood. It is important to conduct further studies on sibling abuse in order to determine if there is a tendency in families where violence occurs to also have sibling abuse. Should this be the case, it would be important for social work to advocate for policies and specialized interventions to effectively deal with sibling abuse. Currently, support groups for battered women and for men who batter focus on the intimate relationship only. The development of groups for adolescents who are violent could potentially arrest the likelihood of wife assault occurring later in the man's life. There is very little information about the effects of sibling abuse currently available. There is a need to broaden the definition of family violence to be inclusive of assaults towards siblings, male or female.

The stories respondents related about the influence of their peers in further entrenching their belief in the unemotional, "macho" definition of masculinity is suggestive of a need to broaden the scope of studies on peer influences. The majority
of the research studies look at peer influence in adolescence and the term "peer pressure" is typically applied to the adolescent population only. These men perceived pressure to "be cool" in their adult relationships with other men. This implies that peer influences do not dissipate after adolescence but continue to be a major influencing force in adult life for men who assault their female partners. This is indicative of a need to further investigate the roles of the peer network in the male batterer's life. Broadening the scope of research investigations on family violence could provide valuable information for both interventions and prevention strategies to combat wife assault.

Erosion of Masculine Image

The second stage of the change process for male batterers who complete group therapy has implications for therapeutic interventions with this population. Social workers working with male batterers in a group program could potentially benefit from the information the four men provided about the group process. First, it is critical that the men perceive the group as a safe and supportive environment. This may pose a dilemma for group leaders as it is important that the men be confronted about their responsibility and their beliefs about masculinity be challenged. This may be more feasible once a supportive atmosphere has been established and may make it more likely that more men would complete therapy. Secondly, while the men spoke little about the content of particular sessions, it appears that the more skilled group
leaders are at introducing topics as a part of a process of discussion rather than a straight lecture format, the better it is received and processed by the male group members.

The data obtained from the four men who completed therapy presents a clear case for the benefits of a group program over individual counselling. The group provided these men with a forum in which to learn new ways of expressing their masculinity, thereby influencing the erosion of their previously one dimensional images of masculinity. This shifting of their beliefs about masculinity would be less likely to occur in an individual therapy program as it was the very fact of having men cry in group and openly discuss their feelings that facilitated these men in rethinking their perceptions of masculinity. It appears that for these men, it was important to have more than one person telling them the same thing.

This type of collective perspective made it even more difficult for the men to avoid taking responsibility for the violence and appears to have assisted them in increasing their repertoire of interactional skills. The benefits of a group therapy program, according to these respondents, suggests a need to increase the potential number of group programs available to assist these men in moving towards a non-abusive identity. All of the respondents interviewed desired a third group or a self-help group in which to obtain ongoing support and assistance. Resources for serving this population are not readily available and social workers in the field could advocate for more voluntary group programs and for longer running therapy groups. The
findings in this stage of the change process are suggestive of the benefits of group therapy over individual counselling as a successful means of intervention with male batterers.

Instituting New Definitions of Masculinity into Relationships

The third stage of the change process for these four men who completed group therapy have implications for outcome expectations, future research, and therapeutic interventions with this population. While all of the men reported being non-violent at the time of the interview, they also reported ongoing verbal abuse towards their partners. The incidence of verbal abuse may have lessened somewhat, but it was present and therefore was still an issue needing to be addressed. Group leaders may have unrealistic expectations of outcome for these men given the twenty four week period designed to undo a lifetime of learning and behaving. Goals beyond ending the violence may be unrealistic given the time allotment and therefore potentially need to be reevaluated to be more reflective of the outcomes perceived by the clients. This conclusion is tentative as it would be necessary to first solicit the perspective of significant others, especially the female partner, before making assumptions of therapeutic outcome with these men.

One significant finding in this stage is that of the struggles around sexual intimacy. It appears that sexual intimacy is not a specific content component of group
treatment with this population and may be relevant for the facilitation of positive outcome. Further, the literature on sexual abuse and wife abuse portray these issues as being separate and distinct forms of violation. The information obtained in these interviews suggest a need to explore the connection of these two forms of abuse as both contain elements of male entitlement and female victimization. This is an unexplored area of spousal assault and one in which there is a need for further exploratory research.

In terms of therapeutic interventions, the interview data suggests that it is important to add a component of therapy beyond the group program for men who complete treatment. The risk of the men re-offending may be heightened without additional supports beyond group therapy. The realm of intervention may be inclusive of therapy sessions with other family members, the partner or ex-partner, and/or peers. This type of intervention may provide the men the opportunity to resolve issues they still have in these relationships and to develop a more supportive network in which to maintain change. This however, would only be feasible with men who were non-violent throughout the program such that safety would not be an issue. The data suggests that therapists need to look beyond the intimate relationship when providing post-group therapy.

This third stage, *Instituting New definitions of Masculinity into Relationships*, is the least investigated area in family violence research yet appears significant in the facilitation and maintenance of positive change for male batterers. The findings in this
stage are most suggestive of the need for further research with men who complete group therapy as well as the development of post-group interventions to assist these men as they reconstruct their way of interacting in relationships with significant others.

Summary

This study contributed to the social work knowledge base on family violence in identifying areas for future research with male batterers. What is the most evident throughout the three stages of the change process for male batterers is the search for new images of masculinity. These men subscribed to a rigid masculine identity in which the expression of feelings was forbidden. Other men within their social milieu also appeared to subscribe to and reinforce this perception of masculinity. The group provided them with the opportunity to experience masculinity at new, three-dimensional levels in which emotionality is supported rather than shunned.

The completion of group therapy witnessed these men searching for ways in which to institute their new masculine identity into outside relationships. While they were somewhat successful in their quest, they also perceived a lot of resistance from others and found it difficult to maintain their new ways of relating to others in the face of peer and family pressure to remain the same. In terms of their intimate relationships, it appears that while these men now perceive their masculine image in a new way, their beliefs about women have shifted only slightly. It appears difficult for
these men to restructure their beliefs about women.

Their struggles to integrate the group experiences into relationships suggests a need for further exploration on the impact of group therapy and therapeutic interventions which will assist them in their struggle to become non-abusive individuals. Although the findings represent the subjective perceptions of only four men who completed group therapy, information was obtained which may assist social workers and other professionals in the field of family violence in their work with the perpetrators of domestic assault against women.

The intent of this study was to conceptualize the subjective perceptions of four male batterers who completed therapy on the effects of the group program on their thoughts and beliefs about themselves and their relationships. In doing this, it is hoped that the reader was able to gain some understanding of the struggles and barriers these men face as they begin to build a new self-identity and form respectful relationships with significant others.
Bibliography


APPENDIX A
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The group therapy program for male batterers who voluntarily participate in treatment is based on a profeminist treatment model. The services are offered through a metropolitan family service agency which offers specialized services to batterers and their female victims. Men are ineligible for any other service, such as individual or couple counselling, if there is any violence in the relationship. Potential clients must directly call the agency and request services and then an initial assessment screening interview is set up with a group leader in the family violence project. At this interview, the man and woman are seen separately and basic information is obtained about the history of abuse in their relationship. Couples and individuals are invited to attend the separate groups for males and females. While the woman is offered supportive counselling, the man receives treatment as the program takes the position that he alone is responsible for the violence in the relationship. All of the groups for men are facilitated by two group leaders.

The groups run for twenty four weeks, two and one half hours each week. There is usually about sixteen men who pass the screening interview and approximately ten who attend the first group. The first twelve weeks, referred to as phase one, focusses primarily on the abuses in the intimate relationship. Content covered includes time-outs, assertiveness, continuum of abuse, anger-cue awareness,
and control and power issues. There is a check-in at the beginning of each session in which participants report on the behaviours and thoughts for the week. There is then a break half-way through. After the break, new learning is introduced and discussed. The session then ends with a check-out in which each man talks about how he is feeling and self-issues he needs to attend to throughout the week.

After the first twelve weeks the men are eligible to continue into the next set of sessions, referred to as phase two. If the man committed any acts of violence, in or out of his intimate relationship in the first twelve weeks, he must repeat phase one and is ineligible for phase two. Phase two moves beyond a focus on the intimate relationship to look at the roles of men and women in society, the effects of abuse on the children, the history of abuse in the family of origin, and other relevant issues. The second phase may also use a less structured format such that the men are able to introduce relevant topics needing discussion during the check-in component of the group.

Upon the completion of the six month group therapy program, participants may receive other services in the agency, provided they are no longer violent.
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Opening: The purpose of this interview is to obtain information that will help me understand the effects of the group experience on your perceptions of yourself and your relationships. As someone who has completed the program, you are in a unique position to describe how the group affects people. As we go through the interview and you have any questions please ask. If there is something you do not wish to answer please say so. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I would like to start with how the group has affected you personally.

I. Thinking back to before you started the program, how do you think you would have described yourself then? (Probes: controlling, violent, angry).

II. How would you describe yourself now that you have completed the program? (Probes: self-esteem, communication, responsibility).

III. Could you tell me what particular experiences you had in the group that helped you make these changes? (Probes: Anger diary, time-outs, assertiveness).

Personal changes, such as the ones you just described, may affect our relationships with other people in our lives.

IV. How do you think you saw your relationship with your partner before you joined
the group? (Probes: need for control, fear of losing her, blame).

V. How do you perceive your relationship now? (Probes: support, intimacy).

VI. Can you think of experiences in the group that helped you make these changes in your relationship? (Probes: roles, myths, discussions).

VII. How have your beliefs about women been affected by the group experience?

Your beliefs about men? (Probes: Respect, Roles).

I am also interested in learning if the changes you have discussed have influenced your family relationships.

VIII. What were your relationships like with your family before you came to group?

IX. What are they like now that you have completed the group?

Do you treat them differently? How?

Do they treat you differently? How?

X. Can you describe the experiences in the group which helped you make these changes? (parental relationships, intergenerational abuse).

In addition to your intimate and family relationships, I would like to discuss your experiences at a more general level.

XI. How would you have described your relationships with coworkers/peers before the group? (Probes: tense, closed).

XII. How is this different now that you have completed the group?
XIII. What particular experiences in the group influenced these changes? (Probes: comraderie, support).

Do you have anything else you would like to add to what we have discussed? Thank you for sharing this information with me.
APPENDIX C
CONTACT LETTER

Dear ___________________, [On Letterhead]

A research study is being conducted to examine the effects of the men’s group at Family Services of Greater Vancouver. The purpose of the study is to explore how experiences in the group program has affected your life. Your participation in this study is important as you can provide us with valuable first hand information about the men’s group through sharing your personal experiences and insights. The research is being conducted by Gail Zuk, a graduate student in the School of Social Work, University of British Columbia as a component of her thesis.

The research will take about two hours of your time to complete through in-person interviews with Gail. The interviews will be audiotaped to ensure accuracy and will be erased upon project completion. All identifying information will be held in confidence by the researcher and will not appear in the final document.

I would like to remind you that your participation is completely voluntary, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time and you may choose to not answer questions posed to you. Your decision, or information shared with the researcher, will in no way affect services you may be receiving now or in the future at Family Services of Greater Vancouver.

Gail has enclosed a consent form and interview outline for your review. Please feel free to contact Gail directly if you have any comments or concerns or to arrange an interview time. You may reach Gail at [phone number]. You may also contact her project supervisor, Dr. Mary Russell, at [jail] is looking forward to meeting with you to discuss your experiences.

Sincerely,

Group Leader
APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW TOPIC AREAS

The following are areas which I would like to discuss with you during our interview. I encourage you to reflect on them and should you wish to add or omit any topics to please let me know as your input is an important part of this study.

1. How the group has effected you personally. Do you perceive yourself differently now that you have successfully completed the program?

2. How have the experiences you had in the group affected your relationship with your partner?

3. How have your relationships with family members changed as a result of your participation in the group program?

4. How have the personal changes you made effected your friendships and relations with coworkers?

In addition, I will be asking general questions, such as your age and the length of your relationship with your partner. Any information you choose to share with me will be a great help in developing an understanding of the impact of the men’s group.

Please feel free to contact me at [phone number] should you have any comments or questions about the study or the interview process. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gail Zuk, B.A., B.S.W.
APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

For the Research Project Titled: A Retrospective Exploration of the Impact of Group Treatment on Male Batterers.

Researcher: Gail Zuk, B.A, B.S.W.
University of British Columbia, School of Social Work
Telephone: [number].

Supervisor: Dr. Mary Russell
University of British Columbia, School of Social Work.
Telephone:

I __________________________ hereby consent to an in-person interview of approximately two hours to be conducted by Gail Zuk in connection with her research study. The purpose of the project is to explore the impact of the men's group program at Family Services of Greater Vancouver on myself and in relationship with others.

Further, I consent to the interview being audiotaped and acknowledge that the audiotape will be erased upon completion of the project. My identity will be held in confidence by the researcher and all identifying information will be omitted from the final document.

I understand that my participation is strictly voluntary; I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time and/or not to answer questions posed to me. Any services I receive now or in the future from Family Services of Greater Vancouver will in no way be affected by my decision. Any questions I have regarding this project will be answered by the researcher and counselling sessions provided to me should this study in any way adversely affect me.

My signature is acknowledgement of receipt of a copy of this consent form.

Respondent Signature: __________________________ Date: ____________

Interviewer Signature: __________________________ Date: ____________
INVESTIGATOR: Russell, M.
UBC DEPT: Social Work
INSTITUTION: Family Services, Vancouver
TITLE: A retrospective exploration of the impact of group treatment on male batterers
NUMBER: B91-412
CO-INVEST: Zuk, G.
APPROVED:

The protocol describing the above-named project has been reviewed by the Committee and the experimental procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Dr. R.D Spratley
Director, Research Services
and Acting Chairman

THIS CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL IS VALID FOR THREE YEARS FROM THE ABOVE APPROVAL DATE PROVIDED THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES
November 27, 1991

Gail Zuk
Masters Student
c/o School of Social Work
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C.

Re: Letter of approval for Research Project: A Retrospective Exploration of the Impact of Group Treatment on Male Batterers

Dear Gail:

This letter is to confirm approval of your research project with our Family Violence Intervention Project as outlined in your thesis project outline. As you have stated, our expectations and your agreement are that all information obtained through the interviews will be kept in the strictest confidence except for aggregate information received used to summarize your findings.

We look forward to hearing your findings and wish you the best of luck in your project.

Yours sincerely,

Elaine Story, M.S.W., R.S.W.
Director, Family Therapy Department

ES:cm
APPENDIX F
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Age:

Relationship Status:
   if separated, how long?
   if together, how long?

Children:

Occupation:

Drug/Alcohol Use:

Date of Last Physical Incident:

Date of Last Verbal Abuse Incident:

Did you witness abuse in your family?

Were you abused as a child?
APPENDIX G

THESIS RESPONDENT 01

I: I wasn't your group leader, so I thought the best way for me to begin is to ask you to describe yourself before the group started.

R: Before the group started?

I: Yeah, before you came into group.

R: I was ah, depressed ah, frustrated ... ah [PAUSE] I was rather desperate.

I: What do you mean by that?

R: Desperate; like just feeling like I was falling like that's you know ... like things weren't getting any better ... uh I was uh, drinking a lot ... and I was avoiding responsibility, and at the same time crying about not having any. I had low self-esteem.

I: What is low self-esteem for you?

R: I, I was I was ah suicidal, I was ah, I was not happy being alive, I was like bottoming out.

I: What were some of your behaviours at that time?

R: Behaviours, uh ... temper tantrums uh [PAUSE] or, ah, broady, sulky, very critical of others, uhm, and of the world.

I: Being critical of others. Can you give me an example of that?

R: My common law partner at the time, and I took everything out on her, uhm ... Just, you know, little
things, uhm, insignificant things ... uhm, for example just like usual, household stuff I guess feeling I couldn't do anything right it's pretty shitty.

I: What prompted you to come to group?

R: Ah, I was recommended by [name] ah, this guy with uh he's a psychologist, went to see him for a few counselling sessions with my partner ... and uh, he recommended the group, and ... I said no ... and then, he recommended it again later and I said yes, cause I knew I had to do something ... so I gave in [PAUSE]. But I, ...I, wasn't really willing, to open up you know to be in a group of men [PAUSE] cause I thought I, I was special and unique and different ... you know, I didn't want to air my dirty laundry with a bunch of beaters ... so ... but I did discover as group went on that we had a lot in common.

I: I think that's an interesting picture that you paint ... How do you describe yourself now that you have finished group?

R: After Phase II?

I: Yeah, after phase II.

R: I wouldn't say I was cured or anything like that. I was, definitely, more in control of myself, and [PAUSE] dare I say my life as well. I was able to learn how to ah ... disarm a potentially ah, explosive situation.

I: With what kind of tools?

R: Recognizing my own warning signals uh, muscle tensions, the blood rushing to the head the... the fist clenching the shortness of breath [PAUSE] you know, blurry vision ... being able to take time out and... and to get off the rollercoaster before it went, down the hill.

I: Its interesting that you describe it as a rollercoaster.  

NOTE: Episodic, ?? Escalating
R: Oh ya.

I: What do you mean by that?

R: Well it's... it's something that builds, it's like going up the hill it builds and it builds and if you just keep ... keep on it then it's, it just gets higher and higher ... and its everything uh, you know it's like the blood boiling, red seeing uh... an overwhelming feeling of your not even in your own body anymore that it's like ah, did you ever see Twin Peaks? Bob?

I: Uhm hm

R: Ya, when Bob killed Laura that he was this creature that actually took over other people's bodies. That's how I saw it as Bob, because I didn't feel like it was me and it wasn't, even when I did uh hit my partner I didn't, didn't feel like I did it, it was something else inside of me that did it or like I was possessed by something, that it was just the so emotionally overwhelming myself and I just ah ] built up ... like a volcano I guess [PAUSE] or the rollercoaster when it goes sheerew all the way down and that and it has to be released 'n' you have to scream to get it out.It's possession, it's like possession [PAUSE]. So that was one thing then, the time out thing and uh, the assertiveness is, was one of my uh big problems. Letting other people decide for me what I was gonna do or ah ... going along with everybody else or going along with my partner, just being ah playing the welcome mat or being ...., not standing up for what I wanted or what I needed, and always getting passed over or taken advantage of or, or going along with everything else and I wasn't, I wasn't keeping any of my own ah needs or wants ah happy or met. I guess I went so low sometimes that I, I had to, assert myself physically in some situations just to regain my ... sense of ah ... balance or something ... it sprang right to the opposite ... direction.

I: What did you learn in the group about that?
R: Uh, assertiveness, it's something called just communication uh ... First being aware of what you want and what you need and being able to communicate this to somebody else without feeling like, oh should I do this, oh do I deserve to do this, oh do I... you know describe uh explain, specify and uh [PAUSE] conclusion. I think it was DESC, it was this DESC exercise.

I: How do you understand that for yourself? How do you take that exercise and put it into practice?

R: Being aware of what I need, what I want, and not being afraid of putting it across in a non-threatening manner ... and being able willing to have some give and take on it, to ah not really compromise but ... maybe reward or something ... give back something for it [PAUSE] in a, in a cool way without, without being intimidating or demanding or, or whining.

I: Was there any part of the process that you can particularly identify with?

R: A particular, uhm ...

I: Really stood out for you?

R: Ah [PAUSE] I don't know I, I wasn't always ah ... as vocal as I could have or should have been, I think to be like a responsible member of the group as far as other people ... ah things went ... I didn't participate or support people enough sometimes where I could of said something I sat back but that's the opposite to what you just asked isn't it? ... Uhm ... I guess so by example the opposite thing would be that I, I enjoyed ... having a place where I could ... almost purge myself in a certain way ... ah, one of the leaders said it was almost like confession for me [PAUSE] cause ah I know confessions are part of the therapy and maybe it is I don't know, but I guess being brought up a Catholic and, and dropping away from it, it happens, the need to ... confess or to ah purge myself of any ah ... sins or ill thoughts, bad
feelings. And it was, it was a safe place for ... for that
where you could go and talk and expose your weaknesses
without fear of pressure, retribution or anything.

I: Is that something new for you?

R: Ah yeah, yeah it is cause ah, like with the guys, going
out with the boys to watch hockey, drink beer and stuff
its usually alot of Fucken' A! How's it goin eh? OK,
Alright! hit em. Its all very superficial, it's on a very
kind of pseudo macho level. You know where you know
you don't want to be looked down upon by the other
guys or different from the other guys you wanna you
know, be in control, strong, an you know like typical,
stereo-typical, macho strong guy. I don't know,
Marlboro Man kinda thing.

I: How does that differ in the group?

R: Well it [PAUSE] you know it's like I cried in the group,
and I would have never cried in front of my buddies ...
I'm glad, it was a safe place to ah go in and to ah tell ...
people how I was feeling [PAUSE] and ah, they were
there like a like a somebody to hug you I guess, its like
a... it was a hopeful thing it was a positive thing, it was
a safe thing.

I: Was it like that when you first went in?

R: I was, I was just a little ah uncertain I guess at the
beginning though I wanted to open up, I mean I still I
had preconceptions about these guys being, beaters or
idiots or, stupid or, you know just anything to make
them different from me you know. I was accusing
everyone else and not really being totally honest with
myself [PAUSE] but as time came to pass it came out.

I: Is there a particular group exercise/exercises that
encouraged you to feel that way or to perceive the group
as a safe place?

R: Ah, not really specific exercises except the beginning
when we checked in and we had to say how you were feeling and that was the first thing we did and you can’t say fine you can’t say ok you had to ... you really got to. It’s usually how are you ok fine good it’s really hard go I’m feeling rather intimidated by this to be honest and to feel you put that place of insecurity or, or revealing yourself without having to wear the mask. So I think that brought everybody to a common level.

I: What’s the mask?

R: The mask you know that’s the one you put on. The mask is like, the leather jacket, the boots, the bandanna, the sunglasses of, it’s definitely how you want others to perceive you and you want to make sure that’s in a very strong, powerful, positive light. You don’t want them to, to see the hurt or the pain or the insecurities or the jealousies or the ... feelings of inadequacy [PAUSE] so you put up that great front hah ya sure you try to.

I: So the check-ins were important to you?

R: Yeah, yeah it got everyone to drop the mask, the bullshit ... outward shows.

I: How have you changed as a result of the group?

R: How have I changed? I changed,... that’s a tough one ... Well I’m more aware, aware of myself of my ah my shortcomings. I don’t know ... um ... I’m, I’ve haven’t had any ah violence since ... um [PAUSE] I’ve ... ah ... well I haven’t been suicidal since so that’s a change. I ah ... I’ve been more accepting of myself too...

I: What does that mean?

R: I guess not being my own toughest critic sometimes and always saying that I don’t measure up and I’m not good enough ... as good to everybody else to really have a better ... acceptance or a better appreciation for who I am and what I do or what I can do um ... I’m ah ... I’m more aware of my ... my outlook towards women ...
was a real chauvinist pig.

I: What do you mean by that?

R: Well not being able to have women friends like women were for sex and nothing else. I couldn’t have a woman friend and being ... everything really like possession and jealousy and everything that’s wrapped up with that too ... um I’ve been able to loosen up. I still, I, I still have this voice in my mind sometimes catching me from time to time but ... I don’t.

I: What does that voice say?

R: It says ah you know... what does it say it’s just like a little alarm that goes off going oop you can’t say that.

I: Do you still think it though?

R: Um time to time I do, yeah, yeah I do ...

I: So what are some of these thoughts?

R: Ah, well just when you, you know you look at a woman and you figure like I wonder what she’s like in bed you know, or you know that’s the first thing that, that women are for sex ... so I’ve come to ah a place now where there’s a lot more respect, a lot more acceptance.

I: Can you give me an example of what more respect means?

R: Um let me think. I still see my ex-partner as a friend now ... and I respect her boundaries. Like I, I don’t grope her anymore, I guess is what the bottom line is ... yeah ... I used to just grab her whenever I wanted to and I don’t do that ... anymore with, with anybody, any woman [PAUSE]. Respecting somebodies boundaries ... not only physical but also emotional by not making them do anything or ... say anything or whatever that they don’t want to. Giving them the dignity that they deserve and hoping that they give me mine.
I: Are there other changes you think you've made within inside yourself as a result of the group?

R: More self confidence ah I guess, guess that's real confident huh. Jeez. Well I've yeah, before group I was, I was kinda in a hibernation state, kinda hiding out with a fear and a not feeling... feeling disconnected from you know, the big picture of the society or whatever. My view of that, my view of myself in the world has become more positive I think as a result.

I: So how do you view yourself now as to before?

R: Well before I didn't want to have anything to do with it, basically I just wanted out... out... I feel now that you know what I do matters you know, no matter what I do it does make a difference or it does have some impact on ah society or the big picture or the [PAUSE]. Yeah, it matters [PAUSE] and for every action there is an opposite and equal reaction. And more, you know, appropriate behaviour.

I: What is appropriate behaviour?

R: Like ah... like ah... well inappropriate. Before I got really carried away at hockey games and things like that, just get totally vocal and worked up, stuff like that.

I: Is this watching hockey or playing hockey?

R: Yeah, just watching.

I: Just watching.

R: I used to do it when I played, but now that I don't play anymore, I just did it when I watched um... acting threateningly or intimidatingly to ah anybody...

I: Doing what?

R: Like raising a hand or raising your voice or you know.
I: How is it different now?

R: Sometimes, I don’t know, it’s like [PAUSE] it just
doesn’t matter as much or the stakes aren’t as high ... or
I don’t allow myself to ... um ... be in a position of
where I can either hurt myself or hurt someone else in
any given situation, to be conscious of my actions and
have that third eye to be aware of ... what I’m saying,
what I’m doing.

I: So there’s more self-awareness on your part?

R: Oh yeah!

I: More now than before?

R: Definitely, definitely!

I: So are there any other changes you can think of?

R: More self respect, mm [PAUSE] I don’t indulge in, as
much in alcohol as I did then. I still drink but I don’t
get lank and drunk everytime.

I: OK, ... Those are really good examples, you made
yourself quite clear. Personal changes like the ones
you’ve been talking about often affects our relationships
with others, in our lives. So to get picture again of you
in a relationship, could you describe your perception of
you’re relationship with you’re ex-partner before group
started?

R: Before the group started?

I: Yeah, what was it like?

R: It was like nailing a butterflies wings to the wall.

I: What’s that about?

R: Yeah, it was ... It’s a denial of basic human rights. I
wouldn’t let her have any friends, I wouldn’t her talk on
the phone with her ex-boyfriends ... didn’t like her being out anywhere I didn’t know about. I took her for granted at the same time I made demands on her financially, physically. I ah, expected her to take care of me ah ... hmn ... I looked for my own happiness through her or, I ... we were so close that I didn’t know where I’d stop and she started sometimes ... It was real, I hate to use the word codependant, but it was real codependant you know? Like we’re both struggling and hanging on to each other and both drowning at the same time ... and neither of us floated ... I ah I denied her of all her basic human rights.

I: How do perceive the relationship now that you’ve gone through the group?

R: Now? I feel very lucky that she is even speaking to me any more ... ah ... I don’t know in hindsight... If I can say what we had before was love, I don’t even know if I’d, what love is anymore. I had a real twisted perception of our relationship, but ah ... I ... ah, right now I allow her to do what ever she wants as she does to me and I support her in any way I can as she does with me, I ah ... there is a very clean lines now between, us as individuals.

I: OK. So how’s the relationship evolved over time? Since the group started and three months later?

R: OK ... one of the guys in the group made an excellent observation, that my relationship with [redacted] is like a heroin addict. There wasn’t so much love as an addiction, its a need, a desperate need ... that I had to have my fix that all my own personal satisfaction, happiness, self-realization, everything was totally wrapped up in her and I guess because those lines are so blurred or something, or because I had no faith in myself and I wanted it all in her, ... depended on her, relied on her, for everything. So through the group I was able to um ... see myself as an individual, see what my
... where I was, short circuiting on my negative perception, negative self-talk, trying to you know get the correct, positive ah ... images of ... um, me as a person, an individual. Then immediately, right at the beginning of group I wanted... I’m sorry it’s over, I won’t hit you again, we’ll live happily ever after. I realize now that was a lot way off and I was still working things out, as I still am today. But it has been very slow ... the process, very gradual, but I know I have to focus on my shaping-up, not hers ... You can probably see that.

I: Was there a specific part to the group or exercise/s or a point in time when you made that shift for yourself?

R: Mmm [PAUSE] I don’t know it might have even been when group ended, like when it was over type of thing.

I: Was there something in particular that happened in your life that encouraged the shift?

R: I think, I think being on my own, living on my own and ah removing myself from any position of codependance or of ... where I could just like focus on myself.

I: Physical distance was important to you?

R: Yeah, yeah it was and also giving up the idea that I could get her back by doing this, you know that I was doing it to better myself not to go for the carrot at the end of the stick and to get her back that I had to be stronger myself.

I: When did you make that realization?

R: Group was telling me. After Phase everybody went around and that was basically the message that I got. But I still hadn’t bought into it ... you know ... so I guess it was ... when towards the end of group II they were saying the same thing. Ha, this like wait a minute here. So yeah, it wasn’t until after the end of Phase II. Even after being way from group that things sunk in.
I: Have there been any other changes in the relationship?

R: I guess, yeah, it's... there's a real fear of going back to that place. That place of abuse so sometimes there's an overcompensation, or something. I just kind of step back too much or like control or no control, I'm not aggressive maybe where I should be aggressive, not aggressive in a bad sense.

I: Is there an example of that to make it clearer?

R: A fear of repeating past mistakes, putting on the kid gloves.

I: Is there any particular instance where you've done that? Overcompensated?

R: Like giving her so much space I'm not there when she needs me. Like if she's going out to some function where I know there going to be a lot of people, ah, letting her go alone so that she can you know, feel um, you know, she doesn't have to look after me or whatever and absolving myself of any responsibility. Then later finding out that she actually did want me to go with her. In the old relationship I would have been right beside her like just ready to, you know, drop the gloves if any trouble came up sort of thing [PAUSE]. I think sexually as well. I've had a certain fear of being physical in anyway is a real caution, a fear of slipping back, fear of violence.

I: Could you tell me some more about that?

R: The place where it's really kinda touchy is like physical sex where she enjoys um, rough treatment sometimes. Spanking, kind of ah, nothing serious, we're not talking S&M or Bondage or anything like that just, just a little squeezing, pinching, um ... you know, it's playful but it's a taboo kind of topic. I've been afraid of that, I've backed off from it and ah ... it's like I've had that part of me cut out or something, like lobotomized form that.
I: Does she ask you for that?

R: Uh, yeah, yeh.

I: So it’s a mutual thing?

R: Yeah, well she introduced it to me actually and ah ... I’d never, I’d never hit her, I’d never been physical, physically abusive to her before the point that she asked me to be physical with her then. So I think that partly when there was a little mix-up with my transmitters or something. That is you know, sexual foreplay isn’t the same as physical violence, abuse or intimidation.

I: Have you made that difference for yourself?

R: Yep, yeah I have, but it’s still I haven’t totally come to terms, but intellectually at least.

I: So, intellectually, what is it then? What’s the difference?

R: I have to keep the trust, and respect is the bottom line and to ah be able to ah ... ah satisfy or try to satisfy, fulfill her needs without infringing on my own.

I: How do you create that balance?

R: [PAUSE] I, ah, knowing, knowing the context, I guess of which your operating. Knowing when you’re ... playing and when you’re not playing, when you’re being sexual or when your not, or when your using it for your own personal needs and when it’s not done to inflict harm on her, trying to ... get your own thing.

I: Is there other ways you think your relationship has been affected?

R: She talks about guys she goes out with and I don’t flip out anymore. I’ve come to terms with that, accepting that she has a freedom of choice and I, ah, used to just s threaten and scream, shout and yell and call out
abandonment.

I: What do you do or say differently now?

R: Now I say that’s good. I’m happy for you. Hope you had a good time. You know and there’s still, there’s still something inside that hurts but ah, I know that I can’t let it eat me. Jealousy is the worst thing. It really is ah, a green eyed monster, all consuming if you let it.

I: How do you not let jealousy consume you?

R: Ah, well having such a highest level of self-esteem now I know that I’m the best right so, but ah, nobody could come near me now (laugh). Feeling, feeling more confident about myself. Feeling more ... more together, more in control ... and realizing too, that I have the same feelings for, for women sometimes too. Except now on both levels, you’re both people.

I: Is there a particular experience you’ve had in the group that helped you make these changes in your relationship?

R: Particular experience ... well on a few occasions I was able to just open up and speak quite freely about our relationship ... and ah ... don’t know if I can remember a specific time. But it was very, very emotional, a very desperate cry for help I guess ... and they were all very supportive of me and they all gave me their phone numbers and said to call anytime. They provided that safety net, that they really cared and ah ... they’d be there for me.

I: How is that different for you?

R: Um, well most, most friends I guess that I have are ah ... married or they’ve got jobs or they’ve got things that keep them busy. Sometimes they don’t always take me seriously, I guess. I’ve cried wolf on a few occasions, before when I... [PAUSE] depended on them to much, sometimes, and they’ve backed off. They weren’t aware of everything that was going on in my relationship either.
obviously so they ... and they didn’t like my partner at the time either, so they couldn’t be objective about it. So being, you know, the group was non-judgemental, it was just unconditional kind of support.

I: Can you think of how the group influenced your perception of intimate relationships in general?

R: Intimate relationships in general. Yeah ... the big one is not looking for mommy; not looking for the cooker, cleaner, sex slave. You know, the breast to suck, the one to go "Oh you poor baby. It’s OK I’ll take care of you". The mother-nurturer thing. Communication is so important. I had problems, I still do. Rather than listening when somebody’s speaking, I try to think of some kind of clever remark to say back as soon as they finish, you know ... I wasn’t really listening. Trying to find out not only what, what they’re saying but, why they’re saying it ... uhm ... That it’s, it’s equal, it’s gotta be equal, it’s no ah one person can’t call the shots all the time.

I: Do you believe that yourself?

R: Uh I’ve, I’ve come to see that that’s the only way it can be. I did, like that’s not how I was raised or how I was shown or how I you know ... the only example that have is, you know, I was conditioned to believe that the, you know, man is the king of the castle and what Dad says goes and what, you know, father knows best and, ah, and she takes care of the, food and the cooking and cleaning and uh, very you know, chauvinistic, sexist kind of outlook [PAUSE] but I wasn’t even aware of it at the time.

I: Once you became aware of it, how did you go about changing it?

R: Umm ... well I, as I said, I think there was a certain like going the opposite coming to a [PAUSE] ah, a compliant, ah, totally ah, what can I do for you kind of situation ah ... ah being very aware of ah ... not sending
out any ah, negative signals. Like ah, even, even like a clenched fist or anything like that you know, or any tension, like my body ah, like awareness. I guess it's self awareness.

I: Thank you for sharing your perceptions of your intimate relationship with me. I would like to move into the area of your family now. Could you describe for me what your relationships were like with your family before the group, how did you perceive them?

R: OK, relationships with family ... uh, I've got ah, I'm one of nine children so ah, second eldest, first boy, ah, my parents are still together. I had been abusive to my siblings, my sisters at an earlier age ah...

I: What types of abuse?

R: Uh, oh all kinds. Physical, mental. My brother and I were always getting into trouble and ah, got alot of ah, spankings and alot of ah, punishment, ah, belts and things like that and ah, I on occasion turned around and did it to my brother and my sisters as well.

I: Who disciplined you in your family?

R: My father ... Dad was the discipline.

I: What was your relationship like with your father?

R: It's hard to say. I thought it was kind of good and average and normal but, now I see that it was abusive. It never really felt like I ah, lived up to his expectations, that I, that he would have rather have had somebody else as a son, you know. He was always saying why can't you be more like, you know, why can't you do this, why are you so retarded, why are you so slow, why are you, you know, I can destroy you and make another one just like you. He was ah, critical and sarcastic and abusive in that way. I've, I've tried to think. I don't think I've ever been sexually abused ... uh, but definitely
physically and uh, and uh emotionally and uh, ... I've learned that people that are abused turn out to be abusers.

I: Where did you learn that?

R: I guess in, in group ah, the circle. That it's a circle you know, it really is, garbage in, garbage out. You practice what you learn. They set the model for you and that's what you think is the given way to do it, and you don't question it cause it's right cause if parents did it, it must be right ... Do as I say not as I do.

I: What was your relationship like with your mom?

R: Pretty good up until a point. She said I was a good kid, great kid up until the rebellion stage and then I called her on not uh, having enough time for me and not having, not getting enough uh, attention or affection from her and she couldn't deal with that or cope with that and, and uh, since group I've, you know, been able to talk to both my parents about ah, their treatment of me.

I: How did you come to that decision?

R: To confront them? Ah, it's like I got where I'm down, mad, and I'm not gonna take it anymore. It came at an inappropriate time when I was with some of my friends, at my parents house and I guess because they were there I felt a little bit stronger. Uh, you know ah ... I told my father that you know, that he was always putting me down and that he was always so critical of me and comparing me with you know, others, ... friends and stuff and at the same time asking why I wasn't successful in any given career or any stage of my life right now and uh, I've just been told all my life that I couldn't do anything right so uh ... I called him on that [PAUSE]. That I was down because, you know, he, he always put me down ...

[end of example of coded transcript].