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LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY  
School of Science and Technology  
in conjunction with the  
Faculty of Graduate Studies

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Batterers' Perception of Treatment Non-Completion

by

Zoila Danixa Gordon

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A dissertation defense submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirement for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Policy and Social Research

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June 2012

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Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this dissertation in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of Dr. Teresa Morris, who provided supervision, help and guidance. I also want to thank each of my committee members who have dedicated their time to help students succeed in this program. It is also a pleasure to thank Katharine Peake who helped with editing feedback during my countless revisions. I'm grateful to Tim Thelander who kept me on task with APA guidelines. I'm grateful to Valarie Simmons, the Clinicians and Staffs at Psychological Health Services (PHS) who provided me with the opportunity to gather relevant data and to carry out this research on their premises. I'm thankful to my colleagues and friends who have been supportive and encouraging. I owe my deepest gratitude to my family who have been extremely encouraging throughout this journey. I thank my two sons, mother, sister, three brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews for their prayers, support and encouraging words. I'm thankful to my father who is resting in the Lord, for inspiring me to become a social worker. Above all, I want to thank my Heavenly Father who constantly reminded me that I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

### Batterers' Perception of Treatment Non-Completion

by

Zoila Danixa Gordon

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Social Policy and Social Research  
Loma Linda University, June 2012  
Dr. Kimberly Freeman, Chairperson

The purpose of this study was to examine reasons why batterers drop out of batterers' intervention programs. A qualitative design was utilized within the framework of Gove's Prime Physical Theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory and Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming Theory. Data collection included interviewing a sample of 22 court mandated male batterers, who had initially dropped out of treatment and had been reinstated. Participants were from a diverse background. Results indicated five key themes that emerged from the batterers' responses: (1) An overall lack of trust toward the legal system which greatly contributed to anger upon entering group; (2) a lack of insight/maturity in understanding the ramifications of non-compliance; (3) poor motivation/interest in attending and continuing in group; (4) difficulties reinstating back into the program once deciding to continue treatment; and (5) a sense of not belonging to the group. These findings have important clinical and policy implications. Clinically, the results suggest that decrease dropout is more likely if group facilitators directly address and assist batterers in resolving their anger in the first few sessions. Facilitators also need to help participants develop insight into how their behavior and choices affect treatment completion, clearly state the benefits in completing treatment, openly reward batterers for coming to group, and facilitate group cohesion among the members. Suggested policy

recommendations include increased education within the judicial and law enforcement systems on how to minimize bias and deescalate anger during the arrest and legal process. This may include factors such as not treating arrestees with bias and structural changes such as calling treatment “Conflict Resolution” as opposed to “Batterers Treatment.” Other policy implications included the need to orient/educate batterers regarding legal requirements and consequences for non-compliance, and reducing barriers to the reinstatement process. Finally, as the legal system plays a major role in the stigmatization and escalation of anger of batterers, future studies should further explore needed organizational changes and the role of shaming in reducing treatment dropout. An examination of treatment dropouts who did not reinstate along with an exploration of cultural differences is also needed.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Domestic violence is a growing problem. In 2007, spousal abuse was responsible for 14% of all homicides in the US. Females made up over 70% of people who died in the U.S at the hands of an intimate partner (U.S Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011; CDC, 2011). According to the U.S. Department Bureau of Justice Statistics (2011), the rate of domestic violence against females declined 53% between 1993-2008, from 9.4 victimizations per 1000 females 12 and older to 4.3 per 1000; however, in 2008 females ages 12 and older experienced about 552 non-fatal violent victimizations including rapes, robbery and attacks. The Center for Disease Control (2011), reported that domestic violence is a public health problem. It indicated that 4.8 million women are physically attacked and raped every year in the U.S. A national women's survey found that 22.1% of women experience physical abuse at some point in their lives (CDC, 2004).

Treatment for those who are convicted of battering is no longer an option; it is mandated. Batterers' intervention groups came into existence in the late 1970s due to the women's movement, which exposed the issue of domestic violence. This movement challenged the criminal justice system to do something about the abuse of women, by their partners, and resulted in the development of batterers' intervention programs (Pandya & Gingerich, 2002). As such, there is increased demand for effective treatment programs that work. This treatment aims to rehabilitate offenders in order to reduce re-assault by helping them develop non-abusive behavior (Rothman, Gupta, Pavlos, Dang, & Coutinho, 2007).

It is clear that treatment is generally effective for batterers if they stay in treatment. The problem is that they do not. According to the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (2006), batterers, in general, have poor program completion records. Statistics indicate that 50-75% of batterers do not complete treatment (California State Auditor, 2006; Daly & Pelowski, 2000; Burton, Regan, & Kelly, 1998; Gondolf, 1997) with some studies reporting even higher rates up to 99% (Roffman, Edleson, Neighbors, Mbillinyi & Walker, 2008). What is even more alarming is the fact that 90% of men who inquire about programs never attend (Gondolf & Foster, 1991). At least 40-60% of men attending the first session of batterers' intervention do not complete treatment (Edleson & Syers, 1991; Gondolf, 1997). Roy, Turcotte, Montminy, and Lindsay (2005), noted that most absenteeism tends to take place at the beginning of treatment. Sung, Belenko and Feng (2001) observed that when offenders do not stay in treatment it is related to a lack of engagement, which is thought to be a necessary component for effective treatment outcomes. There is also substantial evidence that offenders who drop out of batterers' treatment are at a higher risk for recidivism than those who are completers (Bennett, Stoops, Call, and Flett, 2007; Bowen & Gilchrist, 2004; Hanson & Wallace-Capretta, 2004; Buttell & Carney, 2002; Gondolf, 2002; Bennett & Williams, 2001; Gerlock, 2001; Gondolf, 1997, 1998, 1999).

Given the above, researchers are anxious to understand the reasons offenders fail to complete treatment in order to propose ways to improve treatment retention. In this regard, many studies have examined characteristics of non-completers and predictors of dropouts (Bowen & Gilchrist, 2004; Scott, 2004; Chang & Saunders, 2002; Gerlock, 2001). These studies have generally found that men with a long criminal history, who are

younger, with drug or alcohol problems, with antisocial personality traits, who witnessed abuse as children, and are unemployed had difficulty completing treatment.

Although researchers have studied the above mentioned characteristics to determine the reasons for treatment drop out, the reasons for treatment drop out from the batterers' perspectives has not yet been examined. As such, this study uncovered batterers' perceptions of why they do not complete treatment and proposed clinical and policy recommendations for more effective treatment for batterers.

Three theories were used as theoretical frameworks for this study. Gondolf's Prime Physical theory, which focuses on age and maturity, was used to predict that younger and immature batterers are more likely to drop out of treatment. Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory, with the emphasis on motivation, was used to predict that batterers who do not believe that they can benefit from treatment tend to not stay in treatment. Finally, was Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming theory, with a focus on making batterers accountable through shaming with the goal of reintegration into society, rather than shaming with a stigma. It was used to predict that shaming batterers with the use of stigma weakened their bonds with society. This weakening, in turn, caused them to be considered an outcast and made it more likely that batterers would drop out of treatment.

### **Study Aims**

As indicated above, it has been well documented that batterers who complete a domestic violence treatment program reduce their risk of re-assault. Attendance at batterers' treatment suggests that the programs work better for those who stay in them (Gondolf, 2001). Other studies indicate that batterers' intervention lowers the risk of

re-violation. Evaluations conducted on completion and non-completion found that batterers who completed programs consistently reduced their recidivism rate (Gondolf, 2002; Gondolf, Heckert, & Kimmel, 2002; Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1999; Edleson & Syers, 1991).

Bennett and William (2001), provided the best summary of the literature, by stating that the effect of batterers' treatment is limited, but that it significantly adds a small, but overall effect, on the prevention of domestic violence. To support this claim Bennett and William cited the Ontario Experiment in which 59 batterers, who were on probation, were randomly assigned to either a 10-week treatment program or probation with no batterers' intervention treatment. Findings indicated that only 10% of men placed in batterers' treatment group re-violated as compared to 31% of men in probation only. Taken together, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that batterers who complete their treatment program are generally at lower risk for re-violating as compared to non-completers. These statistics combined with the high rate of treatment dropout, emphasize the importance of understanding why batterers do not complete their treatment programs.

There is convincing research suggesting that if batterers do not complete treatment they are more likely to continue to be physically and psychologically abusive, terrorize their victims, model abusive behavior to their children and set a poor example to their community (Gerlock, 2001). This study is significant because it contributed to understanding the reasons for treatment dropout, while also shedding light on the problem of retention. It helped fill the gaps that exist in current research. It is expected



that the study results will aid in the development of policy suggestions aimed at improving program retention based on feedback provided by batterers themselves.

Given the above, the aims of this study were to:

- Discover from batterers' perspectives reasons why they drop out of batterers' intervention programs.
- To propose policy recommendations for more effective treatment programs for batterers.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides a literature review and theoretical framework aimed at understanding why individuals mandated to treatment for domestic violence do not complete treatment. An overview of the effects of treatment completion and non-completion as it pertains to recidivism will be presented. An in-depth discussion on Gove's Physical Prime Theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory and Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming Theory framed the study.

It is well documented that treatment completion is associated with low risk of recidivism and public safety (Coulter & VandeWeerd, 2009; Dynia & Sung, 2000; Lin, Su, Chou, Chen, Huang, Wu, Chen, Chao & Chen, 2009; Young & Belenko, 2002). In a study conducted by Gondolf and Jones (2002), they found that 44-64% of batterers who completed programs were less likely to re-offend. Even when the courts force batterers to attend treatment, they still get the benefit of being in treatment because of the exposure to the information presented to them in the treatment program (Hepburn & Harvey, 2007). Given the above, it is imperative that researchers attempt to better understand why most batterers do not complete their treatment programs and to develop techniques that promote program retention.

In an attempt to understand why batterers drop out of treatment Gove (1985) developed the Prime Physical Theory. This theory provides a theoretical understanding of treatment dropout from a deviance perspective utilizing age, gender and maturity. The Prime Physical Theory takes a biological and a developmental view of deviant behavior. The Prime Physical Theory asserts that physical strength and deviant behavior peaks at

the same time during young adulthood, creating lack of compliance with rules in some individuals. Gove (1985) stated that the decline of physical strength, when a person begins to age and mature, matches the decline in deviant behavior increasing compliance. Gove's theory also suggests that men tend to engage in deviant behavior more than women. The concept regarding the decline of criminal behavior with age was first posited by French social scientist, Adolphe Quetelet, in 1833. He observed that criminal behavior diminished with age because of the reduction of physical vitality (Sung, Belenko, Feng, & Tabachnick, 2004).

### **Theoretical Framework Age and Deviant Behavior**

Gove's theory looked at the biological and developmental process of deviant behavior. It explained that after persons leave the teen years their physical, psychological and hormonal activity begins to decline leading to a maturation level that increases the chances of treatment compliance. This theory related age and gender to treatment compliance and supported the idea that older people are more likely to comply with treatment. According to this theory lower physical agility encourages treatment compliance (Sung, Belenko, Feng & Tabachnick, 2004). With age, individuals begin to develop a sense of self, become less absorbed and more accepting of others and the world around them (Gove, Ortega & Style, 1989).

Gove's theory further indicated that deviant behavior reaches its peak at the same time that physical strength, psychological drive and adrenaline reaches its peak. According to Gove (1985), younger individuals tend to seek gratification through stimulation, which can lead to deviant behavior. The literature indicated that it is during

the ages of 18-24 that individuals are most likely to be involved in criminal behavior (Gove, 1985; Hamby, 2009; Richardson & Budd, 2003). Tittle, Ward and Grasmick (2003) supported the notion that deviant behavior increases more so during this phase.

Gove (1985) also explored the transition of adolescents to young adulthood and pinpointed some characteristics during this phase. One characteristic mentioned by Gove that is relevant to this study is that society expects younger people to experiment with acceptable and unacceptable behavior and that with time these younger adults are expected to settle down. Another characteristic worth mentioning is their sense of autonomy and independence with, however, little responsibility to account for. Gove (1985) indicated that young adults between the ages of 18-25 are self-absorbed and dissatisfied with their lives, making them at risk to be involved in deviant behavior. From a biological point of view, physical strength peaks in young adulthood and then deteriorates thereafter. Energy level decreases and psychological drive depends on persons' desire and willingness to be persistent. Because of the energy level that is required to carry out deviant behavior, these biological factors can influence deviant behavior displayed in adolescence and young adulthood (Gove, 1985).

Gove (1985) went on to explain the Physical Prime theory, by applying Levinson and Erikson's theory, to better understand the relationship between age and deviant behavior. During adolescence and young adulthood individuals are so self-absorbed that they lack the ability to show concern for others and the ability to accept social values (Levinson, 1978). Erikson's fifth life stage is consistent with this developmental phase in which individuals are experimenting and are trying to discover who they, are as opposed

to his next stage in which the development of concern for others begin to form (Erikson, 1963).

The inability experienced by young adults to be cooperative, less self-absorbed, attentive and willing to conform to social norms (Gove, 1985), indicated their inability to comply with treatment completion. Studies support Gove's theory that younger batterers are less likely to complete treatment because of their unwillingness to comply with rules (Bowen & Gilchrist, 2006; Buttell & Carney, 2002; Chang & Saunders, 2002; Gerlock, 2001; Scott, 2004). These studies represented a large body of evidence that documents age being a predictor, or a characteristic, that differentiates completers from non-completers.

Based on personal observation of a batterers group, Gove's theory is consistent with the fact that younger batterers are usually self-absorbed. They tend to come to group being angry at the victim and at the judicial system. These batterers have difficulty accepting responsibility for their behavior and tend to be resistant and argumentative. Older batterers on the other hand, may initially experience similar feelings as the younger ones but they soon become receptive and willing to learn.

### **Gender and Deviant Behavior**

Although the above behavior traits associated with age hold for males and females, such behavioral deviance is predominantly a male phenomenon (Gove, 1985). According to Hirschi and Gottfredson (1993), when comparing the rate of deviant behavior between men and women, deviant behavior for both peaks at about the same age, but for women the peak is less sharp. Gove (1985) indicated that by nature, men tend

to be more aggressive. He stated that they tend to believe in self-protection; they are assertive and more likely to be involved in deviant acts. Women on the other hand tend to be much more concerned about how their behavior impacts others.

Men who adhere to rigid gender roles beliefs tend to more often support domestic violence against women (Reidy, Shirk, Sloan & Zeichner, 2009). The authors suggested that these men tend to assert their power over their mates by using intimidation and threats. These men react aggressively toward their partners when they sense that their masculinity is being threatened.

From a physiological point of view, Gove (1985) explained that males are bigger, more muscular, and stronger than females. These physiological differences between men and women contribute to the level of deviant behavior in men. Gove (1985) noted that men tend to display risky and physically demanding behavior, especially during the late adolescent and early adulthood period. This physical strength and increased agility creates a sense of being in control and unwillingness to be compliant.

This theory considered the physical strength of men, which helped to understand the intimidation batterers exert toward their victims. The sense of self-protection as mentioned in Gove's theory is consistent with the fact that batterers seem to feel the need to fight back against their mates when they feel disrespected. In intervention groups, batterers make statements that they were arrested because their partners hit them and they hit them back. These batterers believe that they are defending themselves by hitting back. They have difficulty understanding why they are in a treatment group instead of their partners whom they perceive as aggressors, rather than victims.

As mentioned earlier adolescents and young adults tend to be more self-absorbed, but according to Gove (1985) with maturity, they move from self-absorption to concerns for others, tending to accept societal values and begin to behave in more appropriate ways. According to Gove (1985), as people mature, they become more comfortable with social relations. They begin forming ties with others and begin to be more concerned with the wellbeing of others. They also become more concerned with community issues and begin to have a better understanding of the meaning of life. As such Gove's theory supported the notion that older batterers become more willing to complete intervention programs than younger ones, because of the sense of responsibility they develop as they age.

Within this context, Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory can also help explain treatment non-completion because of batterers' perceived ideas of why treatment is not necessary. Bandura (1997) defined Self-Efficacy as the belief in one's effectiveness in performing specific tasks. He stated that Self-Efficacy beliefs provide motivation and a sense of accomplishment. Bandura noted that unless people believe that their actions can produce the desired outcome, they have very little motivation to persevere when circumstances become difficult (Pajares, 2006).

Self-efficacy affects individuals' motivation and goals they set for themselves. This concept explains that peoples' level of motivation influences their actions, and that the behavior they display is based on their beliefs about their capabilities (Pajares, 2006). Also, the level of goals individuals set for themselves is influenced by their perceived self-efficacy (Zimmerman, Bandura & Manuel-Martinez, 1992). Bandura's theory suggested that Self-Efficacy affects individuals in all aspects of their lives and that

peoples' beliefs about their competence to succeed in a particular task can affect their motivation, interest and achievement (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996).

Bandura and Locke (2003) believed that individuals have the power to produce desired effects in their lives. The concept of personal efficacy is quite appropriate in the context of batterers' self-perception. The authors suggested that self-efficacy affects individuals, whether they think in a self-enhancing or a in a self-debilitating manner. This theory is manifested by batterers' behaviors. For example, as long as batterers believe that they are not responsible for their behavior, they will not see the benefit in receiving treatment.

If treatment drop-out is viewed from Bandura's perspective, then it can be said that the higher the perceived efficacy about how much batterers are capable of learning from the intervention program, the higher their goals to complete programs will be and the firmer the commitment will be to achieving these goals. If batterers are not motivated enough and do not think they are capable of completing treatment, then according to Bandura they likely will not complete treatment. Bandura believed that self-efficacy can be changed or improved because individuals have the capacity to influence their level of motivation and performance (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996).

Braithwaite's (1989) Reintegrative Shaming Theory gave us further understanding of why batterers drop out of treatment. This theory is a criminology theory that focused on the offender rather than on the offender's behavior. This theory stated that there are two integrative processes. One that shames the offender through the use of stigmatization and the other that shames through reintegration. Stigmatic shaming



weakens the tie between the offender and society, whereas, reintegrative shaming strengthens the ties between the offender and society through forgiveness and by reintegrating him back in to society as a responsible law abiding citizen (Braithwaite, 1989). This theory fits into this study because of the stigma batterers experience by the legal system before they get to the intervention group. As such, batterers come into the group setting already feeling stigmatized by the legal system and they may not stay in the group long enough to benefit from group and experience reintegrative shaming. Stigmatic shaming does not provide the offender with any incentives to stop offending because of the fact that they are excluded from society (Braithwaite, 1989).

Braithwaite explained that reintegrative shaming is a powerful tool to maintain proper social control. He stated that reintegrative shaming of offenders, for their misconduct, sometimes reduces crime rates. Braithwaite explained that there is a distinction between shaming that leads to stigma as opposed to reintegrative shaming that leads to forgiveness. According to Braithwaite (1989), shaming that leads to stigma increases the offenders possibility of committing more crimes but that reintegrative shaming is shaming done through confrontation of the offender by family and friends to show social disapproval of the offender's behavior. This confrontation allows the offender to deal with the consequences of his behavior and gives him the opportunity to express remorse for what he has done as a way to reintegrate him back into society.

Reintegrative Shaming Theory can affect individuals by helping them have an understanding that they have broken the law and that they have an obligation to comply with the law in order for them to be reintegrated back into society as responsible citizens. Complying with treatment through group attendance and completion and ending their

violent behavior would help batterers to be reintegrated back into society. This reintegration is based on batterers having an understanding of what they did, being remorseful and complying with the judicial system in order for them to be considered responsible and acceptable members of society.

Braithwaite (1989) also explained that a society that has high moral standards and high expectations of its citizens has better outcomes in lowering crime rates because it is willing to deliver higher quality crime control, than a society that believes in crime control through inflicting pain on offenders. This form of higher quality crime control is consistent with the concept that batterers who complete treatment have a much better possibility of not re-violating (Gerlock, 2001). This form of crime control should bring more benefits than simply throwing batterers in jail. According to Braithwaite (1989), “Repressive social control, by imprisonment, restricts our autonomy by forced limitations of our choice” (p. 10). Braithwaite here substantiates Bandura’s theory that increasing self-efficacy in offenders increases their motivation to take steps toward positive behavioral change.

In Summary, Gove’s Physical Prime theory, Bandura’s Self-Efficacy theory and Braithwaite’s conceptualization of Reintegrative Shaming theory provide a framework to view program drop out by batterers. The Physical Prime theory postulated that younger men display risky and demanding behavior, increasing their unwillingness to comply with treatment and that the decline of deviant behavior begins after maturation. The Self-Efficacy theory considered the belief in one’s effectiveness in carrying out a certain task and how these beliefs can influence a person’s perception and level of motivation. The Reintegrative shaming theory stated that crime control is effective through shaming

without labeling and stigmatizing. It postulated that shaming is a way for individuals to freely choose compliance, in contrast to repressive social control which forces or coerces compliance. Taken together, these three theories combined help to explain how various factors can affect program completion.

### **Profile of Batterers**

Batterers come from all walks of life including all socio-economic, religious, racial, and age groups. However, there are specific characteristics that are found in some batterers that help social service practitioners better understand this population. Knowledge of these characteristics helps practitioners provide effective treatment.

One of the most common characteristics of batterers is that they tend to be controlling. Controlling behavior is defined by Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary (2011) as: inclined to control others' behavior; domineering. When applied to domestic violence, batterers control victims' by taking charge of their lives and forcing them to submit to authority. Batterers' control victims' finances and whether or not they are allowed to work (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2007). They tend to control where victims go and to whom they speak. Batterers' expect victims to ask permission to leave the house. They control victims' personal decision-making ability as well as any household decisions. The relationship between victims and batterers begins to look more like a parent-child relationship rather than equal partnership (AARDVARC, 2005; AARDVARC, 2011). This controlling behavior can pose a tremendous problem for batterers' improvement due to their unwillingness to give up control and comply with treatment curriculum.

The Domestic Abuse Intervention Project of Duluth, Minnesota (1979) created the Power and Control wheel to educate batterers about their controlling behavior and to help them develop equality with their partners by focusing on the Equality wheel that was also created by this project. A few examples of controlling characteristics listed on this wheel include use of intimidation by doing things that make victims afraid; using emotional abuse by playing mind games and humiliation; using isolation to control victims' actions and limiting victims' outside involvement; and minimizing and blaming by denying that the abuse happened and blaming the victim for causing it. In some cases batterers refuse treatment because they believe they did not do anything wrong and in other instances they believe that victims should attend batterers groups because they were the ones who provoked the abuse. Batterers also use coercion and threats by threatening to leave, reporting the victims to welfare or trying to get the victims to drop charges against them. The Equality wheel changes batterers' perception to see the victim on an equal level and that they should be treated fairly and with respect.

Batterers also tend to have rigid gender roles (Domestic Violence Shelter and Services, Inc., 2002). They have fixed ideas about what roles of men and women should have. Men who batter tend to expect women to stay home and serve them and to obey them in everything, even in illegal dealings. They often believe that women are inferior to men and that they should only be assigned to menial tasks and that women are not whole persons without being involved in a relationship (Domestic Violence Shelter and Services, Inc., 2002). Batterers often hold on to the traditional roles that women should not express their opinions and may be uncomfortable with women's rights and the idea that women are free to express themselves in modern society. Many of these men have

little respect for women and see them as objects (Edin, Lalos, Hogberg & Dahlgren, 2008). Their controlling behavior relates to and affects their willingness to conform to court mandates, often causing them to be resistant to the treatment process.

Low impulse control and explosive temper are also characteristics experienced by some batterers and may be indicative of their tendencies toward non-completion of treatment programs. Most batterers have difficulty expressing their emotions and tend to be non-demonstrative for extensive periods of time. When they can no longer hold it in they explode and become aggressive toward their victims with little to no regard for their feelings. Some batterers experience little empathy, may experience difficulty regulating feelings and may be unable to recognize the emotional state and mood of others (Gottman, 1997). Batterers are aware that treatment requires opening up and expressing emotions and may cope with this discomfort by avoiding and refusing to attend treatment.

Substance abuse is a problem experienced by a large number of batterers. One-fourth to one-half of batterers abuse substances (Gondolf, 1995). A strong correlation exists between domestic violence and substance abuse. According to Brookoff, O'Brien, Cook, Thompson and Williams (1997), 86% of men who batter used alcohol and 14% used cocaine on the day of their domestic violence episode.

Alcohol does not cause violence in individuals but is one of many factors that influences aggressive behavior (Collins & Messerschmidt, 1993). The use of these chemicals is an open door for violence to enter and escalate. While under the influence, individuals lose control and do things that they would not do while sober (Hirschel, Hutchinson & Shaw, 2010).

Batterers' sobriety while in treatment is extremely important. Unfortunately batterers often compound the explosive anger they already have with the use of alcohol and/or drugs. Alcohol and/or drugs further inhibit batterers from problem solving and thinking clearly before reacting. These substances may impair the batterers' ability to make choices against being violent (Bennett, 1995). In order for batterers to learn ways to control their anger, they need to remain sober. Substance abuse by batterers can negatively interfere with the intervention program (Bennett, 1995).

Batterers' treatment may be impacted when batterers are still using or withdrawing from the use of drugs and/or alcohol. The use of these substances may impede batterers from learning the tools being taught in the intervention program. In order for batterers with substance abuse problems to benefit from batterers' treatment, batterers should be referred to substance abuse treatment and batterers' treatment concurrently (Fals-Stewart, 2005).

Edin, Lalos, Hogberg and Dahlgren (2008) included other characteristics such as jealousy toward victims' friends and family. Batterers are thought to keep victims isolated and prefer to only have a small circle of friends. Low-self confidence is another trait that most batterers experience. They feel insecure and unloved to the point of being dependent on the victim. Their lack of confidence impacts their sense of inferiority, feelings of worthlessness and feelings of inadequacy. Their inadequacy may impact their treatment process in that they may be uncomfortable being in a group in which they have to expose their feelings of insecurity.

A typical batterer's profile also includes young age, unemployment, low income, low academic achievement, living in poverty, living in overcrowded conditions, marital

conflicts and having weak sanctions from the justice system, which may exist as a result of individual, familial, environmental and cultural factors (CDC, 2004; White, Gondolf, Robertson, Goodwin & Caraveo, 2002).

The exposure to these factors can lead to learned behavior in children and then be carried out as adults. Boys who witnessed abuse and were abused themselves are the most likely to be abusers when they grow up (Brookoff, O'Brien, Cook, Thompson & Williams, 1997; Tilley, Rugari & Walker, 2008). According to Okum (1986), men who witnessed abuse and who were also abused tend to commit more violent acts against their partners. Witnessing abuse is also a characteristic that strongly predicted early drop out from treatment programs (Gerlock 2001). Men who witnessed abuse as a child tended to use violence to cope with their frustrations as adults and also tended to experience premature drop out from the group.

As mentioned earlier, batterers come from all backgrounds and walks of life. Specific characteristics/profiles such as controlling behavior, impulsiveness, minimizing, blaming and denying have been identified to properly differentiate batterers from non-batterers. These characteristics might also help practitioners recognize areas that non-completers have in common that may need to be addressed in treatment to help increase treatment completion rates.

### **Characteristics of Completers vs. Non-Completers**

Based on the review of literature, no studies have been conducted examining batterers' perspectives for why they do not complete treatment. There were several studies that focused on risk factors and demographic characteristics of completers and

non-completers. Studies identified non-completers as having characteristics such as being unmarried or married at an early age, young, unstable life style, unemployed, antisocial personality, less educated and witnessing abuse in childhood. For example, in a study conducted by Hanson and Wallace-Capretta (2004), where 320 male batterers participated in batterers' intervention, they found that most of the men were married after their teenage years, which, according to the authors, were at their peak years for criminal behavior. They also noted that the men who tended to recidivate were younger, in common law or dating relationships rather than being legally married, in an unstable lifestyle, had unstable employment, and were substance abusers with little commitment to social values.

Other studies (Chang & Saunders, 2002; Buttell & Carney, 2008) also considered age as a characteristic of non-completion, along with other factors. Chang and Saunders (2002) as well as Buttell and Carney (2008), found that age was a major predictor of batterers' involvement in treatment. They concluded that as men grew older they became more motivated to change and had a better understanding of the consequences of their behavior. Another factor was that men with less education dropped out of treatment more readily, possibly due to the educational level of the materials used in the group process.

A study conducted by Bowen and Gilchrist (2004), found that batterers who tend to drop out of treatment had similar characteristics as offenders who were found to have antisocial personality traits. These traits included extensive criminal histories and drug and alcohol problems. This type of personality had a tendency to refuse to conform to the demands of treatment (Davison & Neale, 1997; Huss & Ralston, 2008).



Batterers who were not monitored by the courts were found to be at risk for treatment non-completion. Gerlock (2001) found court ordered status to be a variable that differentiated completers from non-completers. In his study he found that those who were court ordered were also monitored by probation. His findings indicated that court ordered batterers did well because they had more to lose if they dropped out of treatment. Scott (2004) concurred with the need for batterers to be monitored. He stated that the referral source is also a good predictor of treatment completion. He found that batterers who were court referred and monitored by probation were more likely to complete treatment. He also noted that specific demographic indicators such as men, who were older, with no prior arrest history, were more likely to complete treatment.

The literature (Bowen & Gilchrist, 2004; Buttell & Carney, 2008; Chang & Saunders, 2002; Davison & Neale, 1997; Gerlock, 2001; Hanson & Wallace-Capretta, 2004; Huss & Ralston, 2008; Scott, 2004) clearly identified demographic characteristics of non-completers such as not being legally married or married at an early age, young, unstable life style, unemployed, antisocial personality, less educated and having witnessed abuse in childhood. What is missing from these studies is the answer to the question of why batterers drop out of treatment. For example, we know that younger batterers drop out of treatment and we have some theory to explain this, but we have not gone to the source. Knowing these demographic characteristics and risk factors can help identify at-risk batterers and aid in preventing early drop out of treatment, but the key to preventing treatment non-completion is asking the batterers themselves in order to get a clear understanding of their perceptions.

Out of all the studies mentioned on treatment completion, the one that came the closest to this study was the research conducted by McMurrin and McCulloch (2007). The authors studied prisoners who are batterers and their reasons for not completing a cognitive skills program. Eighteen offenders were interviewed. Based on the interviews, several reasons for non-completion were given by the participants. Some of the responses given included: personal problems, drug use, group dynamics, group member not taking the program seriously, did not like the course, difficulty with tutors, out of session written work too demanding and other commitments.

The researchers allowed batterers to share their reasons or perceptions of treatment Non-completion. This information is valuable because it allowed batterers to express the reasons why they drop out of the program. The information given by batterers can be viewed as excuses but nevertheless, should be taken seriously because it is coming directly from them. In the case of the current study, it is hoped that the information received will lead to the development of policies to improve batterers' intervention programs.

### **Batterers' Self Perception**

Batterers' perception of self and their abusive behavior plays a major role in completion and non-completion of a treatment program. According to Cadsky, Hanson, Crawford and Lalonde (1996), there is evidence that incongruity between individuals' perceptions and the goal of the program is associated with treatment dropout. They found that offenders who did not complete treatment did not accept having a problem with being abusive toward their spouse.

In a qualitative study conducted by Smith (2007), batterers reported they felt they were treated unfairly by the legal system and by their partners. The study described other self-perceived notions such as being given unfair punishment; they saw themselves as law-abiding citizens and they felt that it was unfair that they had to attend treatment; before attending treatment these men perceived themselves as being victims. The perception of batterers feeling victimized by their partners, was further substantiated by Buchbinder and Eisikovits (2008) in an analysis of batterers' experience in treatment. Smith's (2007) study also noted that batterers felt that their behavior toward victims was normal. They denied being abusive and justified it as an argument. Also that they saw themselves as having a patriarchal right to their behavior, felt a lack of appreciation by victims and that it was their right to demand obedience and respect from victims. The batterers also felt a sense of superiority toward victims and felt the right to speak about them in demeaning and devaluing ways.

Borochowitz (2008) uncovered similar perceptions experienced by men in a study conducted on 18 batterers from the northern region of Israel. Goldberg and Borochowitz (2009) also reported a related theme in a study conducted on 11 ultra-Orthodox Israeli Jewish battering men. Other self-perceived ideas of batterers regarding intimate partner violence were identified in a study conducted by Levitt, Swanger and Butler (2008). In this study, batterers stated that they believed they were not fully responsible for the abuse. They also felt that they could maintain their masculinity by asserting control over their partners.

Based on personal experience in working with batterers, most batterers' perception about being sent to batterer's intervention is that they were treated unfairly

because they were ordered into treatment, and not their mates. They tend to believe that they do not belong in batterers group because they do not have anger problems. These batterers view themselves as victimized and stigmatized. The literature (Borochowitz, 2008; Buchbinder & Eisikovits, 2008; Cadsky, Hanson, Crawford & Lalonde, 1996; Goldberg & Dalit, 2009; Levitt, Swanger & Butler, 2008; Smith, 2007) supports the belief that batterers have difficulty accepting responsibility for their actions; instead, they blame the victims. This denial might be confronted through an intervention group. According to Braithwaite (1989), shaming helps offenders take responsibility for their actions. The active communication of dissatisfaction from their fellow citizen can motivate batterers to make changes. This theory implied that batterers' beliefs and perceptions of their actions should be confronted.

### **Reasons for Treatment Non-Completion in Various Populations**

Treatment non-completion not only affects batterers' intervention treatments, it is an issue across participant groups in general. Consequently, researchers are trying to understand the reasons for treatment non-completion in general. In a study conducted by MacMurran and McCulloch (2007) on prisoners' non-completion of a 36-session cognitive skills program, the following reasons were expressed for withdrawing from group: personal problems, drug use, group dynamics, members not taking group seriously, dislike of the course, in and out of session, written work too demanding, failure to see program relevance, poor timing in relation to their current concerns, program too demanding and too patronizing.

Other studies reported that the level of engagement influences change and retention (Belding, Iguchi & Lamb, 1997; Chovanec, 2009). Engagement refers to the level of participants' participation. Joe, Simpson and Broome (1999) divided the concept of engagement in both objective and subjective processes. The objective aspect refers to participants' class attendance and compliance with treatment. The subjective focuses on the positive relationship between participant and counselor, as well as satisfaction with their involvement with treatment. Engagement in treatment is the midpoint goal before treatment can take place (Ward, Day, Howells & Birgden, 2004). McMurrin and McCulloch (2007) clarify that some participants may not engage well with the program because their focus may not be on treatment, but may be on other needs or problems such as drug or alcohol use that are dominating their attention. Sometimes individuals are not ready to be in treatment.

According to Ward, et al. (2004) treatment readiness is required for engagement in treatment. These authors explained that in order for individuals to be ready for treatment, they have to be motivated; meaning that they should have the desire and the will to change, can engage and can complete the program successfully. They emphasized that individuals who are ready for treatment tend to engage better which is evident in their attendance pattern, participation and treatment completion.

Further, motivation is a factor that influences the engagement process. According to Deci and Ryan, (2002), motivation is related to engagement as it refers to behavioral change. Ward, et al. (2004) explained that motivation involves the assessment of whether a person is ready for treatment to stop their aggressive behavior. They added that motivation is a predictor that individuals will engage and complete treatment. These

authors reported that a basic criterion for determining motivation is the ability of offenders to show regret for their behavior, demonstrate a desire to change and to be enthusiastic about treatment. Motivation is related to treatment response variables such as engagement, satisfaction and retention (Gossop, Stewart & Marsden, 2006).

Motivation can be both internal and external (Joe, Simpson & Broome, 1999). Internal motivation refers to persons' ability to find the desire within themselves to be interested in change. External motivation is caused by legal pressure or other outside coercion for persons to stay in treatment (Joe, Simpson & Broome, 1999). Some individuals are capable an ability to motivate themselves and others may be motivated by the legal system because of the high stakes involved.

The quest to identify reasons for treatment non-completion is crucial in order to reduce treatment drop out. Understanding these reasons is a complex task because it might involve multiple factors. Motivation and engagement appears to be a powerful key ingredient for participants' retention. These could very well be part of it but it is interesting to know what batterers perceive as the reasons for drop out.

### **Court Mandated Treatment**

Although as noted, some batterers are motivated to complete treatment by potential legal consequences. Many court ordered group participants would not seek treatment if they were not forced to do so (Boyle, Polinsky & Hser, 2000; Czuchry & Dansereau, 2000). According to Hepburn and Harvey (2007), legal coercion is used to motivate participants to stay in treatment, but statistics indicate that many court-ordered individuals are either not enrolling in treatment or are not completing treatment. Smith,

(2007) list some ways batterers feel about being forced into treatment. Specifically, the authors state that batterers feel that they are treated unfairly or that court mandated treatment is unfair punishment. It was also found that batterers: 1) feel that their abusive behavior is justified because they were provoked; 2) minimize the abuse and see it as normal; 3) feel their behavior was misunderstood or exaggerated; 4) do not see their behavior as criminal acts; 5) do not see themselves as criminals or violent individuals; 6) see themselves as victims; 7) see victims as aggressors; 8) feel embarrassed and humiliated that they have to attend court mandated treatment; and 9) feel that victims should also attend treatment. Due to the sense of unfairness, batterers come to group feeling angry and with little motivation to participate in treatment. Therapists believe that participants who are forced to receive treatment tend to have a lower level of interest in treatment (Wild, Cunningham & Ryan, 2006).

In spite of the way batterers feel about being forced into treatment, researchers affirm that court mandated treatment is still an effective strategy, as it provides motivation to participants who would not participate on their own (Lurigio, 2000). Also, some researchers believe that exposure to some treatment is better than none, even if it is forced (Miller & Flaherty, 2000). Garner & Maxwell (2000) agreed that court mandated treatment could be a motivating factor for some participants, but stated that it is clear that many such batterers do not enter treatment and do not complete it.

Not all studies (Buttell & Carney, 2002; Satel, 2000; Saunders & Parker, 1989; Knight, Hiller, Broome & Simpson, 2000) had consistent findings regarding outcomes as it pertains to completion of court ordered treatment. Rather these studies found that batterers who are forced into treatment stay in treatment more than those who attend

voluntarily. In a study on dropout, Saunders and Parker (1989) found that court mandated batterers completed treatment more so than voluntary batterers. They reported that 77% of court referred batterers completed treatment, whereas only 41% of volunteers completed. Conversely, in other studies, when comparing court-mandated treatment to voluntary treatment, researchers found that treatment completion is better or the same in voluntary treatment (Knight, Hiller, Broome & Simpson, 2000; Satel, 2000).

Court ordered treatment could be the key to reducing non-completion of batterers' treatment if the court monitors batterers closely and holds them accountable for non-attendance and non-completion. According to Buttell and Carney (2002), the problem with non-completion of court ordered programs is the fact that the justice system is inconsistent in holding batterers accountable for non-compliance. Some judges will ensure that non-completers deal with consequences for their lack of compliance, but other judges give multiple chances with no consequences.

Whether or not batterers are legally coerced to attend batterers' intervention programs, non-completion continues to persist. Based on the literature, some batterers are more motivated and are responsive to legal coercion, but not all. Although batterers feel it is unfair that they are forced to be in treatment, the need for stronger and consistent legal sanctions might increase the rate of treatment completion.

### **Current Research**

Studies exploring the issue of batterers' intervention drop out have been conducted to identify and understand the necessary steps to retain batterers in treatment. Presented below are some recent studies on the subject of program non-completion and



attempts to find variables that can predict drop-out (Bennett, Stoops, Call & Flett 2007; Bowen & Gilchrist, 2006; Buttell & Carney, 2002; Buttell & Carney, 2008; Carney, Buttell & Muldoon, 2006; Catlett, Toews & Walilko, 2010; Gondolf, 2008; McMurrin & McCulloch, 2007; Olver, Stockdale & Wormith, 2011; Rothman, Gupta, Pavlos, Dang, & Coutinho, 2007).

Buttell and Carney (2002) conducted a study in which 137 court-mandated batterers were ordered to complete treatment. Differences in psychological and demographic variables were investigated between treatment completers and non-completers, in order to predict dropout. In this study, very few psychological and demographic differences were found between completers and non-completers. They examined variables such as age, assertiveness, and whether referral took place after arrest. Interestingly, they discovered an unexamined variable which was much more significant in predicting dropout. This variable was judicial support.

The findings in this study are consistent with other studies (Gerlock, 2001; Scott, 2004) in which the judicial system plays an important role in holding batterers accountable if they do not complete their program. When the judicial system is consistent and applies strong consequences, there is a greater possibility that batterers will comply with treatment.

Another study done by Carney, Buttell and Muldoon (2006) replicated the above study by employing a secondary analysis of 114 men: 56 treatment completers and 58 dropouts. Similar to the above study, demographic and psychological differences between completers and non-completers were identified in order to predict dropout. These characteristics included dating rather than being married, likely to have used one sexually

coercive act 12 months before starting the program and the use of a minor coercive act 12 months before starting the program. This study indicated that batterers using the most violent acts tend to drop out of treatment.

Bowen and Gilchrist (2006) selected 120 batterers from a British domestic violence offenders group to complete psychometric and attitudinal measures to assess attitudes toward domestic violence. In this study, 81 completed and 39 failed to complete. Completers were compared to non-completers, and findings showed that non-completers were much younger than those who completed treatment, most likely to be unmarried, and demonstrated high levels of lifestyle instability. No differences were noted in their self-reported levels of domestic violence and patriarchal attitudes when completers and non-completers were compared.

Again, the above research is consistent with the literature that suggests that younger batterers tend to dropout of treatment (Bowen & Gilchrist, 2006; Buttell & Carney, 2002; Chang & Saunders, 2002; Gerlock, 2001; Scott, 2004). As mentioned earlier, the literature confirms that younger individuals have the tendency to be involved in criminal behavior. In addition, some lack a sense of responsibility (Gove, 1985).

A study conducted by Bennett, Stoops, Call and Flett (2007) examined the effects of batterers' treatment for 899 men who were court referred for domestic violence treatment and were later re-arrested after they completed the program. After 2.4 years the researchers reviewed arrest records and found that 14% of completers and 34.6 % non-completers were re-arrested. This study pointed to a relationship between program completion and re-arrest rate, in that batterers who complete treatment have a lower rate

of re-arrest. This is consistent with the literature on the effects of program completion. Obviously, batterers who stay in treatment have a higher possibility of not re-offending.

Two studies that examined cultural specific groups included one done by Rothman, Gupta, Pavlos, Dang and Coutinho (2007) on Spanish-speaking immigrants enrolled in a domestic violence group in the state of Massachusetts from 2002-2004 and another done by Gondolf (2008) on African-American men in a specialized batterers' counseling group. Both of these studies found that there were no effects on program completion with the specialized cultural groups. The authors did not find sufficient support for their hypothesis that language and culture specific groups only will increase treatment retention.

Another research project completed by Buttell and Carney (2008) investigated demographics and psychological differences between completers and non-completers and applied a 16-week predictive model to a 26-week domestic violence group. The authors utilized a secondary analysis of 1,702 court-referred batterers. Of these, 850 were completers and 852 dropouts. In this study it was found that some characteristics differentiate completers from non-completers. Specifically, it was found that completers were older, had higher income, longer relationships with victims, greater propensity for abuse, and were referred to treatment after arrest. In terms of the predictive model that was applied to a longer program, the authors found that some of the same variables used in the 16-week program were useful in predicting retention in the 26-week program.

The above study shows some consistency with other studies in regards to completers being older, having higher income and being in longer relationships with the victim. Most of the studies reviewed indicated that completers had lower risk of

recidivism (Coulter & VandeWeerd, 2009; Dynia & Sung, 2000; Lin, Su, Chou, Chen, Huang, Wu, Chen, Chao & Chen, 2009; Young & Belenko, 2002). However, an inconsistency was identified with completers having a greater propensity for abuse. The literature supports the notion that batterers who drop out of treatment are also at risk for continuing to abuse.

A study conducted by Catlett, Toews and Walilko (2010) investigated the meaning men gave to their violent behavior and whether these meanings predicted drop out of batterers' intervention program. This study consisted of 154 participants who were court ordered to complete batterers' treatment. Data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Findings showed that these men denied and minimized their violence against the victims and they rationalized and justified their violence. Qualitative findings demonstrated that those who denied and minimized the violent act were more likely to drop out of treatment because they did not think they did anything that warranted involvement in a batterer's treatment group. Logistic regression analysis indicated that men who had lower income, no longer involved with victim, reported more hostility and less physical aggression were more likely to drop out of batterers' intervention programs.

A comprehensive review of literature of treatment studies was conducted by Olver, Stockdale and Wormith (2011) to identify possible predictors of treatment drop out and its relationship to recidivism. This analysis examined 114 studies representing 41,438 treatment participants. These treatment participants were part of either a sex offenders' program or a domestic violence program. Both programs were examined separately and they found specific characteristics across the board that significantly

predicted attrition. These demographic characteristics included: minority, single, young, unemployed, low income and low educational level.

The above studies (Bennett, Stoops, Call & Flett 2007; Bowen & Gilchrist, 2006; Buttell & Carney, 2002; Buttell & Carney, 2008; Carney, Buttell & Muldoon, 2006; Catlett, Toews & Walilko, 2010; Gondolf, 2008; McMurrin & McCulloch, 2007; Olver, Stockdale & Wormith, 2011; Rothman, Gupta, Pavlos, Dang, & Coutinho, 2007) all show similar efforts to understand batterers' reasons for treatment non-completion.

Understanding batterers' perceptions of why they drop out of treatment can help identify possible dropouts early on and improve treatment retention. As mentioned before, treatment retention can reduce domestic violence.

In summary, the above in-depth overview of the literature was presented to examine topics related to treatment dropout such as characteristics of completers vs. non-completers, batterers' profiles, batterers' self-perception, court mandated treatment, and other populations dealing with the issue of dropout. Also, three conceptual frameworks were used to view the issue of batterers' non-completion. Goves' Physical Prime theory, which asserts that the decline of deviant behavior begins after maturation and Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory, that refers to the belief in one's effectiveness in performing specific tasks and Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming theory, that says a strong bond with society encourages offenders to attend to moral standards and compliance in order to reintegrate back into society. Much is known regarding batterers' treatment outcome but little is known about treatment dropout from the perspective of batterers.

The purpose of this study was to examine, batterers' perspectives of reasons why they drop out of batterers' intervention programs. As mentioned before a grounded theory approach was used because it is the most appropriate method to uncover batterers' perceptions of why they fail to complete treatment through open exploration. This exploration was carried out in a naturalistic setting. This approach provided an objective reality and helped develop theories about the issue of dropout.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to explore batterers' perceptions of why they fail to complete intervention programs. A better understanding of this phenomenon will allow batterers' program administrators, probation officers and the courts to design improved batterers' intervention programs. This project used a grounded theory approach with a post-positivist worldview. Grounded theory entails systematic gathering and analysis of qualitative data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Post-positivism is a worldview that requires the collection of qualitative data through interviews, observations and document reviews. This school of thought suggests that individuals should be studied within their naturalistic setting (Morris, 2006). This chapter describes the research methodology and addresses: a) description of the sample selection, b) study site, c) the data gathering process, d) data recording, e) data analysis, and f) communication of findings and termination of study. The chapter ends with a brief concluding summary and was constructed following the guidelines offered by Morris (2006).

#### **Sample Selection**

Purposive sampling methods were used to select this study's sample. Purposive sampling is a method in which the researcher looks for study participants who fit into a specific category that will give the most complete data about the subject being studied (Morris, 2006). Since the purpose of this study is to examine what batterers say about why they dropped out of treatment, purposive sampling was the most appropriate sampling method, because it required that one characteristic, such as those who have

dropped out and have been reinstated in batterers' intervention programs, determined inclusion in the sample. There are fifteen possible approaches to purposive sampling. These are extreme or deviant case sampling, intensity sampling, maximum variation sampling, typical case sampling, stratified purposeful sampling, critical case sampling, snowball or chain sampling, criterion sampling, theory-based or operational construct sampling, confirming and disconfirming cases, opportunistic sampling, purposeful random sampling, sampling politically important cases, convenience sampling and homogeneous sampling. Homogeneous sampling was used in this study.

According to Morris (2006), "homogeneous sampling strategy identifies a subgroup for in-depth study" (p. 92). Homogeneous sampling was appropriate for this study because of the study's focus was only on those who had dropped out and had been reinstated in batterers' intervention programs. The size of the sample was determined by the progress of data gathering, but was not going to be less than 20. During the data collection phase of the study, questions were asked of each study participant (see Appendix A). At the end of each interview, the data was analyzed. This analysis gave direction to the next interview and so on. Once the interviews no longer provided new information, but provided redundant information then data gathering was ended. This process led to a sample of 22 participants.

Participants were not former or current participants of this investigator. One type of individual was invited to participate in this study. These individuals were those who had dropped out of treatment, for reasons of their own, not related to their association with the agency, and had been reinstated in batterers' intervention programs. Participants were not difficult to reach since they were back in treatment. Also, they were thought to



be more receptive to participating in the study because of their increased level of motivation. Announcements (See Appendix B) regarding the study were posted in the agency's lobby and group rooms, inviting those participants who had been re-instated to participate. Also, group facilitators were asked to make a verbal announcement in-group (See Appendix C). The announcement listed a phone number where the researcher could be contacted. When contact was made participants were given a choice as to where to meet for the interview. They chose to meet at any of four study sites located in Riverside, Moreno Valley, Corona or Beaumont. Participants who were interested in participating initiated contact by telephone and engagement with them began at this point. Their questions were answered regarding the study and if interested in participating an appointment was scheduled. A thank you gift certificate of \$15.00 was given to participants at the end of the interviews.

### **Study Site**

Psychological Health Services (PHS), a private organization certified to provide batterers' intervention treatment, located in Riverside County, was the study site. The staffing includes the administrator, the clinical director, 2-3 office staff and 10 group facilitators. This agency has offices in Beaumont, Corona, Moreno Valley and Riverside. PHS runs court ordered groups that includes batterers' intervention, parenting classes, and drug classes (PC 1000). PHS serves 267 participants and offers 26 groups, of which 16 are batterers groups. Each batterers group has approximately 10-15 participants. These participants are court ordered batterers who are referred to complete 52 weeks of batterers' intervention.

This researcher ran batterers' treatment at this agency for six years and is familiar with the administrator, clinical director and facilitators. Discussions with the administrator had taken place around the issue of treatment dropout. These discussions focused on improving the curriculum to reduce attrition. As a result of this engagement, the administrator was willing to support the study, for example, by allowing interviews to take place on site.

### **Data Gathering**

The data gathering discussion is divided into three sections. The first section includes preparing self and interviewees for the interview; the second section addresses interviews, dates, length and types of questions, and the third section explains phases of interviews which include: engagement, development of focus and maintaining focus, and termination of the interview.

### **Preparing Self and Interviewees for the Interview**

Both the interviewees and interviewer needed preparation for the interview. Those who agreed to participate were scheduled at a convenient date and time of their choice. Interviewees were told that the goal of the research was to understand their perceptions of why they dropped out of treatment and the purpose of the study to improve treatment programs. Before the interviews, telephone calls were made to remind participants of the upcoming interviews and to confirm participation (See Appendix D). This continuous communication with participants strengthened and maintained a relationship with the

interviewer in order for them to feel more at ease with the study and to ensure more valid, reliable, and comprehensive data collection during the interview process.

For the interviewer, it was necessary to do some inner reflection and to acknowledge biases that should not interfere with the data gathering. An effort was made to try to minimize their impact while uncovering an objective reality in spite of these values and biases. This was done by understanding that there are barriers that batterers often face. Some batterers experience loss of employment after incarceration and may not be able to afford the fees for their programs. Others may still be employed, but because they have now incurred multiple expenses due to their crime, find it difficult to meet all their expenses, leaving their program at the bottom of their economic priority list. If employed, sometimes work schedules can get in the way of attending programs. In some cases batterers may not feel they are benefiting from the intervention group because of cultural barriers. They may not feel that the curriculum is relevant to their cultural background. Also, batterers who have not attained a certain educational level may not be able to grasp some of the information presented in the group. Some batterers may not feel that they have a problem and that there is, therefore, no value in completing treatment. Most batterers are aware that the consequences of not attending is jail time, but many delay treatment and probably believe that they will eventually “get to it,” or that if they are not caught, the conviction will eventually be erased from their criminal records.

As mentioned above, both the interviewees and interviewer needed to be prepared for the interview. Once the interviewees agreed to be interviewed, the date and time was scheduled. The interviewer worked on becoming aware of biases and making sure these

biases did not get in the way during the interview. At the end of this preparation process both the interviewer and the interviewee were ready to begin the interview.

### **Interviews, Dates, and Types of Questions**

An Informed Consent form was given to participants to review and sign before they began the interview (See Appendix E). The consent form was explained and they were assured that their anonymity would be protected and their responses would be confidential. Participants were interviewed individually and measures were taken to prevent them from running in to each other. To ensure this, their interviews were spaced between each other, using specific codes on notes to identify participants rather than using their names, and not disclosing the names or identifying information on the final written documents. The participants were also made aware that there would be no harm done to them by responding to the questions, during the interviews, or by them asking questions of the interviewer.

After the consent for treatment was reviewed and signed, participants were given a brief demographics questionnaire (see Appendix F). This questionnaire was made up of questions regarding age, race, religious background, educational attainment, marital status and employment status. The aim was to interview participants with a wide range of demographic characteristics.

Interviews took place between February 2010 and August 2010. The interviews were approximately 45 minutes long. Questions asked in the interviews are listed in Appendix F. Participants were asked to share why they dropped out of treatment what motivated them to come back. This information was thought to be helpful in shedding

light as to why some batterers drop out of treatment and why some do not. The purpose of these interviews was to elicit batterers' stories about why they dropped out of treatment and how it affected them.

### **Structure of Interview**

Interviews were structured into four phases. They began with the engagement phase, then development of focus, next maintaining focus and last termination phase. This structure helped the interview to effectively gather data.

### ***Engagement***

The engagement process began from the moment the initial contact was made with participants. Participants were given the reason for the study and invited to participate. Part of the engagement process involved presenting and explaining the consent form and helping participants to feel comfortable and assured that their privacy would be protected. The engagement also helped facilitate the beginning of the interview and set the stage for a relaxed environment.

Like any conversation between two people, at the beginning of the interview, the interviewee needed time to warm up to the interviewer in order to have a sense of familiarity and comfort. Morris (2006) outlined four types of questions that were asked for different purposes. Some of these questions were asked at the beginning for the purpose of forming a relationship with the participants. Examples of these questions are "Where were you born?" "Where did you grow up?" "What type of work do you do?" The purpose for these questions was to establish rapport.

Engagement continued throughout the interview. It was important for participants to remain engaged and interested in the study. The researcher continued to be respectful and sensitive to interviewees, making sure that questions were clear to them. Also, the researcher showed interest in what participants had to say by having eye contact, demonstrating a pleasant attitude, and using appropriate non-verbal communication while being careful not to coax participants into responding in a certain way.

### *Development of Focus*

Once engagement was achieved the interview moved to the “Development of Focus” phase. Questions asked in this phase were essential questions. Examples of essential questions are “Did the program meet your needs?” “What things did you like about the program?” “What did you not like about the program?” The purpose of these questions was to address the specific topic that was being researched. Additional questions were asked to verify that the responses given were consistent. These questions are called extra questions. Examples of extra questions are “Has the program benefited you?” “On a continuum of 1-to-10, how organized would you say that the program was?” “Which parts were organized and which parts were not?” Probing questions were used to guide participants to elaborate. Some examples of probing questions or encouragers were, “Tell me about that,” “Uh-huh,” or “I see.” During this phase, participants gained a better understanding of what was expected of them. Through prompting by the researcher, participants learned to elaborate on their responses in order to generate quality data.

The researcher continued to build a good relationship with participants and continued to show appreciation to participants for their involvement in the study by

verbally expressing gratitude. The time that they were taking out of their daily activities to participate in this research was acknowledged. The researcher also reminded participants that their involvement was contributing to improvement of batterers programs, not only for them, but also for other batterers.

### *Maintaining Focus*

Once the focus of the interview was developed, the maintaining focus phase was implemented by asking different categories of questions. There were three categories of questions: descriptive questions, structured questions, and contrast questions. The following are descriptions and examples of each category.

Descriptive questions refer to questions that are all encompassing or overarching questions, such as “What was your experience like when you attended batterers’ intervention classes?” “During batterers’ intervention class were you able to concentrate or did you experience difficulty concentrating?” “It may be difficult at times to maintain interest in a program for an extended period of time. How did the program keep your interest?” “Most court ordered programs have strict rules. What was your experience with the rules?” “Groups can be somewhat intimidating. How comfortable were you in groups?” These questions were asked to allow participants to describe their experience while in the program.

Structured questions are questions that expand the understanding of a specific topic, for example, “Since you were court ordered to attend group, do you see yourself as having a reason to change?” “Has the program benefited you?” “Since you were court ordered, do you see yourself as being forced into the program?” “When I think of the

problems the incident of domestic violence have caused I feel..." "Since you dropped out of the program, do you see yourself differently from when you were in the program?"

The purpose of these structured questions was to allow the participants the opportunity to explain and expand on their feelings regarding their need to change.

Contrast questions "develop criteria for inclusion and exclusion for a category of knowledge" (Morris, 2006, p. 96). For example, "Was there anything about the program that made you feel that you belonged?" "Was there anything about the group that made you feel that you could not complete the program?" "Was there anything about the program that made you feel you got your money's worth?" "While you were in the program did you lose money or miss out on some other activity?" "Was there anything about the group that made you feel that it was worth your time?" The reason for these questions was for participants to share their perceptions of the program for the purpose of program improvement. The questions in all three categories were constructed to allow the opportunity for new areas to develop during the interview and to identify patterns and regularities.

Another aspect of the development of maintaining focus was to help participants keep on track during the interview rather than allowing the interview to get off the subject. If the participant's response got off into irrelevant issues, this researcher gently brought the focus back to the questions. The goal was to maintain focus on the subject being studied.



### ***Termination***

Finally, the interview moved into the termination phase. In this phase, the intensity of the questions was gradually reduced. Throwaway questions were used because they were non-threatening and more appropriate to ease out of the interview. A summary of what was discussed was presented. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions, to give feedback and to address any concerns they might have had. At this time any clarification on how data would be used was made.

### **Data Recording**

In this study two journals were kept. One journal contained data gathered and the other contained reflections on that data collection and the study process. The first journal was used to record the narrative part of the interviews and any observations made during the interviews. The second journal contained elements such as the reasons for the study, the research plan, sampling, data collection, decisions regarding analysis, and articulation of the approach used. In other words this journal was used for data analysis and reflection.

Data was gathered during the interviews using audio recording and transcription. Audio recording provides the most accurate account of data gathered. Also, there is no risk of omitting valuable data. This form of recording guarantees the use of consistent language. Participants were assured that their names would not be placed on the tapes and that they would be destroyed after they were transcribed.

## **Data Analysis**

Data was systematically analyzed going back and forth between the stages of synthesis as the theory developed. The first stage discussed is the open coding which is a narrative of the interviews broken down into themes or categories, The next is axial coding, when the relationships between open codes are tested in further rounds of data gathering and selective coding, when relationships between categories and themes are identified to form theoretical statements (Morris, 2006).

### ***Open Coding***

The first stage of analysis is open coding in which narratives from the interviews were broken down into categories. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), open coding is the analytic process in which the data are identified and concepts, properties and dimensions are discovered. This process was used to guide and improve the next set of questions. The narrative of each interview was analyzed in detail. Each portion was labeled with a notation referencing its location in the original text. The actual words of the participants were used to label these sections of the material. The sections were highlighted, marked or placed within brackets. For example, a statement made by a participant may proceed:

I don't have a reason to change. I don't feel that I have a problem with anger. She is the one with the problem. Usually when we get into a fight she is the one who raises her voice and begins throwing things.

This statement might be divided up in chunks as follows:

- I don't have a reason to change

- I don't feel I have a problem with anger
- She is the one with the problem
- When we get into a fight she raises her voice
- Begins throwing things

Analytical tools were used to develop concepts, their dimensions, and their links with other concepts. These tools include asking sensitizing, theoretical, practical and guiding questions about the statement and making theoretical comparisons. Some questions that might be included would be; Who? Why? When? Where? What? How? How much? With what results? (Morris, 2006)

This proceeded as follows:

- How do they understand the concept of change?
- Where on the range of feelings does anger come in?
- How do they define responsibility?
- What range of anger have they experienced?
- How do they view anger directed at them?

The answers to these questions identified concepts, theories and directions for further data gathering. Questions were asked to make theoretical comparisons, for example:

- What happens to batterers who are referred to treatment who feel they do not have a reason to change?
- How do these statements compare to others who are not batterers?
- How do women batterers react to being referred to batterers' treatment?
- Is this an appropriate response of batterers?

- Is there a situation where batterers would be better off not being in treatment?

The open codes developed at the end of each interview influenced the next interview. These codes led to additional questions or a change in emphasis in the next interview.

### *Axial Coding*

The next analysis stage is axial coding. In this stage the focus was on the relationships between open codes categories and the testing of those relationships. This process links emergent categories and statements made about the relationships between categories and their dimensions (Morris, 2006). The axial coding connects units to build theory. This process helped to answer questions like, why batterers dropped out and what made them come back.

For example, after the open coding, concepts emerged such as loss of autonomy, faultless, not responsible, and blaming. These four concepts were grouped in a category of loss of power. This process might be repeated with other data in order for a number of categories to be identified that are included in the developing theory of non-compliant batterers.

Examples of axial coding might include categories such as powerless and the desire to regain autonomy. Regaining autonomy, which is an optimistic view for batterers, could be linked to the dimension of powerlessness. Then a quadrant of possible experience is identified for non-compliant batterers.

- Powerlessness/Hopeless (Batterers feel power has been stripped from them, do not want to be forced therefore, do not attend treatment)
- Powerlessness/Optimistic (Batterers feel they have no power, but can regain power by choosing not to attend treatment)
- Autonomy/Hopelessness (Although batterers can think for themselves, they do not see themselves as having any autonomy)
- Autonomy/Optimistic (Batterers have the hope to regain autonomy by thinking that it will all go away if they ignore it)

These dimensions can lead to a collection of more focused data on the characteristics of non-compliant batterers falling into the four quadrants and why and how they fall into those particular quadrants.

### *Selective Coding*

The third stage of analysis is selective coding. In this stage an actual theoretical statement was formed. The data from cases are reduced into concepts and statements that are related (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The relationships between categories and themes was identified and included in a broad statement that described the process by asking specific questions.

The main step in selective coding is to identify the core category, which is the unifying theme that emerges from the data and the open and axial coding process (Morris, 2006). Refining the theory that has emerged was done using the following strategies:

- Identification of the properties of the core categories and filling in any missing dimensions. In this case, more dimensions may need to be added to powerlessness in order to fully describe the quadrant identified.
- Completion of poorly developed categories and eliminating irrelevant categories. For example, if batterers who dropped out and did not return for treatment refuse to talk about their feelings of powerlessness, then this would be a poorly developed category.
- Comparison of the emerging theory with cases in the raw data.
- Provision of an explanation for cases that do not fit the data. In this case, an explanation would be needed for batterers who were optimistic, who had not returned to treatment and those who were hopeless after being re-instated.
- Inclusion of variations. In this study, if there were additional resources other variations could be studied to provide a broader dimension on batterers' treatment dropout. An example would be batterers who have dropped out multiple times and batterers who have dropped out once and completed.

When building theory, it is not only important to develop concepts, categories and linking statements, there has to be a description of the process it takes to develop these statements (Morris, 2006). Examples of the questions that can guide this process would be:

- What is going on here?
- What problems, issues, or happenings are being handled through action/interaction?
- What conditions exist to create the context in which the action/interaction exist?

- Why is the action/interaction remaining the same?
- Why is it changing and how?
- Are actions/interactions aligned or misaligned?
- What conditions and events connect one sequence of events with another?
- What happens to the form, flow, continuity, and rhythm of action/interaction when conditions, or the unusual patterns change?
- How is action/interaction taken in response to problems or contingencies similar to, or different from, action/interaction that is routine?
- How do the consequences of one set of actions/interactions play into the next sequence of action/interactions to either alter the actions/interactions or allow them to stay the same?

This section discussed open coding, axial coding and selective coding which are syntheses used to interpret data in qualitative research. This data analysis process guided each interview. As theory developed, the data was systematically analyzed going back and forth between the stages of synthesis.

### **Communication of Findings and Termination of Study**

The study findings will be disseminated to the judicial system, probation department and batterers' programs to create policies to improve batterers' treatment. Also, this information will be presented in conferences, journals, posters, presentations and papers. Research findings will also be shared with colleagues in research settings and the study site.

When the data was analyzed and the report written, the disengagement process and the re-examination of the situation began. All agency staff involved with this study were invited to a small reception/staff meeting to terminate this process and to thank them for their involvement, as well as to acknowledge their contribution to the success of the study.

Termination is the process of ending the relationship between the researcher and participants. From the very beginning of the study, time-lines were presented to all those involved to properly prepare them for termination and disengagement. As time got closer to the end the researcher talked to the participants regarding termination of study.

Study site staff was also prepared to terminate the study process. The administrator, clinical director, and group facilitators received information regarding timelines of the study. As time progressed they were informed of the final interview date. They were also given a date in which the outcome of the study will be shared with them.

In summary, this chapter provided a description of the methodology of the study. Grounded theory approach with a post positivist worldview was employed to understand why batterers' drop out of treatment programs. This chapter included a description on the following sections: a) description of the sample selection, b) study site c) data gathering process, d) data recording, e) data analysis, and f) communication of findings and termination of study. It focused on selection of the participants through the use of homogeneous sampling. A portion of this section included data gathering and data recording with the use of audio recording. It also identified and described the four stages of synthesis used to properly code the data and to develop theory.



This chapter dealt with reporting findings to the judicial system, to the probation department and to the batterers' intervention programs. These findings will also be reported through papers, journals, and presentations and through the dissertation project. Disengagement, which is a crucial part in the ending process of this project, was looked at and ways in which it was done and how those involved in the study were acknowledged and provided a smooth disengagement process.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Demographics**

Study demographics show a range of participants from 23-57 years of age. In terms of race, 45% (10) of subjects were Black/African American followed by 45% (10) Hispanic/Latino and 9.1% (2) Non-Hispanic White. Marital status included 31.8% (7) Single never been married, followed by 27.3% (6) Married, 22.7% (5) Divorced, 9.1% (2) Member of an unmarried couple and 9.1% (2) Separated. Their employment status included 27.3% (6) Employed followed by 27.3% (6) Out of work for more than a year, 22.7% (5) Self-Employed, 9.1% (2) Out of work for less than a year, 9.1% (2) Retired and 4.6% (1) Student. In regards to religious affiliations, 45.9% (7) were Other, followed by 27.3% (6) Protestant Christians, 22.7% (5) Roman Catholics, 13.6% (3) Evangelical Christians, and 4.6% (1) Muslim. Education completed included 40.9% (9) Grade 9-11 followed by 22.7% (5) Grade 12 or GED, 22.7% (5) College 1-3 years, 9.1% (2) College 4 years (College Graduate) and 4.6% (1) Grade 1-8 (Elementary).

Table 1

*Demographics (22 participants)*

Age Range	Frequency	Percent
20-24	2	9.1%
25-29	9	41%
30-34	5	22 %
35-39	2	9.1%
40-44	1	4.5%
45-49	1	4.5%
57	2	9.1%
Ages: 23, 24, 26, 27(4), 28(2), 29(2), 30, 33(3), 34, 37, 38, 42, 45, 57(2)		
Race		
Black/African American	10	45.45%
Hispanic/Latino	10	45.45%
Non-Hispanic White	2	9.1%
Marital Status		
Married	6	27.3%
Divorced	5	22.7%
Single never been married	7	31.8%
A member of an unmarried Couple	2	9.1%
Separated	2	9.1%
Employment Status		
Employed	6	27.3%
Self-Employed	5	22.7%
Out of work for less than a Year	2	9.1%
Out of work for more than a Year	6	27.3%
Student	1	4.6%
Retired	2	9.1%

Age Range	Frequency	Percent
<b>Religious Affiliations</b>		
Roman Catholic	5	22.7%
Protestant Christian	6	27.3%
Muslim	1	4.6%
Evangelical Christian	3	13.6%
Other	7	45.9%
<b>Education Completed</b>		
Grade 1-8 (Elementary)	1	4.6%
Grade 9-11	9	40.9%
Grade 12 or GED	5	22.7%
College 1-3 years	5	22.7%
College 4 years (College Graduate)	2	9.1%

### **Analysis**

This section describes data analysis utilizing the Grounded Theory Approach. The first step was to categorize the data using open coding. Each open code emerged from transcripts of interviews and was defined and described. The codes were then further condensed and defined. The next step was axial coding in which relationships between codes were established. The final step was selective coding, during which the explanation of the connected relationships between codes and categories that emerged from axial coding was developed, which provided implications for a theory of batterer's treatment dropout.

## **Open Coding**

The transcribed data was imported into the qualitative software program, ALTASti. Also, the transcripts were read multiple times in order to develop an understanding of the meanings being revealed by the narratives of the interviews. There were a total of 53 open codes that were defined and linked to appropriate qualitative data (see Appendix g). After careful review, these open codes were grouped into 19 categories (see Table 2). These categories were: Behaviors that lead to drop out, belonging, challenges with reinstating, compelled, couples' conflicts, dealing with rules, drive to improve, developmentally appropriate, gender relevant, indignant, negative perceptions about group, negative emotions, non-acceptance of responsibility, not invested in group, owning behavior, past experiences, readiness to reinstate, remorseful, and using tools.

Table 2

*Open Codes Categories*

Open Codes Categories	Definitions
Behaviors that lead to drop out	Attendance issues
Belonging	Accepted, group cohesion, expressing emotions, encouragement, not missing much while in group, support, adjustment to group, comfort level
Challenges with Reinstating	Barriers to reinstatement such as not being seen in court a timely manner
Compelled	Feeling pressured, felt forced into program, discouragement, financial stress
Couples' Conflicts	Relationship conflict vs. abuse, couple's interaction, poor communication
Dealing with Rules	Adjustment to rules, difficulties with rules, rules, understanding rules
Drive to Improve	Desire to change, change, hopeful
Developmentally Appropriate	Age appropriate, maturity
Gender Relevant	Gender significant
Indignant	Unfairness, police bias, lack of trust
Negative Perceptions About Group	Preconceptions about group
Negative Emotions	Loss of control, source of anger, resentment
Non-Acceptance of Responsibility	Denial, denying abuse, lack responsibility, blaming
Not Invested in group	Group not being a priority, unengaged, lack of interest
Owning Behavior	Self-reflection understanding the effects of abuse, accepting responsibility
Past Experiences	Prior group experience
Readiness to Reinstatement	Reason for returning
Remorseful	Shame, feeling regretful
Using Tools	Resolving conflicts, applying tools, learning, program benefit and being in control of self

### *Definitions and Descriptions of the Open Codes Categories*

Behaviors that lead to drop out (attendance issues) refer to behaviors by batterers that put them at risk for drop out. Participants talked about behaviors and circumstances that eventually caused them to drop out of group. These reasons included financial strains, inconsistent attendance, returning to jail due to warrants, and group not being a priority.

Belonging (accepted, group cohesion, expressing emotions, encouragement, not missing much while in group, support, adjustment to group, comfort level) refers to being a part of something and having something in common with others. Once batterers feel connected to the group they feel they are part of the group. They experience a sense of cohesion with the group. They experience a place where they can express their emotions. Once this connection takes place their comfort level increases. Participants expressed feeling that they belong to the group because of having something in common with other group members.

Challenges with Reinstating (thoughts about re-instatement, difficulties reinstating) refers to when batterers finally make the attempt to get back into group but barriers prevent them from reinstating quickly. Some participants expressed that lack of money has been a barrier to reinstatement. Also, some stated that the process of getting back into group was delayed by the courts' disorganization and the fact that they were slow to place batterers on the court calendar to see the judge.

Compelled (feeling pressured, feeling forced, discouraged, financial stress) is feeling forced to do something that is creating a certain amount of stress. Participants expressed that this pressure comes from being forced to do not only the batterers'

intervention classes but other classes as well. Feeling pressured can also be caused by financial issues or by obligation to follow rules.

Couples' Conflicts (relationship conflict vs. abuse, couple's interaction, poor communication, lack support) refer to difficulties experienced between couples. These couples have difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings effectively to each other. Some participants stated that they have a hard time expressing their feelings to their partners because they are afraid that the partners might get upset. Others stated that their partners have difficulty expressing their feelings.

Dealing with Rules (adjustment to rules, difficulties with rules, understanding rules) refers to ways in which batterers handle expectations, regulations, and guidelines of the group. Some participants struggled with the rules. Several participants described having difficulties with the rules because they felt they were too strict. Others expressed being resentful about the rules because of having to give up control and having authority problems.

Drive to Improve (desire to change, change, and hopeful) refers to a drive or a desire to achieve a goal. Some participants stated feeling like they had changed and wanted to put their all into the classes. Some stated being motivated because they now had children and they wanted to give them a life without violence.

Developmentally Appropriate (age appropriate, maturity) is when a person is fully developed or has reached a stage in their life that their thinking is advanced. This insight is seen when batterers reinstate. They stated being ready to learn, having more understanding than before and being responsible for completing their classes.



Gender Relevant (gender significant) means a group that is specific to men. This is a group that deals with issues that are relevant to men in particular. This gender relevant group gives batterers an opportunity to have a place where they can express their emotions with other men they can relate to.

Indignant (unfairness, police bias, lack of trust) refers to feeling offended at being referred to as criminal or feeling mistreated. Some participants expressed feelings of being treated unfairly and reluctant to trust others. They stated that they did not trust the agency because they did not know if it was affiliated with the courts or probation. They expressed not knowing how much to share.

Negative Beliefs about Group (preconceptions about group) refers to the initial awareness, understanding or thoughts about the group. Most participants' beliefs of the group were negative. Some said that they felt they were not going to learn anything from it. Others had expectations that the experience was going to be individual sessions and others just did not know what was going to be expected of them.

Negative Emotions (loss of control, source of anger, a sense of unfairness, resentment) refers to emotions that foster loss of self-control and being unable to remain calm. These negative emotions also refer to feelings of being treated unfairly. Negative emotions can be expressed through anger toward the victim, the police and/or the courts.

Non-Acceptance of Actions (denial, denying abuse, lack responsibility, blaming) is not accepting responsibility for one's action. Some participants blamed others for the incident that sent them to group. They had difficulty accepting the role they played and did not think they needed to be in group.

Not Invested in Group (group not being a priority, unengaged) refers to group not being a priority or unimportant. Some participants expressed that when they initially attended group it was not a priority for them and they were unengaged. Some stated they did not feel they needed it and expressed lack of focus and interest in the group.

Owning Behavior (reflecting, understanding the effects of violence, and accepting responsibility) is the act of admitting the role one played in the situation they are in. At the beginning of treatment some participants had difficulty accepting responsibility for their behavior. Once they began accepting responsibility for their actions, their anger was reduced and the possibility of change increased.

Past Group Experiences (prior group experience) refers to previous group involvement. Some participants stated not knowing what to expect and so they did not get much out of the group. Others stated that the program did not meet their needs and some reported feeling uncomfortable in group.

Readiness to Reinstate (reasons for returning) refers to batterers reaching a point in which they have the desire to return to group. It also refers to motivating factors behind their decision to reinstate. Participants expressed that they reinstated in group because they did not want to go back to jail. Others stated that they wanted to put this experience behind them and complete what they were told to do, and others said that they had difficulties finding jobs with the violation pending.

Remorseful (shame, feeling regrets) is feeling badly about past behavior and wishing that they had not behaved the way they did. Most participants expressed feeling badly about their behavior and regretted reacting the way they did.

Using Tools (resolving conflicts, applying tools, learning, and being in control of self) refers to the participant's application of what they were learning in group. Once batterers stay in group they begin to learn tools. These tools help them to be in control of themselves and of their anger. Participants expressed using tools such as time-outs and defusing the situation to prevent argument escalation.

These 19 categories provide a data driven description of the process of treatment drop out which begins prior to group attendance, moving into negative emotions batterers experience while in the program, dropping out, experiencing deterrent to reinstating into the program, reinstating and staying in the program because of that sense of being connected through feeling accepted and being part of a group that is relevant to their needs as men. Some of these codes reflect issues that lead to batterers' drop out at various points in the treatment process.

### **Axial Coding**

Each of the codes was examined by asking if any code was a part of or a property of another code. It was important to distinguish if any were distinct and separate. Five categories emerged as a result of this process (see Table 3). These were anger, insight/lack of insight, motivation/lack of motivation, reinstatement issues, and belonging. These five categories were also placed in three major critical events (see Table 3). These were drop out, reinstating, and staying in group.

Table 3

*Process of Dropping Out and Reinstating in Group*

Critical Events	Categories	Open Codes
Drop Out	Anger	Indignant
		Couple's Conflicts
		Negative Emotions
	Insight/Lack of Insight	Past Experiences
		Negative Perceptions about Group
		Non-Acceptance of Responsibility
		Developmentally Appropriate
	Motivation/Lack of Motivation	Drive to Improve
		Dealing with Rules
		Not Invested in Group
Reinstating	Reinstatement Issues	Compelled
		Behaviors that Lead to Drop Out
		Challenges with Reinstating
		Remorseful
		Owning Behavior
		Readiness to Reinstatement
		Using Tools
Staying in Group Connected		Belonging
		Gender Relevant

**Definitions and Descriptions of the Five Categories**

***Anger***

Anger refers to losing control of self and being unable to remain calm. Batterers are already angry from feeling like they have been treated unfairly. They come to group expressing and demonstrating this anger as evidenced by their unwillingness to

participate. One participant stated, "Everybody come in here they are mad. I was mad."

Another participant said, "At first I really did not want to open to anybody because everybody were strangers and I did not really want to talk." Findings in this study indicate that this anger is coming from their resentment at the victim for causing the argument to escalate and for calling the police. One participant said,

Not all of us have the fault, but women makes it seems like we have the fault you know, but they'll blame everything on us because when they motivate us to do something they know where it is going to get us. We are going to be the ones to get in trouble.

Another participant said,

Nobody, no matter what they say, deserve to be hit whether it's a man or a woman, but there is a lot of women who are out there and hit men but when the man hits them back its domestic violence and only the men end up either in jail or taking these classes.

This anger increases after batterers' interaction with the police. They feel not heard. Participants expressed being treated unfairly and being told to blame it on O. J. Simpson. One participant stated,

But domestic violence in California, the way that they handle it is not fair. So I've always stressed that, it's not fair. Anytime I am being told to blame it on some guy, who I don't even know, why I'm sitting in a jail cell, something is not right with that situation.

They feel that the police favor the women and assume that they are the victims. Unfortunately, according to the men, they are not allowed to share their story. This causes their anger and frustration to rise. This causes them to feel that they have no rights, making their resentment worse.

Their loss of control over themselves is exacerbated when they are ordered to court. They feel their stories are not heard. Although batterers' are represented by counsel they feel they are at the mercy of the judge, the probation officer and the district attorney. They usually feel intimidated and helpless. They expressed feeling "victimized and dogged" by the system. One participant said,

Because I was treated really, really, really unfair, I was treated really bad you know, I was just dogged, you know and all of that because, not only because of what I did and allowing the situation to take place in the first place but just because I, I was looked at as been an impediment to somebody else and there was no upholding of justice, no upholding of the law, there was no none of that it was just 'oh well take him to jail,' you know, and penalty of the law was worse than the crime that was committed.

They also expressed feeling overwhelmed by what they were ordered to do. Sometimes they were ordered to complete batterers' intervention classes, community services, work release, sometimes alcohol rehabilitation, individual counseling and other classes. One participant stated,

I felt pressured with the rules, like right now I'm pressured like that because my DUI class and this class they are court ordered and I'm pressured, because yesterday I went to the DUI class and now today here, yeah I got a little bit of pressure. I have to go the AA meetings too, that I got re-instated too, it's bad.

Their autonomy is taken away and they are aware that they will face consequences if they do not follow through with what is ordered by the judge. Participants expressed feeling forced, which increased their anger. One participant said, "I completely feel forced, I feel forced financially and worrying about my freedom being taking away from me, especially when I did not do anything, but in order to please the courts what am I to do." Participants reported that when they got to group, they arrived

angry and uncooperative. They expressed some difficulties trusting the facility and the group facilitator. Also, they are unsure if the agency is affiliated with the “system.” They are also unsure of how much to share. Here is what one participant said,

When you start coming to class, then you start realizing oh this establishment isn't affiliated with the police which gives you an, oh yeah that's good, you know what I'm saying, which that's good and then it's cool. If you think that you're affiliated with probation, they don't want to say nothing, you think that you may get in trouble if you say I did this, try to tell the story and then there might be something that didn't get brought up in court, and you don't want to say that.

They reported that their anger increased even more with the knowledge that they had to pay for the classes every week for one year. This discovery tended to create financial pressure and concern in the participants, more so if they lost their job while in jail. This is a reasonable concern that is compounded by the fact that the agency cannot allow batterers to attend group too long without making payments. Some participants stated that they sometimes stopped going to group because they could not afford the class fees, leading them to drop out and start the process all over again. They stated that this caused them a tremendous amount of pressure.

Prior negative group experiences seemed to create negative perceptions about intervention group and influenced thoughts and expectations by batterers. One participant said,

In the past I was uncomfortable. I don't even remember the instructor, but there was no impression left upon me. It didn't appear to be organized and there was no structure, I mean we watched TV, people slept, the lights were out.

Also, if batterers have never been in batterers' intervention group, they may not know what to expect. Most of them are dealing with the unknown when they are referred to group. One participant stated,

The program did not meet my needs and I did not meet their needs. It was a little bit of both. Because I did not understand what I was supposed to be getting out of it, you know, the court ordered me to be there and I did not understand what I was supposed to be doing there. Now I know it was intervention and stuff like that, but I did not know how it was supposed to help me and I didn't meet their needs because I did not complete the classes, you know, I did not give it a chance.

Some participants reported not trusting being in group because they did not know what it was all about. Others said that the thought of having to be in a group with people they did not know created some uncomfortable feelings for them.

Some participants expressed the belief that they may not get anything out of the group. This was due to the fact that they did not trust that the agency had their best interest at heart because of their court-ordered status. Another identified reason was the fact that several participants said that they did not have an anger problem; therefore, they did not need any treatment. One participant said,

No, I did not feel like I belong, because if you feel like you belong, then obviously you have a problem. If I feel like I need to be here is 'cause I really have a problem, and I don't want to feel like that.

Batterers reported that at the beginning they felt that there was nothing for them to learn. One said, "I really didn't think I was going to get much out of it, and then there were a lot of people there so I'm kind of hesitant to talk in groups." Another batterer said, "At first, when I was going I thought these classes don't do anything for you." Yet another participant stated that they did not feel they had an anger problem; therefore, they



did not need any treatment. Their perception of the group tended to be influenced by the fact that they were being forced to attend. Batterers rebel and resent the fact that they have been ordered to do something they do not feel they need. Some have problems dealing with authority figures. Also, the sense of feeling helpless and not in control of their own lives prevented them from seeing group as a positive possibility.

One participant talked about the resentment he felt,

I have feelings of resentment over that because, just from the reality of the situation and I've always had somewhat of authority problems too, so people telling me what to do when to do it, how to do it. After prison, you lose all control; it takes your self-respect and all that away from you.

The belief that the group might be full of criminals might not be appealing to batterers, especially if they do not consider themselves criminals. They anticipate a situation in which they are going to be in a group with people with whom they have nothing in common. Another one said, "At first it was kind of a forced deal. It was definitely something that is forced upon you as a choice you have to make." One participant said, "I would say oh it's a domestic violence class and it's a bunch of women beaters in there."

Batterers' anger about being ordered to group played a role in whether they stayed in group or not. Their unhappiness about being ordered to group tended to cause the inconsistencies in group attendance. The anger and resentment they felt about the incident, the victim and the system, contributed to the unfairness they felt. This sense of unfairness caused them to act out by not showing up to group. One participant stated,

I was inconsistent because I did not take it seriously; I did not want to be there, I was resentful. I went back to prison because I assaulted someone with a deadly weapon, and I wound up four years in prison.

The lack of control over the situation also tended to contribute to drop out. Most participants responded that they felt forced. One participant said, “I did feel forced, I figured hey I did what I did and I paid the price, four years of my life, and now you want me to do more, and more, and more.” Another one stated, “Basically I am being forced to take the classes, because if I don’t then I can end up doing six months in jail. So yeah I’m being forced.” For some this is not a major issue, but those who have difficulties with authority have a difficult time with being compliant.

### ***Insight/Lack of Insight***

Insight is when a person has a clear understanding of cause and effect. They have reached a stage in their lives that their thinking is advanced and they are capable of looking within themselves to resolve issues they encounter. According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2012), Insight is the act or result of apprehending the inner nature of things or seeing intuitively. Some batterers are not ready to respond appropriately to the situation that they are in due to lack of developmental maturity and insight. This limited insight tends to play a role in batterers not taking responsibility for their actions. They blame the victim, the police officer, the judge and the probation officer, but have a difficult time accepting the role they played in the situation. One participant stated, “Every time I don’t finish the classes they start it over and charge me more money and more money, but that’s the court. I think the court system just wants my money.” Another participant said, “I had a very angry wife and definitely violent more

times than one.” Another participant stated, “I would often tell my wife ‘I’m going to your class because you’re the one responsible for me being here.

Lack of insight and maturity tends to make it difficult for them to take their situation seriously. They ignore or do not follow through with the orders from the judge. Besides batterers’ intervention group, they may be ordered to do community service, work release and other classes. Unfortunately, because of lack of insight they tend not to think about the consequences of their behavior. Sometimes, because of immature behavior find themselves in constant problems with the law. They accumulate traffic tickets, DUI’s and arrest warrants. One participant said, “The only reason I stop going was because I got a DUI and I went back to prison.” Another one explained,

I dropped out of the program for about 2-3 months because I ended up having a warrant for my arrest for not going to the work release program so I could work off jail time. I was arrested and I spent a couple of days in jail, went back to court and they just re-instated me.

Another participant stated, “There was a situation I got pulled over for a traffic violation and they realized I had a warrant.” Another one said, “Because I didn’t complete my classes.”

Failure to resolve these issues caused them additional legal problems. Lack of insight and maturity may also prevent batterers from seeing the usefulness of treatment. One participant reported,

At the beginning I guess I wasn’t as focused on the class, but I guess with maturity I’ve learned that I can learn from the teacher and other participants in the class. It broadens my view of the problems I had. For me the class helps me every week. It’s therapy for me. Back in the past I don’t think I was ready for it, I was too young minded, but with maturity I can see that it’s positive for me. It probably was then but I wasn’t ready for it.

One other participant stated,

My viewpoints now, and how I saw it then, are night and day. But when I came back to the classes it was so much easier. I was on a level where I saw that the classes do help. I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. God will put you in a place where you have to get clarity and jail was one of those things. That break from my wife, that 11-month period of time opened my eyes to being more mature. So yeah, coming back to this class I had a totally different mindset.

This study suggests that lack of insight/maturity is a developmental issue consistent with Gove's Physical Prime Theory which indicated that younger individuals are more likely involved in deviant behavior, less likely to complete treatment and less likely to comply with rules (Gove, 1985).

### ***Motivation/Lack of Motivation***

Motivation refers to a drive or a desire to achieve a goal. Some participants experienced lack of drive or determination to make changes. Poor motivation affected their ability to focus. Their focus may be on being with friends or being involved in other activities. Their focus may be on their finances and on working, in order to feed their families. Batterers' priority might not be on the group. They may find themselves doing other things that they feel are more important than attending group. Group tends not to be a priority to them, which explains the constant absences and dropout. One participant stated,

I was into other things, I was still hanging out with my old friends, I still wanted to be out and this was not a priority to me and I just stop coming and the money was tight, it was stressful at times it was like I need the money, I need the money and then it just got to a point when I thought you know what, I'm not even going anymore.

Lack of motivation also influenced behaviors creating inconsistent attendance patterns that eventually lead to group drop out. This participant said,

I was half way through the program before I dropped out, I used to skip a lot, and I only came about 45% of what I was supposed to, you know, 'cause I'd come this week and then not show up for two more weeks, then I'd come another week then maybe two weeks in a row and then not show up, then I'd end up in jail. I was inconsistent because I did not take it seriously; I did not want to be there.

Participants sabotaged themselves by becoming involved in negative behaviors that affected their group attendance. Some participants found themselves in situations that lead them to drop out. Most of these situations appeared to be avoidable, for instance, warrants for their arrest for violations that were ignored, lack of consistent group attendance, or re-offenses. These behaviors suggest lack of motivation on the part of participants. Unfortunately, batterers may not make the connection with the fact that negative behaviors might have consequences that land them in a vicious cycle where they feel stuck and do not know how to get out.

The findings in this study suggest that lack of motivation and interest in group also contributes to drop out. Some participants were not committed to group and found that group was not important to them. These participants tended to feel that they had nothing to learn from the group because they did not believe that they had an anger problem. For example one participant stated, "When I first started I was not motivated, I did not feel I had done anything wrong." This suggests that group was not a priority for these individuals, probably because they did not see the value in attending group. It may be difficult for them to feel that they can gain anything from the group. This lack of motivation and interest prevented batterers from staying in group.

### *Reinstatement Issues*

Reinstatement issues refer to batterers being ready to reinstate but experiencing difficulties getting back into group. After drop out, at some point some batterers make the decision to go back into group to complete their classes. Unfortunately the process of reinstatement may not be a smooth one, causing delays in getting back into group. Participants expressed that financial difficulties and disorganization of the court system have prevented them from getting back in group quickly. The participants' financial situation tended to impact their return to group. The financial reality that individuals are experiencing is a factor that cannot be ignored. Some participants lost their jobs as a result of being in jail due to the domestic violence incident. After getting out of jail, some reported experiencing financial struggles and difficulties paying reinstatement fees. One participant stated,

I came out February 10<sup>th</sup> of last year and I was trying to get back, but due to lack of work I did not have money to come back. Getting reinstated was not easy, I remember coming here wanting to reinstate but then being sent out to another city which I had no transportation at the time, then go over there and re-pay everything a whole \$90.00 and \$55.00 fee to re-start this class is no easy task when you did not have a job, so you want to please the court every which way, but you can't when you are financially destroyed. I was struggling to eat, having the kids over when they visit, things like that. A whole lot of stuff was going on.

Some participants also reported difficulties preventing them from getting employed because of the record they now have. The other financial reality is the fact that if they do become employed, some batterers may not make enough money to take care of all their financial responsibilities. Because of the domestic violence incident, they incurred additional legal expenses. They find themselves making a decision between paying for classes and all the other legal expenses or feeding their children and paying

their rent. It is understandable that they would choose to feed their children over paying for class. This does not excuse or justify batterers nonattendance in group but it explains this barrier to reinstatement. Some participants had difficulties finding jobs mainly because of their records. Based on what they stated, they were continually turned down from securing employment because of their criminal background. The need for employment becomes a reality and the constant disappointment of not getting a job leads them back to wanting to complete their program. This also demonstrates maturity and a sense of responsibility.

Batterers who return to treatment are usually ready to do so. Their maturity level influenced their decision to return. The participants expressed the fact that they were ready to finish their classes and put their negative behaviors behind them. They were ready to put that chapter in their lives behind them but they recognized that they had to complete their classes.

Another reason why participants decided to complete their class was because they did not want to go back to jail, which is a sign of maturity. One participant stated,

I came back to the program because it is a program and it is for us to get it done, because I don't want to do jail time or anything like that, I like my freedom you know. I like my own things, my own bed, so I'm not really like jail material, that was never made for me.

They are at a point in their lives that they are ready to comply with the law. They are willing to accept responsibility and understand that the consequence for not completing classes is jail time and most of them reported that jail is no longer an option for them. This does not necessarily guarantee that batterers will fully engage in group, but it does increase their motivation and their desire to complete their classes.

These individuals found themselves following through because of necessity. Interestingly, some stated that they wanted to finish what they had started. They recognized that they had something pending, that it was not going to disappear unless they did something about it. One participant stated,

I came back to the program because I tried to finish something that I started, if it's court ordered then I have to do it, and I don't want to see the law as on top of me. I want to get them away from me, been in with the law so many times, I'm trying to get away now, I don't want any more warrants.

They also seemed to understand that once they are involved with the legal system they had to comply with their court order, otherwise it would always remain on their records. This understanding led them to reinstate into their program. Some participants expressed wanting to complete their classes for their children's sake. They stated that they wanted to be an example for their children, which implied that they wanted to change. They were interested in learning how to deal with their anger and make decisions to learn to control their anger. They understood how the cycle of violence can affect their children and are chose to break this cycle.

Delays by the court represented systemic barriers encountered by some participants. Participants reported that they experienced delays in reinstating due to the fact that when they went to court they were placed on the calendar to see the judge; most of the time their appointment was usually a few weeks later. Some participants felt that the court was slow when dealing with reinstatements, which prevented them from reinstating quickly. Here is what one participant stated,

I got arrested when I got dropped, but by the time I got arrested and got dropped, I went back to get re-enrolled, they told me that I needed a court date, so I just had



to wait for the judge to give me a court date, like I had already went in on a walk-in to let them know. I went to jail, it was their fault, I was dropped from my class.

Another participant stated,

I needed to reinstate, but then they wouldn't let me get on the court calendar because I already had a court date coming up because the violation had already went through. In the end, I ended up getting a paralegal. We just got it all squared away but, I mean if you don't take care of it the courts, they are very unorganized, if you don't stay on it, let them know what's going on they'll just take it. They'll just classify you as this type of person or that type of person. I kept going to let them know I know I'm going to take care of this. We've got to get this straightened out so if you know it took a little while.

The concern is that some batterers may choose not to persevere through this process and decide that it is too much to deal with and do not reinstate.

### *Connected*

Connected refers to being a part of something and experiencing a bond with others. Once batterers reinstated in group and began identifying with other group participants, they seemed to adjust better if they felt that they had things in common with other members. For example one participant said, "I can talk to them like they're my best friend, like I've known them. I can relate to them. I look forward to coming to class now." Another participant stated,

I felt I belong in this program because you've got something in common with the group, you know. We all lost control for whatever reason and we reacted the way we reacted you know, yeah, I'm part of that group. We all have something in common.

Participants' connection to the group suggested that they were a part of that group. They were comfortable with people they could relate to. One participant said,

I look at this class as a place where you come, it's kind a like a male bonding session you know, and we are able to speak free and not to judge and to have people who's gone through life's situations there to give you input and together come to what's best for their life.

They had an understanding of what each other was going through. They seemed to prefer sharing their experience with domestic violence with group members that had had similar experiences than with their friends and family. This suggests that these individuals were capable of sharing with each other and understanding each other's emotions. Their sense of belonging was also experienced through feeling like they belonged to a cohesive and supportive group.

Some participants expressed that they found themselves in a group with people who were developing strong bonds and who provided support to each other. One participant said, "I got comfortable in group, because I look at it like a bunch of guys hanging out, talking, you know, so that was a positive thing." This study suggests that batterers who do not connect and form these bonds miss out on an experience in which they can be encouraged by group peers and the instructor to work through their issues within group.

Some participants tended to be more inclined to accept the fact that they had an anger problem. When encouraged by other members who were farther along with their treatment and who seemed to be insightful, batterers were more willing to take responsibility. Batterers might hear other group members accept responsibility for their actions. For example, one participant stated,

I felt that I belong to the program just by the fact that I do have an anger problem. Once I accepted the fact that I have an anger problem and that I do need help with it, I learned to express it in my class, and it helped me to open up a lot at home and express my feelings there.

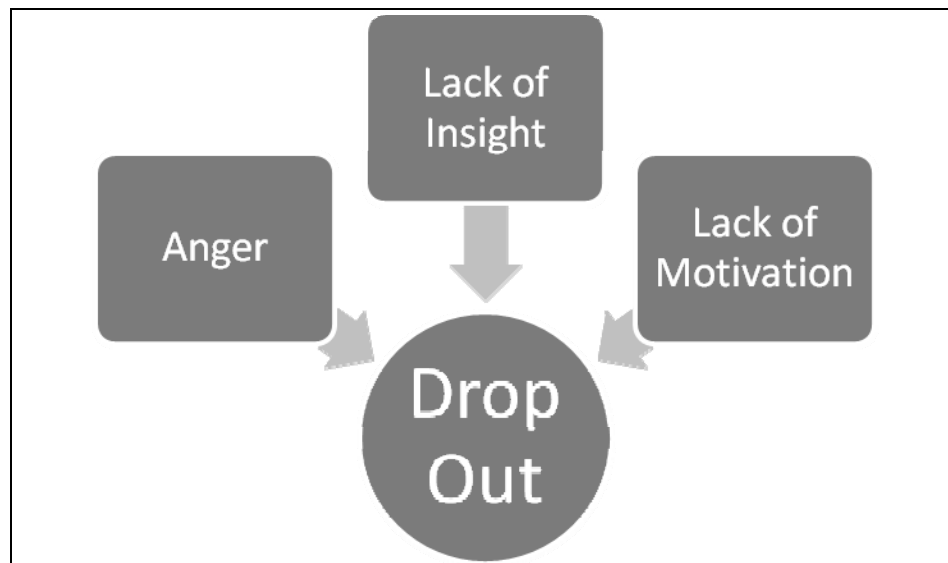
The influence of these individuals impacts on how batterers view their own anger. The support and belonging experienced by participants made them feel comfortable in group. Here is an example of what one participant said, “Well, yeah. I feel that it’s going to help me reach my goal. And the way that they express themselves, they don’t feel intimidated by the group. I feel like I belong because it feels good.” Another participant stated, “When I would share that with the other classmates I kind of start getting the response that it’s not so bad, coming to class isn’t really so bad,”

At the beginning they tended to be uneasy and somewhat intimidated in the group. Once batterers became connected with other members in the group and began to see the similarities with their experiences their comfort level tended to increase. The possibilities that this sense of belonging brings play a crucial role in participants’ decision to stay or drop out of group. Feeling connected to the group encouraged batterers to stay and create a level of motivation that made them want to reach their goals. This connection kept participants in group until they completed it. They felt they were part of a gender relevant group. This process kept them connected in group with a possibility of them staying in group until completion.

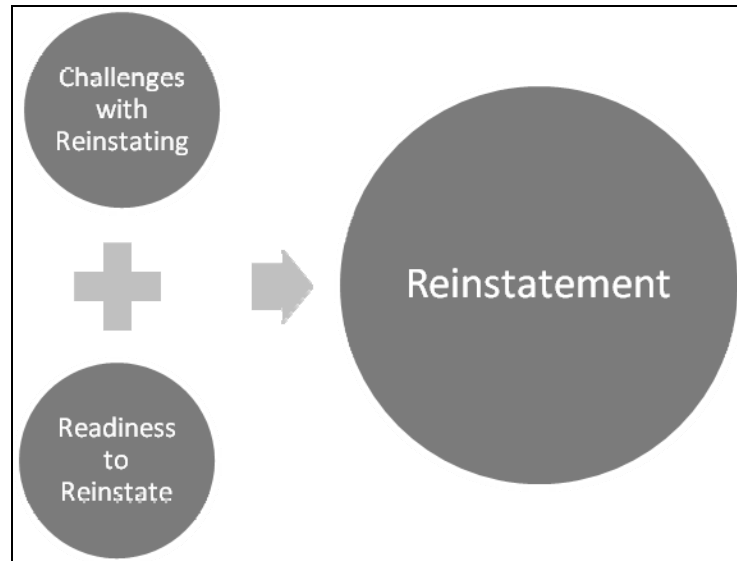
Some participants recognized that men tend to get angry easier than women. One of the biggest benefits of a gender relevant group is the opportunity to deal with their anger and to learn ways to reduce their anger. They seemed to understand that, as boys, they were raised differently from girls. These differences are based on the fact that boys

have been raised with the message that they have to be tough. This explains the reasons why men appear to get angry easily. Having a group with other men with whom they can share these similarities can provide batterers with a place where they could empathize with other men that were dealing with issues specific to men.

These five categories are connected to each other in the following manner; they all play a role in batterers' treatment dropout. The first three categories determine whether batterers drop out or stay in their program (anger, insight/ lack of insight, and motivation /lack of motivation).



*Figure 1.* Reasons for Drop Out



*Figure 2. Reinstating in Group*

The fourth category addresses issues regarding reinstatement (reinstatement issues which include challenges to reinstate and batterers' readiness to reinstate). Batterers may experience challenges in getting back into treatment but because of their readiness to return, they persist until they get reinstated.

The fifth category identifies what makes batterers stay in the program after reinstatement (connected). If batterers drop out of treatment, some will eventually return to be reinstated. After reinstatement, if batterers connect positively with other group members, they tend to stay in group. This could be true for first time participants as well.

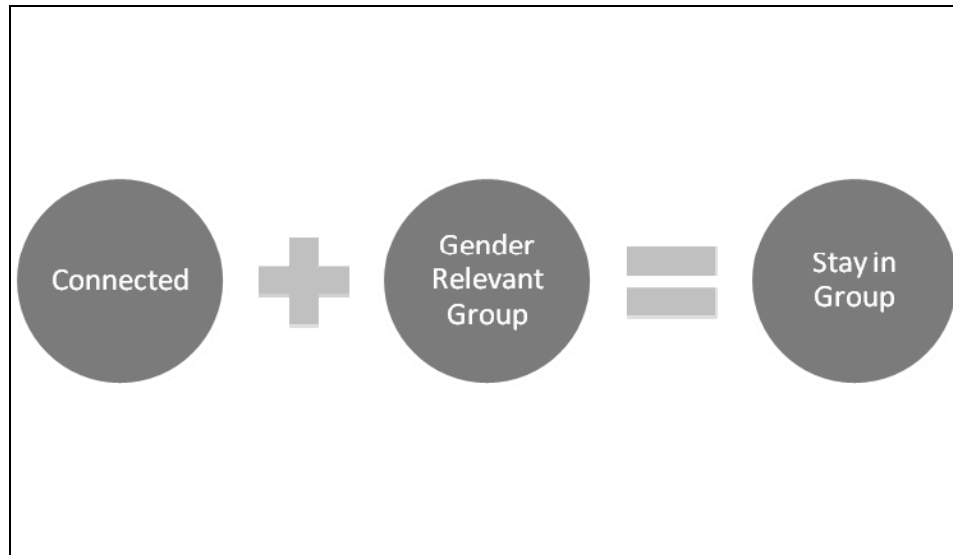


Figure 3. Identified Factors Related to Staying in Group

### **Selective Coding**

Selective coding is the story or narrative part of the theory that has developed based on participant responses. Selective coding is the final step of this process. The following is what has emerged from the axial coding. In this narrative, the reasons for participants' anger are explained from their initial arrest, their court appearance to beginning batterers' intervention program. This narrative is divided into three sections: behaviors that prevented success, behaviors that fostered success, and resolution.

#### ***Behaviors that Prevented Success in Group***

Participants' negative experience influenced their perception of the entire process. This experience tended to lead to anger. The Batterers' arrest sets the stage for the beginning of the journey they were about to encounter. Batterers' first contact with the legal system is when the 911 call is placed. Police respond to the call and show up at the

batterers' residence or the place where the domestic violence incident took place. Usually victims are questioned and batterers are arrested. The participants became angry at the fact that most police officers assume that they are guilty. The participants felt that police are biased and tend to protect women. They also expressed being treated unfairly and stated that they have been dehumanized.

The next encounter that participants experienced was with the court. The participants expressed that there was no justice and no upholding of the law. They stated that the punishment was worse than the crime and that they did not feel that the court cared if the victims were lying. These participants expressed feeling a sense of helplessness because of the fact that they saw the courts and the police as much more powerful than they. Participants also stated finding themselves being forced to plead guilty even when they felt they were innocent, because of their desperation to be free. A majority of participants were resentful and angry about being referred to group. They also expressed their frustration with the courts when they tried to reinstate into the program after drop out. This study indicates that their anger stemmed from their feelings of being treated unfairly by the police and the judge. Their anger dominated their frame of mind causing them to have little or no faith in the system. This anger tended to lead to early drop out and/or got in the way of reinstatement in the future.

Lack of insight tended to prevent participants from seeing the need to complete the program and to follow through with other conditions of probation, which eventually led to their arrest, causing program drop out. Some batterers may experience difficulties looking at the fact that sometimes, their behavior can get them in trouble due to lack of insight. They have difficulties making the connection that they have unhealthy behavior

patterns that have legal consequences, for example, drinking and driving, not taking care of traffic violations, failing to comply with their probation requirements such as work release, community service and batterers' program.

Motivation for some participants was lacking. Attending group may not be high on their priority list. They tended not to see it as something that could help them make changes in their lives. When group was seen as having low or no priority in their lives, it tended to lead to drop out. Some participants expressed not having interest in group, being interested in other things, not taking it seriously and not wanting to be there.

Anger, an emotion some participants experienced, got in the way of their remaining in treatment. Because of their anger, some participants put up walls toward the idea of attending group, influencing their initial perception of group. Some participants tended to show up to group with negative perceptions of the group. These perceptions included: not knowing what to expect, believing that they were going to be in group with a lot of criminals, or thinking that there was nothing that they could gain from attending group. If these initial perceptions are negative, batterers may not stay long enough in group to bond with other group members. These perceptions caused isolation and prevented participants from connecting with other group members. The lack of connection to other group members by batterers can cause them to feel that they do not have anything in common with other group members. This anger can grow because of the fact that they are in group with people that they are not comfortable with.

Findings in this study suggest that behaviors creating inconsistent attendance put participants at risk for drop out. Inconsistent group attendance by batterers reflects the



lack of interest and commitment to complete their program. It also demonstrates the lack of value they put into the treatment.

### ***Behaviors that Fostered Success in Group***

Being connected, when experienced by batterers, helped them to stay linked to the group. When participants allowed themselves to connect with the group they tended to experience a sense of belonging and connection to a group of men who had similar experiences and with whom they could relate. This may have had a great impact on how these individuals felt about the group. This sense of belonging encouraged participants to go to group week after week. This sense of belonging was also influenced by the strong bond that they developed as men. The group gave these men an opportunity to have a gender specific forum in which they could express themselves as men.

A gender relevant group encourages men to go to a place where they can deal with their emotions. Men can be supported by helping each other to reach their goal to be free from violence. It is a place where they can talk about issues pertaining to men without being embarrassed or self-conscious. Group is a place where they can learn to resolve conflicts through better communication skills and other tools they are taught.

### ***Resolution of Anger to Encourage Success***

Drop out from group may eventually take place if batterers' anger is not resolved. This anger was coming from their perception of the unfair treatment from the police and the courts. If the anger is not dealt with from an individual and group level immediately when batterers begin their program it can lead to program drop out. If batterers were

ignored during their first sessions, and their anger was not processed with them, their risk for drop out increased. Also, if batterers did not feel the support from the other group members, there would not be an opportunity for group bonding. This also leads to drop out.

Staying in group can be challenging for batterers, but it is possible if the anger is worked through. This study suggests that during the first few sessions, group facilitators need to dedicate a lot of time in group to helping batterers process the anger and frustration that comes up. Also, group time providing support from other group members will help batterers continue to resolve their anger and at the same time build cohesion and a sense of belonging in the group. Also, as the participants developed insight they tended to understand the need to fulfill an obligation. They had gotten to a point in their lives that they no longer wanted to have legal problems hanging over their heads. They wanted to move on with their lives and wanted to complete the conditions of their probation. They became motivated to learn and to complete what they had been ordered to do. They were trying to be better providers for their children, better role models and to change their behavior as a whole.

This section showed a clear framework for what contributes to batterers treatment drop out. It also provided a category for behaviors that prevent success and behaviors that foster success, helped to present a clearer picture of what causes drop out and what causes batterers to stay in the program. Also, this section dealt with participants' anger, which makes a case for how anger influences treatment drop out from the beginning process of batterers' experience. It also delineated some preventative steps to help buffer the beginning process and encourage success.

## **Summary of Study Findings**

In conclusion, what was discovered from this study is that several issues contribute to drop out of participants from batterers' program. One of the major issues contributing to drop out, from the perception of participants, was the legal process and barriers in that system that reinforced their lack of trust in the system. This leads to batterers' anger. Other issues leading to drop out were participants' lack of insight and lack of motivation. Major impact on batterers' retention in group, will depend on the resolution of batterers' anger at an individual and group level. The increase in batterers' insight and their motivation will also play a major role in them finding the interest and the desire to complete their program. Dispelling negative initial perceptions will also impact batterers' desire to stay in group. Group facilitators can be instrumental in helping group members work through their anger and begin to feel like they belong to the group. Also, this sense of belonging can help group members feel connected to each other and can help them build strong male bonds among them which can influence the new member to want to be part of the group.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the findings uncovered in this study. It reviews the theoretical framework and how it relates to the current findings. Also, a discussion of policy and practice implications is viewed from three perspectives: organization, individuals and group and how each affects treatment drop out. Specifically, policy implications will highlight the organization, which includes the legal system, e.g., the police and the courts as well as recommendations. Practice implications and recommendations, as they pertain to individuals, groups, and the role of group facilitators are explained. Reinstatement to elucidate why batterers come back to group and what makes them stay will be explored. This chapter will conclude with study limitations, suggestions for future research and a conclusion.

#### **Outcome**

The findings in this study demonstrate that batterers drop out of treatment because of their anger, lack of insight/ maturity, and lack of motivation. This study also discovered that batterers who are ready to change do rejoin the program and are committed and motivated to stay in the program. Once they became connected to other group members, they experienced a bond that kept them in the intervention group until they completed it. An initial theoretical framework of batterers' perspective for why they drop out of treatment is presented. This perspective attempts to explain-from batterers'

perspective-why they drop out of the intervention programs, why they reinstate and why they stay.

This section discusses each one of the five findings identified in this study. It also links Gove's Physical Prime theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory and Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming theory to the findings of this study. Specifically, it explores the issues raised by Gove's Physical Prime theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory and Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming theory and how these theories relate to treatment dropout. Gove's Physical Prime theory addresses maturation as the main focus for treatment drop out. Bandura's Self-efficacy theory addresses motivation and self-perception as the cause of treatment drop out. Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming theory addresses shaming that leads to reintegration vs. shaming that leads to stigmatization to encourage compliance. The study findings affirm Gove's Physical Prime theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory and Braithwaite's Reintegrative Shaming theory.

The first finding of this research project is that batterers' anger caused them to drop out of treatment. This was noted repeatedly by every participant. This anger reportedly stems from the domestic violence incident in which batterers blame the victims for provoking them and not being punished, while they were the one taken to jail. They also reported being angry at the police for not investigating properly to find out what caused the incident and who truly was the aggressor, and with the court system for the way they were handled. Specifically, being pressured to plead guilty and for having to pay for multiple conditions of their sentences such as restitution fees, community service, work release and batterers' intervention classes. Additionally, participants experienced

anger at the treatment program because of the class fees they had to pay on a weekly basis for 52 weeks. Taken together, participants ended up coming to group treatment with a great amount of anger and if it was not resolved they would drop out of treatment.

The theoretical implications developed from the study data shows that batterers' anger can be so strong that it can influence their program completion. This means that this anger should be dealt with from the very beginning. Regardless of their offense they need to be treated with dignity and respect by everyone they come in contact with, from the police who respond to the domestic violence incident, to the group facilitator who welcomes batterers into the class. Braithwaite's theory confirms the theoretical findings in this study, which emphasizes compliance by treating offenders with respect.

Braithwaite (1989), stated that shaming should be done with respect and love rather than treating these individuals as outcasts. This theory also helps to see that batterers experience stigmatized shaming from the very beginning of their engagement with the legal system. By the time they get to the treatment group they are so angry that it is difficult to engage them in the reintegrative process.

The second finding was that lack of insight/maturity causes batterers to drop out of treatment. This was noted repeatedly by every participant. Some participants reported that they lacked enough insight/maturity to help them understand the consequences of their behavior. They had difficulty making the connection with the fact that lack of follow through with their court orders is a violation of their probation. Some participants found themselves involved with the law for multiple reasons. They incurred fines for traffic tickets and were unable to pay these fines, which resulted in warrants for their arrest. They also ignored completing work release and community service hours, creating

negative consequences and causing more violations of their probation. They might have avoided paying restitution fees or not shown up for class. These behaviors demonstrate a lack of insight/maturity into the problems they already have and the new ones they are creating.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that batterers lack insight/maturity and understanding of how their behavior can affect their wellbeing. This means that unless batterers develop insight into their behavior these patterns of behavior will continue. Batterers will continue to have difficulty completing group treatment because they do not see how the lack of treatment completion can affect them. Gove (1985) confirms that maturation is an important factor in determining treatment completion. Gove's theory, like this study, found that younger, immature men are usually less compliant and more apt to take on riskier behavior. This study also found that as men mature and become more insightful, they are much more willing to comply with attending intervention group.

The study's third finding was that lack of motivation causes treatment drop out. This was noted repeatedly by every participant. Batterers who drop out of treatment lack interest in attending the intervention group. They tend to not have the group on their priority list and find themselves focusing their interest on other things that they consider to be more important. Additionally, they do not think that they can benefit or learn from the intervention group resulting in further motivational problem. This means that if batterers' lack of motivation remains unchanged, they will continue having difficulties finishing their program. Batterers who are highly motivated look forward to being in the intervention group because they see the benefit of what being in group can do for them.

They are eager to learn skills that they can apply to help resolve conflicts appropriately. This study also affirms Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory, which states that motivation is based on individuals' level of self-efficacy, and their belief that they can succeed in a particular task. Participants in this study did not believe they could benefit from the treatment group. And this led to poor motivation and eventually to dropping out.

The study's fourth finding was that reinstatement into the group can be challenging, but if batterers are ready to reinstate they will do so and stay. This was noted repeatedly by every participant. Batterers may become discouraged and decide that reinstating is too difficult. Batterers who are persistent because they are ready to change, or ready to complete all that they were ordered to do, tend to reinstate and complete their program. These individuals found that they were ready to complete their program because of their desire to put their past behind them and have a new start.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that once batterers find a reason to finish their program they become committed to that goal and they are insistent on getting it done. This means that batterers who have a goal will move forward toward completing that goal. Gove's theory confirms that as men mature and become more insightful, they are much more willing to comply with attending intervention group.

The fifth and final finding was that batterers' sense of being connected keeps them in the program. This was noted repeatedly by every participant. Batterers who bonded with their classmates felt like they belonged. They looked forward to attending group week after week and sharing experiences with a group of men with whom they could identify. They felt that they had a lot in common with men who had had similar experiences. They experienced an atmosphere where they can feel safe with people they



could trust. A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that men benefit from being around other men they can talk to. They benefit from engaging in deep conversations about things that are important to them. These conversations are not superficial talk, but revealing conversations about themselves and their feelings, about changes they want to make and changes they are making. They can talk about the concerns they have for their families and how they want to improve things. This suggests that men can benefit from being connected to other men. This connectedness keeps them involved in a group where they can mentor each other. This means that once men become connected and feel they are a part of a group of other men, they are more likely to complete their program.

Braithwaite's theory confirms that offenders need a sense of communitarianism which brings interdependence between each other. This interdependence brings mutuality which creates trust and a sense of belonging. This theory also confirms that when the bonds are strengthened between offenders and the community, offenders can "reattach to conventional society" (Braithwaite, 1989). The study findings affirm Gove's Physical Prime theory, Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory and Braithwaite Reintegrative Shaming theory. (see Table 4).

Table 4

*Conceptual Framework and Findings*

5 Key Findings	Grove	Bandura	Braithwaite
Anger			Stigmatization Reinforces Anger
Insight/Maturity	Decline of Deviant Behavior Begins After Maturity		
Motivation		Belief That They Can Benefit from Treatment	
Reinstatement	<u>Ready to Comply</u>		
Belonging			Reintegration In Society

Knowledge of these findings can help improve batterers' completion rate.

Understanding that anger impacts treatment drop out helps to make valuable recommendations to the judicial system and batterers' program. These recommendations can help to interact with batterers in a way that helps reduce their anger, which in turn can increase their treatment completion rate. Knowing that lack of insight/maturation affects treatment completion can help provide recommendations to group facilitators to provide batterers with tools that would help increase insight. Awareness that lack of motivation can prevent treatment completion can generate recommendations to group facilitators to provide batterers with tools to increase motivation. Understanding reinstatement challenges and the reasons why batterers return to complete their treatment

can help provide recommendations to the court for a smooth and timely reinstatement process.

Recommendations to group facilitators to help encourage batterers to stay in treatment may also increase completion rate. An understanding that a sense of being connected among batterers can help recommendations to group facilitators to encourage a cohesive group and a strong bond among batterers can keep them in group and increase completion rate. This study adds to existing knowledge by not only understanding the reasons for treatment drop out from batterers themselves, but an understanding of what makes them reinstate, what is involved in that process and what makes them stay in treatment.

In short, this study shows that batterers drop out of treatment because of their anger, lack of insight/maturation and lack of motivation. It also shows that when batterers are ready to change, they reinstate and are motivated to stay in group. Once they become connected to other group members, they will complete their program. Program completion is crucial because as a result, batterers learn to deal with their anger properly which leads to reduced incidents of domestic violence.

### **Implications**

The knowledge gained from examining batterers' perception of treatment completion helps to better understand why batterers drop out of treatment. This research provided direct evidence from batterers themselves that professionals in the field of domestic violence have long been trying to understand. This information can be used to improve and strengthen all systems involved with batterers, including the judicial system,

law enforcement, and batterers' intervention programs. Implications are discussed from the following three perspectives: organization, individuals and group. It also discusses the effects that each of these levels of human organization have on each other at a policy and practice level (See figure 4). Finally, reinstatement issues are discussed, especially what makes batterers rejoin intervention groups and the reasons why they stay in these groups.

From an organization level, batterers' experience with the police and the courts may be a negative one, leading to anger which results in batterers' treatment drop out. From an individual level, the anger caused by how batterers perceived they were treated by the organizations, along with their lack of insight and lack of motivation affects their state of mind and contributes to treatment drop out. At the group level, batterers' negative state of mind caused by their anger toward the organizations involved, affects their behavior in the group which results in group drop out.

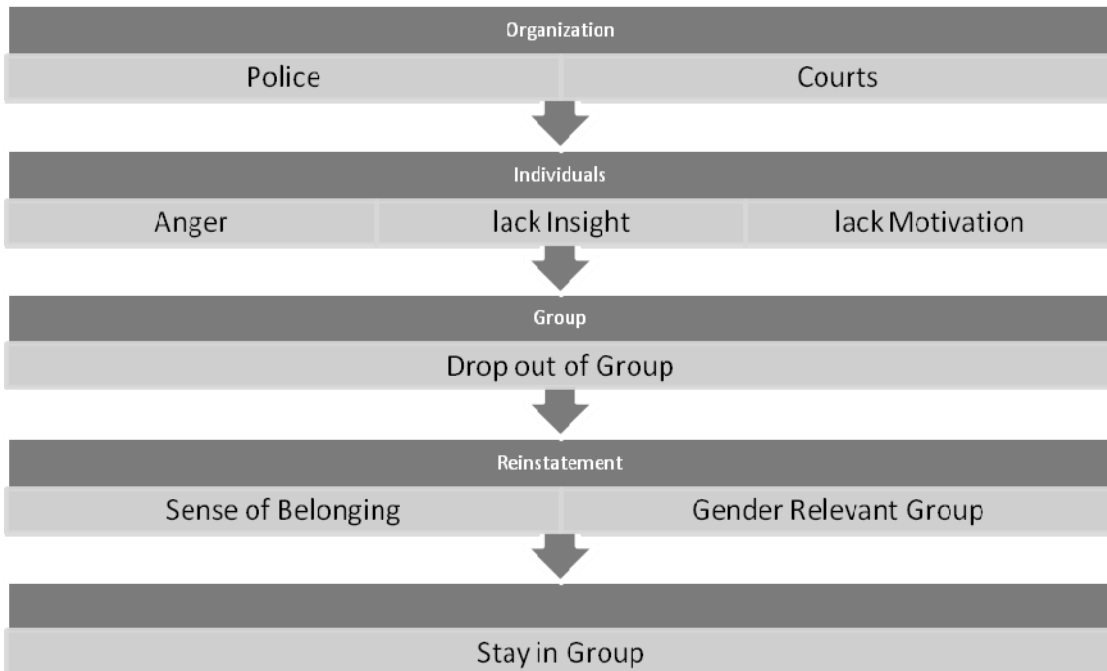


Figure 4. Perspectives on why Batterers Drop Out/Stay

### *Policy Implications*

The organization refers to the police and the courts (see figure 4). From the organization perspective, we can understand the reasons for drop out by exploring the role that the police and the courts play in batterers' failure to complete treatment (see figure 4). According to the study data, and theory developed from that data, participants' experience with these agencies influences their state of mind about group attendance. Batterers' perception of the legal system must improve in order to increase the chances of completing their program. The processes, from the time batterers are arrested until they are reinstated, should be seen as actions that do not overwhelm and intimidate batterers.

Police are the first entity batterers come into contact with when a 911 call is made as a result of a domestic violence incident. After such a call, the police arrive at the home and briefly assess the situation to determine whether an arrest should be made. Participants in this study stated that police officers are biased because they automatically believe that the man is at fault. According to Gove (1985), men by nature are the gender that is the most aggressive. The men in this study confirm that in cases of domestic violence they usually display riskier behavior by provoking the argument. Interestingly men in this study regard the legal system as being biased against men, although they agree that they are more aggressive than women but that they are not always the aggressors. Batterers perceived that this general knowledge about men being more aggressive than women influences police biases and, according to the participants in this study, limits in-depth investigation. The investigation needs to be thorough, so police officers do not make quick judgments about victims and aggressors. According to

batterers, they have often been accused wrongly because of this misconception. Batterers feel intimidated by the legal system. They feel that the control has been taken from them. This reinforces batterers' anger, which influences them to drop out of the intervention group.

Regarding the courts, the batterers believe that there is a need for more information and more flexible court processes to build trust among batterers. Participants claimed they did not know what to expect when they got to the group. They did not understand what they needed to do in the intervention group and what the group would do for them. They perceived a lack of clear communication by the court regarding intervention group expectations and its purpose and this created uneasiness when participants first attended the intervention group. Reviewing how information is provided to batterers and how this could be improved may well bring them to the group in a much better frame of mind.

Participants perceived that rigid court processes create systemic problems when they try to reinstate. They think that this process is delayed when they appear in court to request reinstatement and they are told they have to be put on the court calendar. Court calendar appointments may take a few days to a few weeks. Batterers noted that often they may already have a previous court appointment set for a later date that they have to honor. This means that they are not allowed to make another court date before the previously scheduled date. If this is the process perhaps the courts could allow batterers to reinstate sooner and avoid violation. Batterers lack of trust for the legal system, is often transferred to the intervention group and influences drop out. If batterers'

perceptions of the legal system are changed to see the legal system as sensitive and fair, batterers would likely come to group more receptive and less angry.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

Policy recommendations deal with batterers' perceptions regarding police investigation, lumping batterers together regardless of their offense, information regarding the intervention group and reinstatement and ways in which batterers perception can change to make them stay in group.

Batterers need to believe that the police are doing a thorough investigation and presenting accurate information to the courts. A suggestion to change batterers' perception regarding police investigations would be to interview both parties thoroughly, as well as witnesses, regarding the domestic violence incident if these steps are not already included in the investigation process. Also, a trained therapist could be assigned to respond along with the police to assist with interviewing all parties involved. Although the results of lie detector test are not admissible as evidence of guilt or innocence, inclusion of lie detector testing could provide a more accurate assessment of who the aggressors are in order to provide the best intervention for these individuals. With this information, a judge would be able to determine appropriate sentencing and referrals to batterers. Batterers will see the effort that has been made to complete a fair interview process.

Participants perceived that the courts lump all batterers together regardless of their offense, that they do not provide proper information regarding intervention group and that the reinstatement process is rigid. Batterers believe that whether they are first

time offenders or have been convicted of domestic abuse in the past, they are all treated the same. If this is true, dealing with batterers on a case by case basis would reinforce the fairness of the judicial system and it would help batterers change their perception regarding the sentencing process.

Batterers also think that the courts do not provide information about the intervention group. If this is the case, perhaps the courts could provide information such as why they are sent to intervention group, what is expected of them, the purpose of the intervention group and the courts' expectations regarding attendance and completion of the intervention group. Providing this information to batterers could help them perceive the courts as being informative.

Participants perceived the reinstatement process as being inflexible. If this is true, the reinstatement process could be made flexible by allowing batterers to go to court and reinstate on the same day. This would reduce the delay that it takes for batterers to get back into a program and it would change batterers' perception regarding the courts' lack of flexibility. Another recommendation would be to design programs that respond to batterers' perceptions to the findings addressing anger, maturation/insight, motivation, reinstatement issues and connectedness to the intervention group. These findings will be provided to the courts, probation department, the police as well as batterer's program to increase program completion.

The goal of these recommendations is to change batterers' perception of the legal system and to get them to stay in treatment. Once batterers see the legal system as being non-threatening and non-intimidating, they will not feel as if they were treated unfairly. Their anger level will not dominate their state of mind making them to be much more



ready to be in the intervention group. Also, batterers will have no reason to not trust the system or to be suspicious about possible affiliations of the group facilitator with the judicial system.

### *Practice Implications*

#### **Individuals**

As noted above, batterers often come to group angry, with poor insight/maturation and with little motivation (see figure 4). Taken together, these factors are likely to have a significant negative impact on treatment if not addressed. Specifically, the built up anger that batterers have prior to coming to group greatly affects their behavior in the group. Batterers attend group feeling resentful at the “system,” angry at the rules and not willing to participate. This anger, if not resolved, according to the theoretical implication developed in this study, will lead to treatment drop out.

Batterers’ behavior in group is affected by how they perceive being treated by the organizations involved. Batterers’ initial perception of group is usually negative because of the anger they come with due to their perception of the organizations they are involved with. They are angry because of feeling they were treated unfairly. Based on the theoretical implications of this study, group facilitators can assist batterers to resolve the anger they bring and to help them develop a sense of belonging and feeling connected with other group members. This process helps batterers develop a strong male bond in a group that they feel is relevant to themselves as males. Group facilitators should be perceived as having an important role to play in the retention of group members.

The bonding process of batterers in intervention group is greatly influenced by the role group facilitators play. Facilitators should be perceived as providing an environment in which individuals feel safe. They can help batterers feel that they belong by engaging them immediately into group. Facilitators should also be perceived as making sure the group supports its members. Facilitators should be perceived as allowing group members to introduce themselves to newcomers and to share their stories with them. Listening to the stories of other group members allows newcomers to understand that they are not alone. It helps them to feel that there are many individuals experiencing similar issues. This puts them at ease and helps them feel that they are not going to be judged. Sharing gives them an opportunity to tell their side of the story and to reflect on the incident that brought them to group. It also allows other group members to provide support and encouragement to the newcomers. This process will help new members connect to the group.

The facilitator also has a role to play during the newcomers' next few sessions. The facilitator should be perceived as spending a lot of time helping newcomers to express their anger and resolve it. Resolution of anger will increase batterers' chances of staying in group.

Lack of insight/maturity also affects the individual and can result in treatment drop out. The current study findings suggest that batterers may not understand the need to fulfill their obligations to the court when batterers' insight/maturity is limited. Batterers display behaviors that demonstrate lack of insight such as accumulating traffic tickets, driving under the influence, not taking care of warrants and not understanding how their lack of follow-through can affect their freedom. These behaviors eventually create severe

consequences for batterers causing them to drop out of group as a result of being incarcerated.

Finally, motivation, if it is lacking, also leads to drop out. This lack of motivation demonstrated by actions like not showing up for class, not being interested, feeling like they would prefer to be somewhere else or doing other things can eventually cause batterers to drop out. Based on the theoretical implications in this study, which also confirms Bandura's theory, batterers' motivation is influenced by their belief that they cannot benefit from the intervention group. This theory suggests that if batterers believe that they can learn from the intervention group then their motivation will increase. So, practitioners can motivate batterers by helping them change their perception to believe that they are capable of learning skills that can be beneficial to them. Practical tools can be role-played in the group and batterers can be encouraged to apply these tools at home. More attention can be paid to rapport building in order to encourage a cohesive group and strong connections within the group. Individual meetings or an orientation group can be done to prepare batterers for group before their first treatment group meeting.

## **Group**

Some group behaviors and batterers perceptions contributed to treatment drop out. Participants expressed feeling resentment and rebellion about being forced to attend intervention group. They stated that their inconsistent group attendance was because they were not interested in group due to the fact that it was not a priority for them. One participant stated being "spaced out" in group because his interest was on doing other

things. They expressed that their behavior was negative, which was demonstrated through non participation in group.

Lack of trust was another issue raised by several participants. Participants perceived that the intervention program was affiliated with the legal system and were not sure how much to share. Also, participants perceived that the rules were too restrictive. They reported being bothered that there was no flexibility. They expressed not only feeling forced to follow group rules but forced to attend group. When faced with the group pressures, batterers feel controlled which reinforces their displeasure even more. These men stated that these pressures created their resistance to group attendance.

Some participants reported that at times they were uncomfortable opening up to a room full of strangers. Others stated being naturally timid in groups which made participation a struggle. Participants expressed being in a group with other batterers with whom they perceived they could not relate to because they have nothing in common. These negative perceptions will impact group attendance. If these behaviors and perceptions persist batterers will not stay in group long enough to bond and become connected to the intervention group (see figure 4). From a group perspective, facilitators play a crucial role in helping batterers resolve their negative perceptions and become connected to the intervention group. These men experience a sense of being connected and they bond with other males in a gender relevant group.

Regarding reinstatement, all of the interviewed batterers indicated that they were more ready to make changes in their lives after being re-instated. Specifically, they reported being much more matured, willing to follow through and allowed themselves to be connected to other group members. This sense of belonging influenced their behavior

in a positive way. These men felt that they were part of a gender relevant group made up of men who understand what they are going through, which contributed to them staying in group. A gender relevant group provides men with an opportunity to express their feelings. Men rarely have a place where they can gather, as men, to share their feelings. Although it might be difficult for these men to express their feelings, being surrounded with other men who understand what they are going through helped them share their emotions more easily. This environment provided a place of support where these men could talk about issues that they may not be able to talk about any other place. Men open up about real issues in groups attended by men only. They are able to share not only their concerns, but their fears, worries and successes with other men. This gives men an opportunity to get feedback from other men's point of view. This forum gives men the opportunity to clarify confusions they might have and to make important decisions in their lives. This opportunity to open up fosters better communication for men.

### ***Practice Recommendations***

Practice recommendations focus on dealing with resolving drop out, from the individual's perspective, through a discussion regarding the designing of two separate batterers' groups based on the severity of the offense and the number of times batterers have offended. Also, a brief recommendation on how to increase insight/maturity by helping batterers learn cause and effect. In addition, a discussion on motivation and ways in which group facilitators can help motivate batterers to stay in the intervention group is included. Also, from the group perspective, ways to keep batterers in the intervention group through the provision of a supportive environment by group facilitators.

A recommendation that would help alleviate the anger felt by batterers is to design two types of intervention groups. One group would be for batterers who have committed a lesser degree of domestic violence offense or are first time offenders and another for offenders with more than one domestic violence offense and/or who have committed severe domestic abuse acts. Programs would also contain relevant curriculums for each group.

Groups for first time offenders could be called conflict resolution groups rather than batterers' intervention. These groups could deal with how to resolve conflicts without the use of aggression. Also, the focus could be on abuse prevention, how to deal with emotions, communication issues and tools to prevent anger from escalating. This would be similar to the current curriculum but would not regularly address members as domestic abusers. Since drop out is influenced by batterers' lack of maturity/insight, facilitators could address the issue of cause and effect, helping batterers visualize how negative behavior results in negative outcomes, and how positive behavior will produce positive outcomes. Facilitators could also lead discussions around taking responsibility for behaviors and actions and how individuals are responsible for their own emotions. Groups for repeat/violent offenders would continue to be called batterers' intervention. The focus would continue to be based on the current curriculum that batterers' intervention groups are using.

Lack of motivation also influences treatment dropout. So facilitators could also point out that they in fact can complete the classes, and that many people have done just that. After all, Bandura demonstrates that those who believe they can learn increase their self-efficacy. Motivation can be improved with telephone reminders. This helps batterers

see that people are genuinely interested in their success. Noticing when they are not in group and telling the batterers that their absence was noticed also reinforces that they were missed.

These recommendations are practical and can be accomplished by the facilitators within the group system. The responsibility to complete a batterers' intervention program does not only lay on batterers, but on every entity involved in this process, including the police, courts, probation officers, intervention programs, and facilitators. In an effort to increase completion of batterers in intervention programs, these recommendations are worth exploring. Batterers can benefit from the support of everyone involved to have a more successful completion rate.

### **Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

The suggestions for future research grow out of the study's limitations and its successes. The study is limited in perspective, partly because it was conducted as an unfunded research, partly because the twenty-two men interviewed included no batterers who had dropped out and did not reinstate, and partly because it included no non-English speakers. Increasing the sample would have given more authority and perspective to the study.

Adding batterers who dropped out and did not reinstate would have shed more light on why batterers do not return to treatment group. But this group is more difficult to recruit. There was no access to their current contact, and if contacted they might be suspicious of the researcher and/or may believe that the researcher has some affiliation with the law.

Adding non-English speakers batterers would have allowed us to see if their commitment and motivation is any different from that of English speakers. It would also have been interesting to interview dropouts who did not reinstate, particularly to find out whether they see themselves as different from when they were in the program and whether they feel anything in the program was worth their while. Other limitations that were not controlled for were individual factors such as mental illness and previous arrest history.

This study shows that anger, immaturity/lack of insight and lack of motivation are the core reasons batterers drop out of treatment. Batterers are often angry at the criminal justice system. They do not like the way police, judges, public defenders, district attorneys, or probation officers treat them. So future research should explore how the judicial system perceives itself in relation to batterers. Police officers, judges, probation officers, public defenders, and district attorneys may understand how to improve the way the judicial system deals with batterers. This is a crucial area that needs in-depth exploration because the initial interaction batterers' experience with the legal system sets the stage for how successful they are in completing an intervention program.

It is important for batterers to complete their intervention: from a theoretical perspective these factors appear to be important in reducing recidivism, which reduces violence against women and children. This perspective would have to be tested using other types of research. For example, it would be interesting to compare two different groups, one treatment and one that had a pre-group/orientation group to address the anger and distrust of the system prior to starting treatment group. Drop-out rates could then be compared to see if this theory holds up. This is a possible way of testing findings for



future research. Also, the use of Braithwaite's Reintegrative theory could be tested specifically with batterers to see how effective it might be in preventing treatment dropout.

### **Conclusion**

Given its limitations, the study was a success. It got inside the minds of batterers and determined how they relate to intervention groups and the judicial system. It helps us to understand the reasons batterers drop out of intervention group from batterers' perspectives and offers possible solutions to address treatment non-completion. It also reveals that men who connect with other men to become part of a productive group can overcome anger and immaturity and complete the intervention program. The more batterers who complete their intervention program the less risk of recidivism and the less violence against women and children. Knowing more about the reasons for dropout helps reduce the cycle of violence.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**ANTICIPATED QUESTIONS**

Descriptive Questions

1. What was your experience like when you first attended men's intervention classes? How about now?
2. Most court ordered programs have strict rules. What is your experience with the rules?
3. Groups can be somewhat intimidating. How comfortable are you in groups?
4. Did the program meet your needs? How?
5. How motivated are you to change?
6. I understand that you were reinstated in the program, why did you drop out?
7. What made you come back?

### Structured Questions

8. Has the program benefited you? How?
9. Since you were court ordered, do you see yourself as being forced into the program?
10. When I think of the problems the incident of domestic violence have caused I feel.....
11. Men and women deal with anger and conflicts in different ways. Is the program appropriate for men?
12. Most groups are made up of various ages. How appropriate is the program to your age group?
13. While you were out of the program, did you miss it?

### Contrast Questions

14. Is there anything about the program that made you feel that you belonged?
15. While you were in the program did you feel you lost money or missed out on some other activity?
16. While you were out of the program was there anything that made you feel that you could benefit from it if you came back?

Taken and modified from McMurran & McCulloch (2007).

APPENDIX B  
ANNOUNCEMENT

# ATTENTION!

## *Volunteers needed*

*Have you been ordered by the court to attend a men's intervention group?  
At some point, did you stop attending and have now been re-instated?  
If you've answered yes to the above questions, then...*

*You are invited to participate in a study on:*

*Men's Perception of Treatment Non-Completion.*

- *The study includes a 60-minutes interview scheduled at your convenience at any of the 4 PHS locations.*
- *If you are interested in participating, please contact Zoila Gordon at (909) 537-5000 to schedule an appointment.*

*As a thank you for your participation a \$15.00 gift card will be given to you at the end of the interview.*

**APPENDIX C**  
**STUDY ANNOUNCEMENT**

If you are 18 years and older, have been court ordered to attend a men's intervention group and at some point stopped attending and are now re-instated, you are invited to participate in a study on Men's Perception of Treatment Non-Completion. The study includes a one-hour interview scheduled at your convenience at any of the 4 PHS locations: Moreno Valley, Riverside, Corona, and Beaumont. As a thank you for your participation in this study, a gift card of \$15.00 will be given to you at the end of the interview. Your participation in this study is purely voluntary. If you are interested in participating, please contact Zoila Gordon at (909) 537-5000 to schedule an appointment

## APPENDIX D

### TELEPHONE CALL REMINDER SCRIPT

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_: this is Zoila Gordon doctoral student at Loma Linda University. We spoke a few weeks ago regarding the study my supervisor and I are conducting on men's perception of treatment non-completion. I just wanted to remind you and confirm that your interview is scheduled on \_\_\_\_\_.

The location of your appointment will be at \_\_\_\_\_. The interview will be approximately one hour long. Please contact me at 909-537-5000 if there are any changes. I appreciate your willingness to participate in such a valuable study. Thank you and I am looking forward to seeing you on \_\_\_\_\_.

**APPENDIX E**  
**INFORMED CONSENT**

[Letterhead will go here]

Informed Consent

Perceptions Regarding Non-Completion of Men in Intervention Groups

You are invited to participate in a research study because of your current or past participation in an intervention program at Psychological Health Services. Before you give your consent, please read through this entire document and sign and date the bottom of each page.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this student research study is to examine reasons why some men do not complete mandated intervention programs aimed at reducing domestic violence. It is expected that this information will help Psychological Health Services improve their programs for me.

Participation in this study will take approximately one hour. Once the consent form has been reviewed and signed, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire and to participate in an audio recorded interview about your personal and program related reasons for discontinuing treatment at PHS.

Risk

Due to the fact that treatment is court mandated, you may be concerned about potential legal consequences this study might have. Please know that the researchers are in no way affiliated with the legal system and your participation in this study will not result in any study related legal consequences. The study includes questions regarding your treatment experience, which may result in uncomfortable feelings. If this occurs, you can choose to not answer and/or you may stop the study at any time during the process. If you become emotionally upset during the interview, a referral to speak to a counselor at the PHS clinic will be available to you. If you reveal a new domestic violence incident or offense, you will be encouraged to discuss this during your intervention program and to apply the tools you are learning to resolve conflicts without using aggression. Participating in this study exposes you to minimal risk, no more than you would encounter in your daily life.

Benefits

There may not be any direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, this research will provide you an opportunity to share how you feel about the program and may result in making the program more useful to you and others like you in the future.

Perceptions Regarding Non-Completion of Men in Intervention Groups



Participants Rights

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can choose not to participate in this study. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Your decision on whether or not to participate or whether to terminate at any time will not affect your present or future involvement with Psychological Health Services.

Confidentiality

All information from this study about you will be kept strictly confidential, and any research reports or publications of the study will not personally identify you. Further, any identifying information revealed on the audiotape will be deleted from the transcription and once transcribed your audiotape will be destroyed. Information collected during the study will be stored in a locked cabinet and in a password-protected computer. Only members of the research team will have access to these files.

Additional Costs/Reimbursements

There will be no cost to you for participating in this study. A small thank you gift card of \$15.00 will be given to you upon completion of the interview.

Impartial Third Party Contact

If you wish to contact an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any complaint or concern you may have about the study, you may contact the patient representatives of Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda CA 92354, phone (909) 558-4647 or patientrelations@llu.edu for information and assistance.

Informed Consent

I have read the consent form. My questions concerning this study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand what is being requested of me. I hereby give voluntary consent for participation in this study. I may call or email Zoila Gordon, doctoral student at (909) 537-5000 (zgordonsealey03g@llu.edu) or Kimberly Freeman, PhD, her supervisor at (909) 379-7589 (kfreeman@llu.edu) if I have additional questions or concerns.

I have kept a copy of this consent form.

I give consent to be audio taped during my interview \_\_\_\_\_ (initials)

Name of Participant (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Signed) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher (signed) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ *Initial*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Date* A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST HEALTH SCIENCES INSTITUTION

## APPENDIX F

### DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to see if participants best represent a wide range of demographic characteristics in this study. Please check the items that describe you.

Age \_\_\_\_\_

#### Race/ Ethnicity

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or Black African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Non-Hispanic White

#### Marital Status

- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Separated
- Single/Never been married
- A member of an unmarried couple

#### Employment Status

- Employed for wages
- Self-Employed
- Out of work for more than one year
- Out of work for less than a year
- Homemaker
- Student
- Unable to work
- Retired

#### Religious Affiliation

- Protestant Christian
- Roman Catholic
- Evangelical Christian
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Buddhist
- Other

### Education Completed

- Never attended school
- Attended kindergarten
- Grades 1 through 8 (Elementary)
- Grades 9 through 11 (Some high school)
- Grades 12 or GED (High school graduate)
- College 1 year to 3 years (Some college or technical school)
- College 4 years (College graduate)

## **APPENDIX G**

### **OPEN CODES EXCERPTS**

These are the definitions of the above codes and narratives taken from participants' interviews to illustrate them.

#### Accepted

Accepted refers to being a part of something also, being embraced due to having something in common with others. One participant stated, "I felt I belong in this program because you've got something in common with the group, you know. We all lost control for whatever reason and we reacted the way we reacted you know, yeah, I'm part of that group. We all have something in common." Another participant said, "I felt that I belong to the program just by the fact that I do have an anger problem. Once I accepted the fact that I have an anger problem and that I do need help with it, I learned to express it in my class, and it helped me to open up a lot at home and express my feelings there." Another participant stated, "If I didn't drop out I would still be with those guys but I'm with these guys now and I like it and I enjoy coming to class." Here is an example of what one participant said, "Well, yeah. I feel that it's going to help me reach my goal. And the way that they express themselves, they don't feel intimidated by the group. I feel like I belong because it feels good." Another participant said, "Yes, the whole concept of anger management. I never had a problem with dealing with my anger but I did grow up around a lot of violence so it made me feel that I belong here because there are things I need to know about how to deal with other people's anger and violence." Another stated, "To me this is home because this is where I started so for me to go to another group that means I have to start all over so I want to start here and finish here."

## Accepting Responsibility

Accepting responsibility is the act of admitting the role one played in their circumstances. One participant said, “So that moment, that day I knew that I was wrong. It’s true I slapped you, and you didn’t deserve it and I deserve whatever is coming to me.” Another participant stated, “I feel stupid ‘cause no matter what the situation is there is a right way to handle it.” Another participant stated, “I feel like I was really irresponsible because me and my wife were trying to raise our kids and that wasn’t giving a correct role model to them and they’re going to repeat if I don’t change.”

## Adjustment to Group

Adjustment to group is the act of becoming comfortable and at ease in group. One participant stated, “Everybody come in here they are mad. I was mad. That’s change. That attitude changes once you lose the madness and you realize I’m already here might as well try to get something out of it.” Another participant stated, “In the beginning, I was not comfortable in group at all. They throw you in a room with a bunch of other people that you don’t know and that you’ve never seen before, and you don’t know what their story is. Then you get to know them. I know everybody now so, the facilitator have us tell our story when you are new. You are the only one sharing your story. Once that happens that kind of helps you out to blend in. I don’t feel like a stranger now. I feel like those guys and I have the same problem or whatever. We all are trying to work out our problems.” Another participant said, “At first I really did not want to open to anybody because everybody were strangers and I did not really want to talk but after being in the class for a while, most guys open up after a little bit but it does take me very long to get

used to people. After I started participating with everything that is going on in class I started opening up.”

#### Adjustment to Rules

Adjustment to rules refers to ways in which batterers become at ease with group rules. One participant stated, “I did not feel that the rules were very demanding, if you stay in the classes long enough then you would see how they would help.” Another participant said, “Honestly when I first found out that the judge wanted me to do 52 weeks of domestic violence I was kind of upset. I thought the rules were just real harsh but just going with it and just doing what the courts expect me to do I realize that in reality, it’s really not that bad.” Another one stated, “I think the rules are enforced but I don’t think the rules are necessarily strict as opposed to some other court ordered programs that they are really strict. They have drug testing going on and other stuff.”

#### Age Appropriate

Age appropriate refers to how relevant information is to a particular age group. One participant stated, “The program was appropriate to my age group. In my group, there are older people, and they are people like my age too. I listen to them. Like I said I’m quiet, don’t say anything but I listen.” Another participant said, “There are some that are older than you, and they’ve been through a lot and you can learn from them. Everybody talks about their problem. It doesn’t matter what age they are. Everybody just learns off each other and their life experience.” Another one said, “It’s very appropriate because a lot of males my age are going through the same thing. Different races and different ages, especially mine because I think we need to be the ones to teach the younger generation.” Yeah I think it’s appropriate at this age, not knowing how to handle

work and where your next money is going to come from. You're young still, and you're already dealing with those problems. So my age group, yeah I think it cool."

### Applying Tools

Application of tools refers to the participants' application of what they are learning in group. A participant stated, "Before I did not try to diffuse the situation, but now I try to diffuse it before it starts. I try to find something to do and let her know that I'm taking off; I'd go driving around the block for a while." Another one said, "Now I just use like time-outs. I use me now. I just use like time-outs. I use me-time. I just tell my wife I need some me time so instead of fighting I would leave the house if I get mad get my keys, jump in the car and I take off time. I just tell my wife I need some me-time so instead of fighting I would leave the house." Another participant stated, "Most of the time, when we would start arguing or when things would start getting violent, I would start to back off. That was the main tool that I used, and it's a really good tool to use. Sometimes you can push people's buttons, and not know it and I learned that I have to stand back and think about what I can do to stop this."

### Attendance Issues

Attendance issues refer to explanations of reasons why batterers experience problems with group attendance. Several participants gave a variety of reasons for dropping out of group. One participant said, "The only reason I stop going was because I got a DUI and I went back to prison." Another one explained, "I dropped out of the program for about 2-3 months because I ended up having a warrant for my arrest for not going to the work release program so I could work off jail time. I was arrested and I spent a couple of days in jail, went back to court and they just re-instated me." Another

participant stated, “There was a situation I got pulled over for a traffic violation and they realized I had a warrant.” Another one said, “Because I didn’t complete my classes. I didn’t have the money to pay and they were like, ‘what’s up?’” And I never told them anything when I stopped going so I guess he told them. And so they put a warrant out and I went to jail.” One participant stated that he dropped out of group for financial reasons. He said, “Because I didn’t complete my classes. I didn’t have the money to pay and they were like, ‘what’s up?’ And I never told them anything when I stopped going so I guess he told them. And so they put a warrant out and I went to jail.” Another participant acknowledged that his attendance was inconsistent because he did not want to be in group. This participant said, “I was half way through the program before I dropped out, I used to skip a lot, and I only came about 45% of what I was supposed to, you know, ‘cause I’d come this week and then not show up for two more weeks, then I’d come another week then maybe two weeks in a row and then not show up, then I’d end up in jail. I was inconsistent because I did not take it seriously; I did not want to be there, I was resentful. I went back to prison because I assaulted someone with a deadly weapon, and I wound up 4 years in prison.” Also, financial difficulties may play a role in batterers dropping out of group. Here is what this participant said, “ I just stop coming, the money was tight, it was stressful at times it was like I need the money I need the money and then it just got to a point when I thought you know what I’m not even going anymore.”

#### Barriers to Reinstatement

Barriers to reinstating refer to batterers having trouble getting back into the group. Some respondents stated, “I came out February 10<sup>th</sup> of last year and I was trying to get back but due to lack of work I did not have money to come back. Getting reinstated was



not easy, I remember coming here wanting to reinstate but then being sent out to another city which I had no transportation at the time, then go over there and re-pay everything a whole \$90.00 and \$55.00 fee to re-start this class is no easy task when you did not have a job, so you want to please the court every which way, but you can't when you are financially destroyed. I was struggling to eat, having the kids over when they visit things like that. A whole lot of stuff was going on." Another participant said, "I needed to reinstate but then they wouldn't let me get on the court calendar because I already had a court date coming up because the violation had already went through. In the end, I ended up getting a paralegal. We just got it all squared away but, I mean if you don't take care of it the courts, they are very unorganized, if you don't stay on it let them know what's going on they'll just take it. They'll just classify you as this type of person or that type of person. I kept going to let them know I know I'm going to take care of this. We've got to get this straightened out so if you know it took a little while." Some participants feel that the court is slow when dealing with reinstatements, which prevents them from reinstating quickly. Here is what this participant stated, "I got arrested when I got dropped but by the time I got arrested and got dropped, I went back to get re-enrolled, they told me that I needed a court date so I just had to wait for the judge to give me a court date, like I had already went in on a walk-in to let them know, I went to jail it was their fault, I dropped from my class."

### Being in Control of Self

Being in control of self means controlling one's' emotion. One participant stated, "If you just stay, keep your mind on it. I'm not going to let BS set me off. I'm not going to go wilding out on people. I'm just going to be cool try to handle everything in a more

positive lower tone; you know what I'm saying. If you just stay on it and you stay in that mind set. There are a couple situations where I could control myself." Another one said, "Let's say right now today if she came to my house and I had some 'cush' on the table and she just start throwing it away I just leave. I just go. I would lose that little bit. I'll just say I'll go get some bud or whatever. I'm not getting drawn into people's stuff not more I don't even want to be a part of it." Another participant stated, "Someday I have to tell God thanks for putting me through this, because if I did not go through this, I would have been different with myself. I have control."

### Blaming

Blaming refers to justifying Ones' behavior. One participant stated, "Every time I don't finish the classes they start it over and charge me more money and more money, but that's the court. I think the court system just wants my money." Another participant said, "I had a very angry wife and definitely violent more times than one." Another participant stated, "I would often tell my wife 'I'm going to your class because you're the one responsible for me being here.' I was a blamer and blaming kept me in the mindset that I was in, until I began to allow myself to dissect what that anger was about."

### Change

Change is taking a different course of action. Change is doing something different. A participant stated, "It's about changing. I can't change her I can change me as far as arguing or making things get to a higher level of arguing. That is something I try to avoid very much." Another one stated, "I felt motivated to change. Before I was incarcerated for my domestic violence I wanted change. I just was scared of change." Another one stated, "And it's changed a lot in my life with my wife; we have boundaries

and rules now. And when you first get into a relationship its love, puppy love maybe, and maybe kids got you together, but you don't really settle for any guidelines or rules to your relationship and it made me do that."

#### Comfort Level

Comfort level is the degree of comfort experienced by batterers in group. One participant said, "Ah very comfortable, yeah but I mean group settings and talking in front of people don't bother me so, I'm sure for the more introverted people it's probably ah a little more grueling, but for me, it did not bother me." Another participant stated, "I got comfortable in group, because I look at it like a bunch of guys hanging out, talking, you know, so that was a positive thing. I was comfortable from the first time I came to group. I talked to some guys like outside or whatever; for the most part I was comfortable." One other participant stated, "In the beginning I was not too open. When we first come in we have to tell everybody what happened to get us in here. I was able to but it was uncomfortable."

#### Couples' Interaction

Couples' Interaction means the way couples' behave with each other. One participant stated, "Because in the midst of both of those situations, there is always the fact that these are usually two people who love each other. 9 times out of 10, its two people who are madly, madly in love with each other because you can't get somebody you don't care about to get you that upset." Another participant said, "My girl and I, we get along a lot better too, cause like if she has a problem or an attitude or stuff like that I try to work around it, you know. Instead of looking out for myself, even though she is wrong I take responsibility and stuff like that. Even though most of the times she does not

admit to her problems I still can ignore it and stuff like that. I still try to talk about things instead of silence.” Another participant said, “There was times where I went to catch the bus and my wife would say that she’ll drop me off. She would pick me up and if our class was running late she would be sitting outside honking the horn and screaming.”

### Denial

Denial is not taking responsibility for ones’ action. One participant stated, “No, I did not feel like I belong, because if you feel like you belong, then obviously you have a problem. If I feel like I need to be here is ‘cause I really have a problem, and I don’t want to feel like that. I don’t want to feel like I have a problem, ‘cause I made a mistake, and you know I will passed that. So If, I feel that I’ve got to be here is because I have a problem.” Another participant stated, “When I first started I was not motivated, I did not feel I had done anything wrong. I mean it was wrong, but I felt justifying what I had done.”

### Denying Abuse

Denying abuse means not accepting that a particular behavior is abusive. One participant stated, “Even though I hadn’t done anything to be thrown in jail, it is what it is.” One other participant said, “See I’m an unusual demographic. I am 45 years old, and I’ve never got in trouble for anything ever, I mean eve. If you do the research on my case, I got in trouble for hitting a girl who I didn’t hit and that I know for ever and she knows I did not hit her, and it gets worse than that. I’ve known her forever and she ruined my business and cost me\$ 300,000 plus by just one phone call. Actually it was not a phone call it was a fax. She sent a fax to all the insurance company. She was my wife’s best girlfriend and the she did this thing with the car accident and swears I punched her in the

head. If I had punched her in the head I would have killed her. I would not even hit a man I did not like, but she swears I hit her.”

### Desire to Change

Desire to change is feeling excited about changing their behavior. One participant said, “I’m very motivated to make changes. In prison this time, I was then somewhat of a, want to say a Christian, but I was a poor Christian, this time I spent my entire 4 years studying the word of God, and that has changed me.” Another participant said, “Since I had just gotten released from custody of the county I was kind of motivated to do good, you know, I wanted to do the right thing, so yea I would say yes I was motivated.” One other participant stated, “This time around is different I’m much more motivated.” Another one said, “I’m all the way motivated. I feel like a changed man now. My motivation is still high, I was just telling one of my cousins that’s also in one of these classes that a man that has to come into these classes should really put his all into them because it really plays a part in life with a woman or people in general.” Another participant stated, “I believe that I’m a lot motivated to change I actually believe that everybody who comes to class and sticks with it they’re working towards their goal of being a better person, so I am very motivated to change.” Another one stated, “Yeah, for my daughter, because I grew up in a violent home and I don’t want my daughter to go through that. Even with this first class I’m even more motivated than I was before. I think because of the experiences I went through I just don’t want to put my daughter through that.”

## Difficulties with Rules

Difficulties with rules refer to batterers struggling to follow rules. One participant said, “So it feels like you are between a rock and a hard spot and I have feelings of resentment over that because, just from the reality of the situation and I’ve always had somewhat of with authority problems too, so people telling me what to do when to do it, how to do it. After prison, you lose all control. It takes your self-respect and all that away from you, and they degrade you and take all your self-respect from you. Somehow it doesn’t seem fair to me.” Another client said, “My experience with the rules was that it was very strict, very like they weren’t going to put up with too much. Three times and you are out if you missed. From what I remember it was very strict, which made it also hard especially when I didn’t want to be there.” Another participant stated, “As far as the rules they felt stressful because me being a truck driver and this place only having 2 days open for you to try and get your classes in was very stressful for me and still is, very much of a struggle, and so if they had opening classes every day, it would probably be a lot easier for people to get through this situation. If you can make it to your classes you would be back in the court system serving jail time.”

## Discouragement

Discouragement refers to batterers having a sense of hopelessness and /or a sense of not being able to move forward. One participant said, “That was a really, really ah discouraging situation because I thought, you know, that I was a making a headway where I was not seen as a person who beats up on women.” Another participant said, “I felt I was forced and to be quite honest as much as I love my family, and that’s why I admitted to making changes. When I was incarcerated I heard these other inmates talking

about how they have to do 52. They only can miss 3 classes. It cost this much money. I was just thinking to myself like wow that's a lot of money. That's a lot of time wasted. All the negative aspects about it so I had almost convinced myself that I'm just going to stay in jail, just give me whatever the jail sentence is. If I have to do a year in jail because you want me to do a year in classes, I'm just going to do a year in jail and then I'll come home and I don't have to do the classes but it doesn't work that way."

### Encouragement

Encouragement is feeling supported in their effort to change. One participant said, "So anybody who comes in the class and they are complaining and they are real negative about I'm real quick to let them know that it's to their benefit it's not because anybody hates you, its' not that anybody is against you, it's just they are against your ways and if you could change your ways you'll be ok." Another participant said, "I always was told growing up that I have a gift from God, and that was that I can get people's attention very easily. And then when in church, youth pastors they would always tell me you have a calling, people do listen to you, when are you going to use your calling. And then I come here and then I see that people do listen when I'm talking, they are just like ah! I have a purpose in life and I want to use it. I want to use these classes, I'm not looking for a paycheck I just want to help somebody, if I can help change that one person in real life then I know that I've done something good, then that one person would be able to help another person and it would just continue."

### Expressing Emotions

Expressing emotions is the ability of individuals to state how they are feeling. One participant said, "I do have like little times when I'm feeling upset or angry at my

own problems but don't get aggressive to someone else. But I do know how to work out my problems like filter it out, some way I can by myself. My anger has gotten a little better." Another participant stated, "I just felt that if I didn't express my feelings and my emotions, and I feel that if I didn't get comfortable sometime soon I felt that I would be wasting my time. Then you are in front of a bunch of men, then you know men have their own ways and their own theories so I had to ignore the fact that there was men. I actually had to announce that to the class that I know that we are all men in here but I'm going to excuse that for the time being that I'm here and I'm just going to speak how I feel."

### Feeling Pressured

Feeling pressured is feeling forced to do something that is creating a certain amount of stress. One participant said, "My anger, I tried to work on, I would not say anger but my mood, it's just like I'm always down because there's lot of stuff that stresses me out about my life but, I always look at it like things could be worse you know." "I'm still here; I keep moving I have a lot of hard thoughts." Another participant stated, "I felt pressured with the rules, like right now I'm pressured like that because my DUI class and this class they are court ordered and I'm pressured, because yesterday I went to the DUI class and now today here, yeah I got a little bit of pressure. I have to go the AA meetings too, that I got re-instated too, it's bad. But I'm almost done with this class here; I'm in my 39<sup>th</sup> class now. I'm almost there." "Batterers also see the courts and the police as much bigger than them and some feel that their only way out is to do what they are told to do. One participant stated, "After my fourth class, my fifth and sixth class I just ignored who I was up against, that was the courts, the police officers, I just felt that



if I didn't express my feelings and my emotions, and I feel that if I didn't get comfortable sometime soon I felt that I would be wasting my time."

### Feeling Regretful

Feeling regretful is feeling badly about past behavior and wishing that they had not behaved the way they did. One participant stated, "Yeah, because after that happened I was still with that person, not for a long time, and it was just the same, but I feel if I had done the program I could have dealt with it and we might be together." Another one said, "I made some mistakes in the past and I'm still paying for them now." Another one said, "I could have avoided that. I could have not gone to jail and just walk away. But back then I wanted the last word but I could have avoided all that otherwise I wouldn't be here. That was the whole reason why I'm here, when I could have just left for the day and just took off and avoided all these classes, work release, community service, probation, I could have avoided all of that and I just have to do it." Another participant stated, "I could have handled it in different ways if I would have taken more time to think the matter through, If I had not allowed my anger to get out of control. It's not a matter of who's right or wrong; it's a matter of technique. It's not what you say; it's how you say it. There are different ways to approach it and I had tunnel vision at that time."

### Felt Forced into Program

Felt Forced into Program is feeling pressured to attend group. Batterers sometimes feel as if they have no option. One participant said, "I did feel forced, I figured hey I did what I did and I paid the price four years of my life and now you want me to do more, and more, and more." Another one said, "I felt like I was forced but I mean sometimes you just a little nudge in the right direction but I do feel like I was

forced because I would have never thought to come do this on my own accord, I felt like they were making me especially at the beginning.” Another one said, “Basically I am being forced to take the classes because if I don’t then I can end up doing six months in jail so yeah I’m being forced but I would take the classes if they would’ve said we will not put you in jail but we want you to take these classes then yeah I would’ve taken them. Over the years my wife and I have even gone and taken classes together, not being court ordered.” This participant stated, “I completely feel forced, I feel forced financially and worrying about my freedom being taking away from me especially when I did not do anything but in order to please the courts what am I to do.”

#### Financial Stress

Financial Stress refers to financial pressures or exhaustion. A participant said, “I felt that I missed out on \$25.00. I felt it was money going down the toilet, going down the drain when I could at least buy something for the kids, and I could spend time with them, spend time with the family rather than being here and while they are missing you at home.” Another one said, “While I was in the program I feel I missed out on a lot of money. I was the only one working. I had my daughter and my son-in-law living there, I had my three boys and then when I had my other daughter and her kids, it got hard, financially this has really destroyed me, very taxing.” Another participant stated, “I always felt that my money could go into better things especially if you haven’t been working, it’s hard to be putting out that money when you don’t have it to give up. If I was working I would be ok but when I have to conserve my money and put aside for this program I could be using that for more food or I could be making sure that I’m on time

with the rent, cause a lot of time I'm not on time with the rent I always have to borrow money from my parents."

### Gender Significant

Gender Significant means whether the group is meaningful to men in particular. One participant stated, "Because men get more angry and physical than women do, they talk about their experience and you can learn from them." Another participant said, "Guys sometimes have things on their chest that they can't tell their boys and you can't tell your wife because she's a girl, and you can't tell your boys because you don't want them to be ashamed of you coming to a class to get this out and you don't know the people. You know them but you only know them from the class and you know they're not going to speak about it." Another participant said, "Yeah I think so. It teaches them not to get so aggressive. Most of the time it's the guy that's egging on the argument, because we're men, it's in us to be like that."

### Group Cohesion

Group Cohesion refers to members of the group feeling a sense of closeness with each other. One participant said, "I look at this class as a place where you come, it's kind a like a male bonding session you know, and we are able to speak free and not to judge and to have people who's gone through life's situations there to give you input and together come to what's best for their life." Another participant stated, "When I would share that with the other classmates I kind of start getting the response that it's not so bad, coming to class isn't really so bad, then I would hear other people that would come that would be on a different day same style class they would come to a Sunday class and they would say that they wished that they were on a Sunday class cause we get so heavily

involved.” Another participant said, “I can talk to them like they’re my best friend, like I’ve known them. I can relate to them. I look forward to coming to class now.

#### Group not Being a Priority

Group not Being a Priority refers to group not being important or special. A participant said, “I knew I had to come back, but not really. I’m stubborn I think that I can resolve my own problems and If I do have a problem I will learn to take care of it. I’m not really a big believer in getting help.” Another participant said, “The first time I was away from the program I didn’t miss it because I didn’t take it as seriously as I do now.” One other participant said, “I was into other things, I was still hanging out with my old friends, I still wanted to be out and this was not a priority to me and I just stop coming and the money was tight, it was stressful at times it was like I need the money, I need the money and then it just got to a point when I thought you know what, I’m not even going anymore.”

#### Hopeful

Hopeful refers to having positive feelings about the future. A participant demonstrated this by stating, “I told my wife stop lying for me it is not going to get any worse it’s only going to get better.” Another one said, “I feel anxious, very happy I would like to say excited to come to the class when it was just because I knew that it would be another day of improvement.” One other participant stated, “I feel like it can only do positive, you guys are only trying to help us do positive and I feel that all of you counselors are really trying to help every participant. I knew it couldn’t do anything but benefit me.”

## Lack of Interest

Lack of interest refers to group not being a priority or important. Batterers may not give enough importance to attending group because of lack of interest or because they don't feel that they need it. One participant stated, "The first time I was away from the program I didn't miss it because I didn't take it as seriously as I do now." Another participant also stated not being into group. He stated, "While I was out of the program I did not miss it, because I was not focused, I did not really care about it, I was not into it." This next participant stated that because of his health group was not a priority. He stated, "While I was out of the program I did not miss being in the program, I was just dealing with my health, it was pretty bad, they wanted to pull my gallbladder out, I was in a wheelchair, I was separated, my world was so upside down I did not know which way to go so that's why it was so busy to me, but somehow I made it through."

## Lack of Responsibility

Lack of Responsibility is the unwillingness of batterers to accept the role they played in the situation they are in. One participant stated, "I was told a million times blame it on O. J., even though I did not do anything. Even though I hadn't done anything to be thrown in jail, it is what it is." Another participant said, "At first I was just like, umm, there is nothing wrong with me it was the other person that got me in here." Another one said, "In my case, my girlfriend at the time attacked me down a flight of stairs so I went into the manager's office and used his phone to call a ride so when I walked back out of the door I got attacked again, my girlfriend isn't a petite woman, she was strong and we're the same height. So she kept attacking me and I wasn't getting mad

I was trying to defend myself so we both ended up hitting each other. I was the one that ended up trying to physically run away from her.”

### Lack of Trust

Lack of Trust is the inability to have confidence in others. One participant said, “I don’t believe anything anybody said unless I see it with my own eyes. You can tell me this and if I see something else then you’re lying and I won’t associate with you anymore.” Most of these men believe that the groups are associated with the legal system. One participant said, “When you start coming to class then you start realizing oh this establishment isn’t affiliated with the police which gives you an oh yeah that’s good, you know what I’m saying, which that’s good and then it’s cool. If you think that you’re affiliated with probation, they don’t want to say nothing, you think that you may get in trouble if you say I did this, try to tell the story and then there might be something that didn’t get brought up in court, and you don’t want to say that.” Another participant stated, “I just have paranoia. I use to be affiliated with a gang and we use to run in groups and they brainwashed me. They made me think and do dumb stuff. And I thought they’re my family so I’ll do this for them but after that I lost confidence in all kinds of people. They put me out there; I did some time in jail for them. And even when I was in there they didn’t come to see me, they didn’t put any money on my books and I was in there because of them and after that I lost trust in people and that’s why I don’t like putting myself out there in front of people anymore.”

### Learning

Learning refers to acquiring information and knowledge. One participant said, “I learn from the homework, the movies, examples, and examples of what happens and what

causes the problems. I learned to walk away from my first DV class. I learned it from a guy that was in the class, he would just say, 'walk away' and I started doing that and it does work and I still remember to use it. Reading the lessons helps me." Another participant said, "I learned how to communicate, how to listen, how to get along, I learn to compromise." Another one said, "Like I said, had I gone to this group before I don't think that situation would have happened, I just know more now, that technique about side stepping confrontation when you reach a certain point then you want to walk away and they wouldn't let you, that's what put me back in prison, that was the situation I fell in."

#### Loss of Control

Loss of Control means being unable to contain one's anger. One participant stated, "When I was here and missed all the classes and I ended up assaulting somebody with a deadly weapon, it's hard to say on that one, cause I was learning in that class, I really was but it was just one of those situation where I just blew it, lost control." Another one said, "My mind was to run but then I thought I'd wait 'till they come I'm going to let them know 'cause I figure once they got there they'll figure out the situation. It would just be like all right you guys chill out, it was a big problem because I got into it with the cops, they came trying to take pictures of her and I was like what are you taking pictures of, they wanted to say like I was hitting her or something."

#### Maturity

Maturity is when a person is fully developed or has reached a stage in their life that their thinking is advanced. One participant said. "At the beginning I guess I wasn't as focused on the class, but I guess with maturity I've learned that I can learn from the

teacher and other participants in the class. It broadens my view of the problems I had. For me the class helps me every week. It's therapy for me. Back in the past I don't think I was ready for it, I was too young minded but with maturity I can see that it's positive for me. It probably was then but I wasn't ready for it." Another participant said, "Usually when we're in class the older guys are talking more than the younger guys and I learn from them. I think it's important to have older and younger because they can learn. If you only have a bunch of young kids in there they don't really understand, they haven't lived life to really understand what they're going through and with the older guys in there they can really teach them and vice versa. I feel like it benefits all." One other participant stated, "My viewpoints now and how I saw it then are night and day. But when I came back to the classes it was so much easier. I was on a level where I saw that the classes do help. I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. God will put you in a place where you have to get clarity and jail was one of those things. That break from my wife, that 11-month period of time opened my eyes to being more mature. So yeah, coming back to this class I had a totally different mindset."

#### Not Missing Much When in Group

Not Missing Much When in Group refers to batterers not feeling that they are missing out on other activities when they are in group. One participant said, "I mean nothing really important. Missed out on a couple TV shows, you know ha, something else or whatever the case may be but nothing real big." Another participant said, "When I get out I'm thinking oh yeah my buddies probably meeting up but who wants to be in a bar the first hour anyways you want to be there a little later, so I mean you'll be thinking like I'm missing out or whatever but in real life, but if you don't go to class you'll be feeling



like you're missing out on not going to class honestly." One other participant stated, "I don't feel like the money was a waste because like I say I'll go pay to drink so I might as well pay to get some good information. I did feel like I missed out but when I don't come here you feel more like you're missing out."

#### Preconceptions about Group

Preconceptions about group refer to thoughts and expectations of the group by batterers before starting group. A participant said, "I feel very comfortable. Not intimidated, but I just felt that I wasn't going to enjoy being there and I wasn't going to get the help that I needed from that group so that's why I changed." Another participant said, "I really didn't think I was going to get much out of it, and then there were a lot of people there so I'm kind of hesitant to talk in groups." Batterers do not know what to expect before starting group. They may have negative perceptions about the group. A respondent said, "At first when I was going I thought these classes don't do anything for you." Another one said, "At first it was kind of a forced deal. It was definitely something that is forced upon you as a choice you have to make." One participant said, "I would say oh it's a domestic violence class and it's a bunch of women beaters in there."

#### Poor Communication

Poor Communication between couples refers to the inability of couples to express their thoughts and feelings effectively to each other. Some have poor communication skills and others are learning these skills. In this case, this participant expressed inability to communicate appropriately, "She is the type of person, she is not a bad person, she has her mood swings, but you know, she does not know to really talk about her problems with me sometimes, so it's mainly yelling, kind of self-centered." This next participant

seemed to feel frustrated because of the lack of communication that existed between him and his spouse, “I stop looking at myself sometimes, It’s like it burns me out because I can’t like, tell her how I feel, I’ll upset her and stuff like that you know. I wish like she could come to a program like this too, work it out.” This particular participant had been in group for some time and he had been developing better communication skills. He stated, “Today we can be in the car we are not talking about really anything I would just ask her hey are you happy, you know, am I doing everything that makes you happy or is there something that have I done during the week that got you kind of upset?”

### Police Bias

Police Bias refers to police seeing one side of the situation without investigating the facts. One participant said, “So it’s always that, and then there is the bias with the police, you know, they are going to protect the woman. I was told a million times blame it on O’Jay. Participants feel that there is unfairness in the way these types of cases are handled. One participant stated, “But domestic violence in California, the way that they handle it is not fair. So I’ve always stressed that, it’s not fair. Anytime I am being told to blame it on some guy, who I don’t even know, why I’m sitting in a jail cell, something is not right with that situation.” Another participant said, “Nobody, no matter what they say, deserve to be hit whether it’s a man or a woman, but there is a lot of women who are out there and hit men but when the man hits them back its domestic violence and only the men end up either in jail or taking these classes.” Some batterers explain that even when they do the right thing by walking away from the situation they are still put in jail. This participant stated, “I told her I was going to leave, well she ended up calling the officers and they did not care, they said is your name so and so, I said yes, they said turn around

and they put the cuffs on, threw me in jail, they did not care.” Participants also believe that police officers should investigate the situation before arresting. One participant stated, “To me personally with my situation I think they should have looked into the situation before they threw me in jail because what I did was actually walk away from my wife. Another participant made a statement of not been treated appropriately, “I think that a lot of times the way that it’s handled is dehumanizing.”

### Prior Group Experience

Prior Group Experience refers to previous group involvement. All batterers who have been reinstated in group have had experiences in other group or groups before this last reinstatement. Some had negative experiences in the past. These experiences may have affected their decision to reinstate. One participant stated that he did not know what to expect from group and acknowledged that he did not give it a chance. Here is what he said, “The program did not meet my needs and I did not meet their needs. It was a little bit of both. Because I did not understand what I was supposed to be getting out of it, you know the court ordered me to be there and I did not understand what I was supposed to be doing there. Now I know it was intervention and stuff like that but I did not know how it was supposed to help me and I didn’t meet their needs because I did not complete the classes, you know, I did not give it a chance.” Another participant said, “I have already been through these classes before but I really did not learn that much in that first class. We watch a lot of movies and stuff like that. All the guys were always playing around and talking back. That’s why over there, I stopped. It just got boring to me between the teachers and the guys.” Another one said, “As I mentioned, in the past I was uncomfortable. I don’t even remember the instructor but there was no impression left

upon me. It didn't appear to be organized and there was no structure, I mean we watched TV, people slept, the lights were out.”

### Program Benefit

Program Benefit refers to what batterers are getting from being in group. One participant said, “The program has benefited me a lot. When I wake up on Sunday morning, sometimes I wake up quiet, all my problems come to me when I wake up or go to sleep, so when I come in here It kind of wakes me up and helps me look at different stuff in a different way in a calmer manner, things could be a lot worse. Kind of wakes me up, takes me out of that quiet dull mood. That's why it's benefited me.” Another one said, “As far as my needs, I think It helps me to understand anger, you know I believe that everybody has anger but I have never seen it that way.” Another participant said, “The program has benefited me, I'm able to spot when I'm getting angry before I would just let every little thought that I had that elevated my anger and now it's like maybe I should start thinking a little bit more widely, some of the stuff that I got angry over weren't even worth it, it caused more problems within my family, I'm getting mad and getting angry, showing that violence to my children, that's not how I want my kids to be, I want them to be protective of themselves but to know when to use their anger in a good way.”

### Reasons for Reinstating

Reasons for Reinstating, means making statements to explain the reason for coming back to group. At some point some batterers make the decision to return to group. Some batterers expressed that they do not want to go back to jail. He said, “I came back to the program because it is a program and it is for us to get it done, because I don't want

to do jail time or anything like that, I like my freedom you know, I like my own things, my own bed, so I'm not really like jail material, that was never made for me." Others find that not completing the group prevents them from moving forward with their lives. One participant stated, "I was trying to change my life around and when I was trying to get hired it was messing me up because of my background and they were showing up as warrants. Every job I was trying to get they would deny me. So I had to get this out of my way because its holding me back from what I want to pursue in life, so that's the main reason why. I just wanted to get it over with and out of my life. I don't want to deal with it anymore." This next participant expressed the need to complete the program so that he could also move on with his life. He said, "The fact that I'm trying to get ahead in life, trying to fix everything that I did and trying to clean my record, I'm trying to do everything right this time." Another one said, "I came back to the program because I tried to finish something that I started, if it's court ordered then I have to do it, and I don't want to see the law as on top of me, I want to get them away from me, been in with the law so many times, I'm trying to get away now, I don't want any more warrants." Another participant stated, "I had just gotten release from prison and this was one of my terms to come here and my thing is I don't want to go back to jail, so that is why I'm so motivated this time around. I'm not hanging around with the same guys, I don't want to go back to prison and if I don't want to go back to prison I need to do this."

#### Relationship Conflict vs. Abuse

Relationships Conflicts vs. Abuse, refers to understanding the differences between basic disagreement between couples and maltreatment. One participant explains this issue by saying, "It is usually retaliatory; the man feeling like the woman is nagging

him, you know, or she is just bothering him on purpose or whatever the case, he gets irritated reacts aggressively or the woman she feels like she is a woman scorn because he is cheating or she thinks that he is cheating so, you know, she's got to go keyed up his car, scratch his face up, you know he grabs her, you know." Another participant said, "My wife has been through this class before me, back in '97 because she tried to run me over with my car after picking up the children and all I was trying to do was get the paper work out of the car because I own the vehicle. I still owed money on it so I needed information in order to take care of the bill while she had the car, well she got so upset that she started backing up the car to try to run me over with, backed it up again and finally hit me, my niece was looking through the window and had seen everything, she was the one who called the officer. So she ended up doing these classes but in reality my wife never worked, we've been together for 25 years, financially I ended up paying for everything. She constantly told me that she was going to make sure that I did these classes sooner or later."

### Resentment

Resentment is a strong and negative emotion experienced by batterers. One participant said, "I hated it, it was just a pain, you know, I figured I went in there with a bad attitude, with resentment, you can't teach me anything, I'm not going to learn nothing you know, so don't even try. Hey you definitely learn stuff anyway but I was pretty resentful and pretty rebellious that's why I only came once or twice a month. I did not want people to tell me what to do. One participant said, "Angry and stressed. I think so. I don't have another example, so I don't really know what the best way is. There are a lot of people that have experience with the same thing so everyone has different ways of

saying it, so you learn a lot from them.” Another participant said, “I feel disturbed, I feel cynical, I feel skeptical, I feel angry, I feel sad.” Another participant stated, “I got mad, I broke a phone ‘cause I was in the middle of an argument with my girl. She was saying my name. I think she was talking to her mom I just took the phone and broke it because she was talking my business.”

### Resolving Conflicts

Resolving Conflicts is the ability to solve problems appropriately. One participant said, “Once it goes from arguments, to cursing to calling names and this and that I just know how to walk away or walk away not letting her feel like I’m leaving. Sometimes when you leave, you might be in a relationship were a guy and a girl, she might think I’m going out doing some other stuff, so I leave and make her feel comfortable before I go, I let her know where I’m at this and that.” Another participant said, “You need to handle your problems or else they escalate. When you see certain signs, you need to diffuse them, you have to get some counseling, you have to talk it over and get them out of the way so they won’t come up later. You have to learn how to compromise.” Another participant stated, “It’s taught me a couple things like how to get out of certain situations.” One other participant said, “Me and my wife were having a situation at the time and rather than us be at our throats being in the same house I took a break to my mom’s and I didn’t intend for it to be so long, it was only suppose to be for a month or so but it ended up being for an extended time. I think I was able to redirect work to where it was and we got another place together.”

## Rules

Rules refer to expectations, regulations, and guidelines of the group. Some batterers struggle with the rules.” Here are some statements made by a few batterers about rules, “I’m not a very easy person to follow rules, but I dealt with them. It was kind of hard.” One participant describes his difficulties dealing with following rules and giving up control, “I have feelings of resentment over that because, just from the reality of the situation and I’ve always had somewhat of authority problems too, so people telling me what to do when to do it, how to do it. After prison, you lose all control; it takes your self-respect and all that away from you.” Another participant state, “From what I remember it was very strict, which made it also hard especially when I didn’t want to be there.”

## Self Reflection

Self-reflection is evaluating or doing some form of self-examination. One participant reflected on the incident that brought him to group, “Once I look back at it I know I could have avoided so many different ways, I stood there, fought back with her.” Another one said, “During the time that I was gone I did not think about the group, I thought about my life, I think it was right then when I started thinking about God, when I came back from there I went to church every week and I’ve never missed a week ever.” Another one said, “I was raised in a broken up home and that’s not what I wanted to continue I didn’t want to continue that path I want to give that chain, the kind that I was raise with, cut that link and start my own new chain.”



## Shame

Shame refers to feeling badly and sorry about their behavior. Wishing they could erase the past. One participant said, “I feel bad when I think of what the problem of domestic violence have caused.” Another participant said, “The incident that happen between my wife and myself it hurts me ‘til this day, It hurts me ‘till this day even though she in her heart said fervently to me that she has forgiving me I feel bad because I’m not the type of person to raise my hand to women and I had never done it before with her and to anybody else.” Another one said, “I feel bad. I feel like I made a mistake. I learned a lot, I have a daughter now and I should never raise my hand to a woman no matter what the situation is. If it’s that bad, just walk away. I feel real bad. I came from a really bad area and I didn’t know how to act. I was rude, I was vulgar, I was all kinds of stuff. I feel I needed the classes and I do feel bad but I have learned a lot in these classes.” This participant stated “I made some mistakes in the past and I’m still paying for them now.” This next participant regretted what he did and stated what he should have done instead, “I got tired of it, but I should have just walked away from the relationship when she started hitting.” This next participant stated, “I could have avoided not going to jail and just walk.”

## Source of Anger

Source of anger is identifying the cause of their anger. One participant explained, “When I was younger I was not aware of why I was angry. My dad did tell me one time when I was 7 year old that ‘I can see issues happening and it scares me’, if you grow up that way I have no idea what you’re going to become, other than that it never really clicked in my head, you know, now I see that my father kind of opened up to me and

tried to find out what was going on with me, but I didn't understand why I was doing things until I got older. In elementary my parents were hardly ever around, I was the one watching my little brother and my little sister and we were always fighting with each other 'cause there was no authority in the house. Growing up I had parents that were always gone, partying, drinking doing this and that always gone so I was always to myself I could never go to my brother and sister because we were always fighting. I feel that my anger came from the need to protect myself because I always felt that I was by myself. I needed to be angry so that I wouldn't be messed with. I had to show people that I'm an angry person and that I can get violent, which I was, I have gotten kicked out of schools for fighting too much, I've almost gotten expelled from school because of my anger. It was a way to protect myself from feeling threatened by anything and put that barrier up to protect yourself."

#### Support

Support refers to encouragement. One participant said, "My mother right now she helps me out and try to get done 'cause she does not want me to go to jail and I don't either." Another participant stated, "I would come voluntarily". That's why I am just taking advantage of this time I'm not going to get re-instated. I would like once I'm done, I would like to find some kind of group session like that, 'cause I really don't have a lot of friends cause I put them side, my relationship. I have a little girl; I just have like close friends, my brothers, and my mom, that's about it." Another participant said, "I grew up in a tight knit family from where I was from and then I came out here and my family over here is kind of on their own. They said they were going to help me out and next thing I

know it, I'm on the street. I had no body out here. It's just been experience after experience."

#### Unengaged

Unengaged refers to the inability to connect, attach or be part of the group. One participant said, "While I was out of the program I couldn't miss it because I didn't really attend that many days, probably like only ten days, so I wasn't really comfortable, I was still at that point where I felt like Ah, I don't want to be here not really knowing what classes I was on, my mind was spaced out, you know like oh man I could be doing other stuff." Another one said, "While I was out of the program I did not miss it, because I was not focused, I did not really care about it, I was not into it." This next participant said, "I was getting to know everybody but like I said, I wouldn't really open up. I was just chilling because I didn't know them."

#### Understanding the Effects of Abuse

Understanding the Effects of Abuse refers to batterers' understanding of a person's response to violence and the impact abuse has on that person. One participant said, "You learn about the domestic violence arguing and the putdowns and all these other things that really affects kids, you'll see it 'cause that's the way they want to relate to their peers and based that behavior they tend to believe is normal behavior." Another participant said, "The kids are the ones who really suffer and it doesn't matter how big the thing really is whether it's an argument, but the kids really see that and take hold, which is kind of backwards for me because we didn't see any of that stuff, I mean we knew it went on but my parents kept it behind closed doors so we were never exposed to it, but I'm a little different, or I use to be, at least. But now I feel its important now

because of my little ones.” Another participant said, “It helps a little bit. I started thinking what to do and what not to do and why I shouldn’t do those things. It made me stop and think about the people it affects is not just me and I don’t want to be in those positions in the first place.”

#### Understanding of Rules

Understanding of rules is the ability to comprehend and accept rules. This participant stated, “It was cool. Just normal rules, same rules like high school rules. It was nothing that bothered me.” Another participant said, “I didn’t have enough time to have any experience with the rules but heard some of the rules. You can’t be absent more than three times, but I feel that they’re fair.” Another participant said, “Rules are meant for something, I guess. Especially with court ordered people they don’t know how to act. There are a lot of people in prison that haven’t adapted to society and they don’t know how to act and they’ll do dumb stuff. They’ll act out and act like little kids, but the rules were fine with me, I know how to follow rules, but other people don’t.”

#### Unfairness

Unfairness means a sense of not being treated equally or fairly. One participant said, “When I think of the problem that the incident of domestic violence have caused I feel victimized.” Another participant said, “Not all of us have the fault but women makes it seems like we have the fault you know but they’ll blame everything on us because when they motivate us to do something they know where it is going to get us. We are going to be the ones to get in trouble.” The court is another entity that participants feel that are biased and unfair. One participant said, “Because I was treated really, really, really unfair, I was treated really bad you know, I was just dogged, you know and all of

that because, not only because of what I did and allowing the situation to take place in the first place but just because I, I was looked at as been an impediment to somebody else and there was no upholding of justice no upholding of the law there was no none of that it was just oh well take him to jail, you know, and penalty of the law was worse than the crime that was committed.” Another participant stated, “She said I hit her but then she turned around and tried to tell the courts that she did not mean to call the cops she was just upset this and that, it did not matter it was already picked up by the DA, so what could I do.” Some participants see themselves in helpless situation and find that the only way to regain freedom is to plead guilty even when they are not guilty. One participant stated, “But after 6 days of being in jail, saw my freedom taken away, all I wanted was out, I chose to get out, I pleaded guilty,” This sense of helplessness continues when they are concerned about being able to pay for the required batterers’ intervention class.

Table 5

*Original Open Codes*

Accepted	Encouragement	Poor Communication
Accepting Responsibility	Expressing Emotions	Police Bias
Adjustment to Group Resentment	Feeling Pressured	Prior Group Experience
Adjustment to Rules	Feeling Regretful	Program Benefit
Age Appropriate	Felt Forced into Program	Reasons for Returning
Applying Tools	Financial Stress	Relationship Conflict vs. Abuse
Attendance Issues	Gender Significant	Resentment
Barriers to Reinstatement	Group Cohesion	Resolving Conflicts
Being in Control of Self	Group Not Being a Priority	Rules
Blaming	Hopeful	Self Reflection
Change	Lack of Interest	Shame
Comfort Level	Lack of Responsibility	Source of Anger
Couple's Interaction	Lack of Trust	Support
Denial	Learning	Understanding Rules
Denying Abuse	Loss of Control	Understanding the Effects of Abuse
Desire to Change	Maturity	Unengaged
Difficulties with Rules	Not Missing Much when in Group	Unfairness
Discouragement	Preconceptions about Group	