
**Paths of Change: A Follow-up Qualitative
Evaluation of Men Mandated to the Sheriff King
Offender Groups**



by

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Chapter One: Calgary's Specialized Domestic Violence First Appearance Court

The serious nature of intimate partner violence and the harm to women and their children has been acknowledged in numerous documents (Statistics Canada, 2005; Tutty & Goard, 2002). The costs to society for charging abusive partners and providing treatment in the hope of stopping domestic violence are substantial (Bowlus, McKenna, Day & Wright, 2003; Greaves, Hankivsky, & Kingston-Reichers, 1995; Healey, Smith, & O'Sullivan, 1998).

The criminal justice system is an institution that deals with a high number of cases of domestic assaults yearly (Tutty, Koshan, Jesso, Ogden & Warrell, 2011; Ursel, Tutty & LeMaistre, 2008a). While there is no separate domestic violence offence, abusers are subject to a variety of charges, from common assault to uttering threats to murder, that would apply to anyone regardless of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Nevertheless, the dynamics and the intimate relationship between the accused and the victims in domestic violence cases, has severely challenged the criminal justice response that typically deals with crimes committed by strangers.

Beginning with the development of the court in Winnipeg in 1991, specialized domestic violence courts have become increasingly available across Canada with the goal of more effectively addressing the criminal justice response to domestic violence. The extensive effort involved in creating such specialized justice responses should be acknowledged. To date, however, few evaluations have been published that assess whether these initiatives make a difference, exceptions being the work of Ursel in Winnipeg (Ursel & Hagyard, 2008), the Yukon Domestic Violence Treatment Option (Hornick, Boyes, Tutty & White, 2008) and some courts in Ontario (Moyer, Rettinger & Hotton (2000), cited in Clarke, 2003; Dawson & Dinovitzer, 2001), and Tutty and Ursel in the Canadian prairie provinces (Ursel, Tutty, & LeMaistre, 2008b).

Calgary's model developed in early 2000 with the input of key players from not only the criminal justice institutions such as police services, the Crown Prosecutor offices, probation, Legal Aid and the defence bar, but also community agencies that offer batterer intervention programs and support, shelter and advocacy for victims. The model was innovative, with the initial emphasis on a specialized domestic violence docket court with the aim of speeding up the process for those charges with domestic abuse offences to both allow low risk offenders to take responsibility for their actions and speed their entry into treatment. Such actions were thought to better safeguard victims, both because their partners were mandated to treatment much earlier, and to prevent repercussions to victims who, if the case proceeded to court, might be required to testify.

Because of its unique nature, this section describes Calgary's specialized domestic violence first appearance court process. This material is taken from a chapter written by Tutty, McNichol and Christensen (2008) in a book, *What's Law Got to Do with It: The Law, Specialized Courts and Domestic Violence in Canada*, edited by Ursel, Tutty and LeMaistre (2008a) published in Canada by Cormorant Press.

In 1999, the dedicated domestic violence first appearance court process in Calgary came into operation. This unique specialization was originally only in the "docket" or "first appearance" court in which the accused make their first court appearance following charges related to domestic violence. The court can perform all functions up to but excluding trial. Those functions include bail hearings, acceptance of pleas and sentencing. The specialized court

hears all domestic violence-related cases charged in the City of Calgary, including violence by persons in heterosexual or same-sex couples who are in either cohabitating or non-cohabitating relationships, interfamilial violence, child abuse or elder abuse. The most common offences seen in the court include assault, uttering threats and breach of court orders, and can include attempted murder and homicide.

As noted previously, what makes the Calgary model unique is its focus on the first appearance court in which low-risk accused can have their charges withdrawn with a peace bond if they acknowledge responsibility for their behaviour and are willing to participate in court-mandated domestic violence counselling and other mandated treatments. Its goals are to hold offenders accountable within the justice system and increase the likelihood that a meaningful intervention will be imposed on the offender through treatment. It is based on the premise that a more efficient court process can take advantage of the low risk accused's guilt and shame that is usually present close in time to the offence. It is hoped that the speedy access to treatment and tight monitoring of offenders will increase compliance with court orders and maximize the effects of treatment programs.

Additionally, victim safety is prioritized in the specialized court. Risk assessments and the victim's wishes are presented to the court team prior to docket court and are used to support and refine submissions made to the court by the Crown and defence attorneys. The addition of "real time" information improves the quality of submissions made in court and, ultimately, the decisions improve the response of the justice system to victims' safety and needs. Further, the more efficient process minimizes factors related to the dynamic of abuse and violence that impede or impair court processes, such as victims recanting their testimony or being reluctant witnesses.

Calgary is a city of one million citizens and is home to many specialized domestic violence agencies including a specialized police unit (Domestic Conflict Unit or DCU), specialized probation officers and a community co-ordinating body (the Alliance to End Violence, formerly the Action Committee Against Violence). An extensive protocol network promotes collaboration and the sharing of information across agencies, including the police, Crown prosecutors, Legal Aid, victim advocates, shelters, probation, and treatment programs.

Additionally, victims are supported by a non-profit law office (Calgary Legal Guidance), which provides the joint services of a lawyer and social worker and specializes in restraining and emergency protection orders along with various other matters related to family law. Victims and their children have access to a range of counselling and treatment options and a safe visitation and access centre. Further, while their partners are under community supervision through probation, victims are contacted and offered support through the Partner Support Program, a partnership between a volunteer victim support staff and probation services.

The accused have the benefit of a fast-tracked Legal Aid appointment process and a dedicated Legal Aid lawyer attached to the specialized court. Calgary Police Services follow a mandatory charge policy and undergo extensive training on dominant aggressors and domestic violence investigations. Dominant or primary aggressor policies are guidelines for the police in deciding who to charge in circumstances in which it is difficult to determine who is the victim because of ambiguity, such as when both parties are injured or accuse the other of assault. The dominant aggressor is the individual who has been the most significant aggressor throughout the relationship (Strack, n.d.).

The Court Team

This section describes the critical elements of the specialized domestic violence first appearance court, including the court team that consists of domestic court caseworkers, specialized Crown attorneys, police, probation and duty counsel officers.

One of the key elements of the process is the court “team,” perceived by many as the “backbone” of the process. The team includes specialists from the Crown prosecutor’s office and probation office, a member of the Domestic Conflict Unit of Calgary Police Services and domestic court caseworkers from HomeFront, the non-profit agency that supports the court processes with domestic court case workers and other initiatives.

Currently, four Crown prosecutors are specialized in domestic violence and appear in the court on a rotating basis. Two representatives from the specialized probation office rotate daily in the docket court, while their seven other colleagues manage the majority of domestic violence offenders at a central location. Likewise, one member of the Domestic Conflict Unit sits in the court. The Domestic Conflict Unit consists of 10 investigators, a sergeant and staff sergeant. The Unit reviews all domestic violence calls responded to by the Calgary Police Service and directly handles approximately 400 high-risk and/or chronic files per year, while offering support to frontline police officers. Four court caseworkers from HomeFront cover the docket court on a rotating basis.

A major undertaking of the court team is to assess risk in order to attain or maintain the safety of victims and their children. The specialized domestic violence team exists to bring to the justice system a greater understanding of the nature of domestic violence and to bring about the best and most expedient response. The Crown prosecutors assess risk and recommend to the judge and defence counsel the directions that they consider most appropriate in each case. Their recommendations are based upon information and assessments provided to them during “pre-court conferences” that occur prior to case resolutions or bail hearings each day and for every file.

The pre-court conferences involve all the court team members to ensure that relevant information is provided or confirmed regarding victim concerns/wishes and the conditions requested. For example, the accused may be given no contact orders, orders not to drink, orders to attend counselling within a specified time period, and may have their weapons confiscated.

The HomeFront Domestic Court Caseworkers

The HomeFront court caseworkers provide two essential services. The first is victim support. Each morning, they review the police 24-hour incident reports to collect new offence information and begin contacting the victims in those cases within a day of the police laying charges. Further, they review each case before every court appearance and ensure that victims’ wishes are up to date and that victims are aware of the status of the case against their partners. The workers typically inquire about a past history of abuse, current relationship status with the accused, perceived level of danger, as well as the victims’ wishes with respect to what they would like to happen at court. In addition, the clinical interview is supplemented with standardized risk assessment tools such as the Danger Assessment (Campbell, Sharps & Glass, 2001).

Safety planning for victims is an essential component of the court caseworker’s role. Safety is ensured by connecting the victim to other community or legal resources: counselling

programs for victims or children exposed to domestic violence, immigrant serving agencies, shelters and the Court Preparation and Restraining Order programs at Calgary Legal Guidance. The court caseworkers also keep victims updated about the progress of their partner/ex-partner's case within the justice system, including such information as the date of the next court appearance and the plea entered. Court caseworkers, by necessity, may also liaise with other agency representatives in the City of Calgary, including the Child and Family Services Authority (child welfare).

The second essential service is conducting risk assessments and providing the victim's wishes to the court team. This information is often vital in supporting and guiding the decisions of the court and supplementing/balancing information provided by other sources, including the police and defence representatives.

Probation Services

Probation officers are key stakeholders in the specialized court process as they can provide considerable information about an accused's past history of criminal offences. Further, the court probation officer acts as an information conduit between the court and the accused's supervising probation officer.

In addition to case conferencing, probation officers are officers of the court and may answer questions posed by counsel, the accused or the court. The information requested often includes past involvement with probation, current orders against the accused (including pre-trial), compliance history, as well as possible treatment options and suggested conditions. To prepare for court, the probation officers preview the docket list to assess what information might be needed during the daily docket, including checking databases and talking to any assigned probation officers about whether the accused is complying with community supervision.

An advantage of having a probation officer in court is that the accused makes immediate contact with the probation officer and is directly referred to treatment services from court. This significantly decreases the delay of an offender entering into treatment. The probation offices are located on the ground floor of the provincial court building and are easily accessible. Once an accused has been sentenced, he/she meets with the probation officer to review the court order with the officer, signs it to signify compliance and receives reporting instructions about when he/she must reconnect with the supervising probation officer.

Common probation conditions include immediate monitoring of the accused and ensuring that the accused follow court orders. At this time, probation officers also complete a preliminary intake with the accused to screen for any mental health, medical or treatment related issues such as language fluency to better direct accused into appropriate programming.

Within the specialized domestic violence first appearance court, the accused are given a shorter timeframe to contact their probation officer and treatment agencies than if they were to appear in a non-specialized court. The accused are generally given seven to ten days to contact their supervising probation officer in a non-specialized court, whereas in the specialized setting, they are given, on average, four days.

The Specialized Domestic Violence First Appearance Court Process

Until recently, the specialized docket court was in session from 9 a.m., Monday to Friday, and ran until the cases on the docket were heard that day, usually ending at noon or 1

p.m. (this changed to three full days a week in 2008). The judiciary was initially specialized in domestic violence, though now all Calgary provincial criminal court judges rotate into the specialized court.

The court team meets before court is in session each day and again during breaks. The team reviews the particulars of each case with the defence or duty counsel and determines what course they will pursue. At this time, new information from any team member can be introduced. As well, members have the opportunity to request additional information they may need from other members before meeting again. Examples of information shared include: letters from victims asking that no contact orders be lifted or that the victim is fearful and pursuing a restraining order; address and employment updates from probation and police officers; verification of treatment attendance and compliance; or any changes in the perceived level of risk for the accused or the victim. The goal is to provide the court with as much information as possible in order to allow it to make appropriate and efficient decisions.

Docket court is the first opportunity for an accused to enter a plea; however, many other steps and procedures often need to take place before a plea is accepted. These procedures can include adjournments to allow an accused to make application for legal aid coverage and retain a lawyer; to allow information or paperwork to catch up to the court; or until an interpreter can be made available. Some adjournments are made for tactical reasons such as if other charges or court decisions are pending for an accused. Duty counsel, the defence or the Crown may request that the case be heard at a later time because they do not yet have all the necessary information.

In about one-third of all cases, when the accused accepts responsibility for his actions, the charges are withdrawn and the accused is given a peace bond whereby he enters into an agreement with the court to abide by conditions to keep the peace, report to a probation officer, attend and complete mandated treatment for either domestic violence or substance abuse, or attend a parenting course. Often peace bonds include conditions of no contact, geographic restrictions and abstinence from drugs and/or alcohol. In all cases, the accused are required to acknowledge before the court the substance of their actions that led to the criminal charges being laid and express a willingness to participate in domestic violence or other appropriate treatment programs.

The bulk of cases seen by the court and mandated to treatment are referred to the Calgary Counselling Centre, YWCA Sheriff King Home, and the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, with a smaller percentage going to Forensic Assessment Outpatient Services at the Peter Lougheed Hospital. Additional referrals would also be given, depending on case circumstances, to immigrant serving agencies or first-language counsellors that can address cultural and settlement issues, First Nations counselling or culturally based services, mental health resources, brain injury resources, and others.

Key Points in the Court Process

Fast and efficient resolution of domestic violence cases is considered a central goal in the co-ordinated justice response. This is because the longer the delay until the court intervenes, the greater the likelihood that the evidence, usually hinging on victims' willingness to testify, will be lost. Further, offenders' remorse and willingness to acknowledge a problem in their lives wanes the more time passes between intervention and the original offence. Delays also play significantly into the cycle of violence and can exacerbate victims' feelings of helplessness.

Treatment is an integral and effective response to domestic violence and every effort is made to direct the accused into treatment as soon as possible following police charges and fast-tracked court dispositions. Being fast-tracked into counselling, which is monitored by probation, is believed to be an effective means of maintaining the safety of victims and families and breaking the cycle of violence. Holding offenders accountable is essential to an effective domestic violence intervention because offenders need to know that there are consequences unless they better regulate their behaviour. Monitoring helps ensure the victim's safety and reassures victims that they are not solely responsible for supervising the offenders' behaviour.

Immediate screening and regular contact with victims throughout the justice process is a further means of checking on safety and offering needed support to victims of violence, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will seek support in the future.

Discussion and Conclusions

With its emphasis on the docket court, Calgary's specialized response is a unique model, different from other specialized domestic violence courts across Canada (Tutty, Ursel & Douglas, 2008b). Much of the emphasis has been on creating a speedier response to assaults in domestic violence cases: seeing the accused in a specialized docket court more quickly than previously, and having treatment available much more quickly than before. Further, crisis intervention theory has long posited that the sooner one receives intervention, the more likely the counselling will be effective (Roberts & Everly, 2006). Also, the safety and wishes of the victims are taken into consideration by the court team early on in the process, while the assault is still fresh in their minds and they are not influenced by the accused to the same extent as they might be later on.

The data from the specialized domestic violence first appearance court validate that accused receiving the option of having their charges withdrawn and given a peace bond (typically mandating them to treatment such as intervention for batterers or substance abuse) are less likely to have previous criminal records. This is not surprising since those who plead not guilty and proceed to trial are often more knowledgeable about the justice system and understand that long delays often result in dismissals. Further, pre-custody time is counted as double time and therefore substantially reduces the amount of actual jail time served in cases in which a long jail sentence may be imposed.

Even so, some advocates for victims and others have expressed concern about utilizing the outcome of stays with a peace bond (Hoffart & Clarke, 2004); since it gives the appearance of letting the accused off without a criminal record. While this remains a philosophical concern, results from the HomeFront evaluation indicate that accused who receive a peace bond reoffend at a much lower rate than those who receive other dispositions. Further, an evaluation of the batterer treatment programs in Calgary (Cairns, 2005) concluded that those with peace bonds who attended and completed counselling had significantly lower new charge rates (6.1%) than those who did not show or complete treatment (23.7%). The lower recidivism rates for all cases concluded at the first appearance court, whether stayed with a peace bond or entering a guilty plea, provide additional support for dealing with these cases in this manner.

While noting difficulties in comparing recidivism studies because of differing definitions of recidivism and time periods, recidivism rates of 7.9% for police charges for new offences and 10.9% of charges for breaches of court orders over an average of one to two years following the

first offence (a total of 18.8 %) appear relatively low when compared with other research (in fact, this percentage is likely inflated because a number of accused both breach and are charged with new offences). In terms of official reports in which the police laid subsequent charges, three studies from the United States (Maxwell, Garner & Fagan, 2001; Thistlewaite, Wooldredge & Gibbs, 1998; Tolman & Weisz, 1995) reported recidivism rates of 30% (six months to three years), 17% (one year) and 23.6% (18 months) respectively. Further, the lower recidivism rates since the inception of the HomeFront court as compared with the baseline data conducted by Hoffart and Clarke (2004) provide additional support to the premise that specialization has contributed significant improvements in the justice system response to domestic violence in Calgary.

Following the early successes of the specialized domestic violence first appearance court, the Calgary justice community instituted a specialized domestic violence trial court in 2004. One rationale for this was the recognition that the HomeFront domestic court caseworkers were not available to support victims in cases going to trial. The high number of cases withdrawn or dismissed for want of prosecution at trial is often because victims recant their testimony (Ursel, 2002), and providing ongoing support could decrease the number of withdrawals and possibly increase the number of cases found guilty or concluded with intervention conditions at trial.

If accused know that the trial court is also specialized, with Crown prosecutors and other staff that have a strong understanding of the serious nature and dynamics of intimate partner violence, some accused could be encouraged to plead guilty at first appearance or take the offer of a peace bond.

In conclusion, a significant advantage of the Calgary specialized first appearance court model is the extent to which the police and court systems are perceived by the general public, by accused persons and by victims as mobilizing significant resources to address family violence. The hope is that this specialized response will signal that these offences are taken seriously and will not be tolerated, thereby serving as a deterrent and preventing offences from occurring in the future.

Chapter Two: The Efficacy of Court-Mandated Batterer Intervention Programs

As the primary condition to which the accused in domestic violence cases are mandated by the courts, establishing the efficacy of batterer treatment programs is critical, especially as many women stay or return to potentially dangerous partners in the hope that they will change as a result of group treatment (Gondolf & Russell, 1986).

Crisis intervention theory has long posited that the sooner one receives intervention, the more likely the counselling will be effective (Roberts & Everly, 2006). Also, the safety and wishes of the victims are taken into consideration by the court team early on in the process, while the assault is still fresh in their minds and they are not influenced by the accused to the same extent as they might be later on.

Since batterer intervention is commonly mandated by both the Calgary's specialized docket court and the specialized domestic violence trial court, assessing the perspectives of those mandated to this intervention is vital. As a key intervention in addressing both the accountability of the accused and the safety of victims and their children, the current research was comprised of interviews with 20 men who were mandated by the specialized justice process to batterer intervention programs. These men attended the YWCA of Calgary's Sheriff King Paths of Change and Sobering Effect programs.

This chapter provides an overview of research on batterer intervention programs, highlighting the various outcomes assessed in addition to the challenges and successes of such approaches in the North American context.

Batterer Intervention Programs

Batterer intervention programs, almost exclusively offered in a group format, were first developed in the late 1970s based on concerns expressed by advocates for abused woman (Cranwell Schmidt et al., 2007; Feder & Wilson, 2005; Gondolf, 2002). Initially slow to evolve due to voluntary attendance and poor retention rates (Gondolf, 2002), today, batterer intervention programs are a key component of the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence (Ursel, Tutty, & LeMaistre, 2008b). In the 1980s, these programs received increased attention as a result of new mandatory arrest policies for domestic violence offenders. The resulting increase in perpetrators being mandated to treatment as a part of their sentencing caused a surge in the development of new batterer intervention programs (Gondolf, 2002).

The programs vary in their approach to helping batterers acknowledge and change their abusive behaviour. A pro-feminist psychoeducational approach, known as the Duluth model (named after the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota), is the most frequently used model (Feder & Wilson, 2005). The Duluth model views domestic abuse as being rooted in patriarchal societal beliefs that portray men as having the right to exert power and control over women (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004). Feminist principles are used to confront the men's beliefs, assist them to recognize their wrongful actions, and replace them with more appropriate behaviours that appreciate woman as equal partners in the relationships (Pence & Paymar, as cited in Babcock et al., 2004, p. 1026).

Cognitive-behavioural approaches to batterer treatment consider intimate partner violence to be a learned behaviour and require offenders to recognize their abusive behaviour as under their control (Feder & Wilson, 2005). Cognitive-behavioural treatment (CBT) focuses on

changing the batterer's behaviour by providing him with tools and skills to deal with conflict and communicate more effectively (Babcock et al., 2004; Feder & Wilson, 2005). CBT includes a component on anger management, although most programs address this in at least one session. Although the Duluth model and CBT are typically seen as two different approaches to batterer treatment, many programs now incorporate both methods (Babcock et al., 2004).

Approaches using narrative therapy have increasingly been offered (Augusta-Scott, & Dankwort, 2002; McGregor, Tutty, Babins-Wagner & Gill, 2002; Babins-Wagner, Tutty & Rothery, 2009). For example, Calgary Counselling's Responsible Choices for Men program is a narrative therapy approach with a feminist perspective developed by Australian family therapist Alan Jenkins. The program invites the participants to review their beliefs about their selves in relation to the world, to challenge beliefs that are based on distorted perception, and to assist the men access their preferred or honorable selves (Jenkins, 1990).

Couples therapy is less frequently used and has been criticized for putting victims at increased risk for further victimization and for wrongfully insinuating that the women are also partly responsible for the abuse (Babcock et al., 2004; Bograd & Mederos, 1999; Feder & Wilson, 2005, Johansson & Tutty, 1998). Additionally, couples therapy is considered inappropriate in most court-mandated treatment cases due to the severity of the violence that is likely present (Bograd & Mederos, 1999).

Currently, batterer programs are the most prominent interventions for dealing with men who abuse their partners. The idea of mandating batterers to treatment as a part of sentencing is supported by research that finds court-mandated batterers are more likely to complete treatment over self-referred batterers (Rosenbaum, Gearan & Ondovic, 2001). The evaluation of their efficacy is essential and has received increased attention by domestic violence researchers. Ineffective interventions may not only be doing little to change batterers' abusive behaviour but may put victims at increased risk. Gondolf found that a batterer's attendance in a program is the "most influential factor in a woman's return to her abusive partner" (2002, p. 29). This research emphasizes the critical need to evaluate batterer treatment programs.

Despite the different approaches in batterer intervention programs, three common goals are to reduce re-abuse, to change the batterer's attitudes and beliefs that justify abuse, and to provide him with the skills to change his abusive behaviour (Davis, Taylor, & Maxwell, 2000). Researchers have largely relied on quantitative studies that either used recidivism rates or clinical measures of attitudes to evaluate the efficacy of batterer intervention programs.

Additionally, several researchers have employed a qualitative approach to gain greater insight into the victims and batterers experience of treatment and its outcomes. The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of the quantitative and qualitative research that examines the efficacy of mandated treatment for batterers. In addition, research on the efficacy of different program models is reviewed. The report concludes with suggestions for future research.

Quantitative Evaluations of Batterer Intervention Programs

The research evaluating batterer intervention programs that use clinical and attitudinal measures is based on the assumption that domestic violence is linked to the batterer's belief systems. Batterers tend to hold sexist beliefs that entitle them, as a male, to use abusive behaviour to exert power and control over woman (Cranwell Schmidt et al., 2007). Therefore,

clinical measure studies are aimed at uncovering any changes in the batterer's attitudes and belief systems that justify his abuse towards women. These studies are thought to provide insight into the mechanisms of change that will later translate in a reduction of future intimate partner violence (Bowen, Gilchrist, & Beech, 2008). Most use a pretest and posttest design, with the posttests being administered either immediately following the completion of treatment or shortly thereafter.

Numerous evaluations of treatment for men that abuse intimate partners have been conducted. Canadian studies include Augusta-Scott and Dankwort (2002) in Nova Scotia; Montminy, Roy, Lindsay & Turcotte (2003) in Quebec; Palmer, Brown and Barrera (1992); Barrera, Palmer, Brown, and Kalaher, (1994), Scott and Wolfe (2000) and Tutty, Bidgood, Rothery and Bidgood (2001) in Ontario and McGregor, Tutty, Babins-Wagner and Gill (2002) in Alberta.

In 1997(a), Gondolf counted a total of 30 published single-site program evaluations, many with methodological shortcomings such as quasi-experimental and exploratory research designs. Gondolf (1997b) concluded that these methodological limitations resulted in no clear evidence of the efficacy of treatment. He did, however, note that the "success rates" of batterer programs are comparable to others such as drunk-driving, drug and alcohol, and sex offender programs.

The quantitative studies that used clinical measures generally conclude that the programs effectively increase a batterer's personal control and responsibility for his actions (Bowen et al., 2008; Feder & Forde, 2000; Tutty, et al., 2001), reduce perceived stress by increasing coping skills (Buttall & Pike, 2003; Tutty et al., 2001), and decrease depression and anger (Hamberger & Hastings, 1988). Additionally, batterers attending treatment programs have increased their social support network (Tutty et al., 2001). Stewart et al. (2005) also found that treatment completers decreased jealousy and negative attitudes about relationships, had more positive attitudes towards achieving program goals, and increased their use of skills to prevent re-abuse.

Motivation and treatment readiness have also been addressed by studies using clinical outcome measures. The importance of being intrinsically motivated to change has been raised as an important concern regarding batterers who are court-mandated to treatment versus self-referred (Stuart, Temple & Moore, 2007). However, Cranwell Schmidt et al. (2007) found that court-mandated batterers are initially motivated to cease their abusive behaviour by short-term consequences, such as job loss or fear of arrest, but that upon completion of treatment they are more likely to be motivated by the effects of abuse on the family or a desire to improve their family relationship. Stewart et al. (2005) also found batterers' readiness to change increased from the beginning to the end of the treatment program. This research suggests that, in general, batterer intervention programs are meeting the goals of changing batterer's beliefs about woman and domestic violence, and encouraging the development of vital skills for more effective conflict resolution.

It is assumed that these changes in batterers' attitudes will translate into a reduction in violence. However, research does not necessarily support this assumption. Tutty et al. (2001) did find a significant reduction in frequency and severity of abusive behaviour in their study that also found significant attitudinal changes pre- to post-treatment. However, other researchers have cautioned that attitudinal changes are not necessarily associated with significant reductions in re-abuse and more research is needed to establish the connection between them (Cranwell Schmidt et al., 2007; Gondolf, 2000).

For this reason and issues with reliability and social desirability of batterer self reports, in their meta-analysis of court mandated treatment, Feder, Wilson, and Austin (2008) chose to exclude studies that only used attitudinal changes as an outcome measure. In response to such concerns, researchers such as Babins-Wagner, Tutty and Rothery (2005) have incorporated measures of social desirability that are used to adjust scores on the outcome measures. Such adjustments typically shift the scores into the clinical range.

Despite confounds such as those highlighted previously, pretest and posttest measures of outcomes do provide valuable information about the treatment process and batterers' progression through it. In conjunction with those on recidivism, these studies provide a more complete picture of abusers, the efficacy of batterer intervention programs and the treatment process.

Qualitative Studies on Batterer Intervention Programs

Very few studies have investigated the impact of batterer treatment programs qualitatively (Hanson, 2002). However, the value of qualitative studies should not be discounted. In addition to providing more in-depth and detailed information about, "what batterers actually take [away] from programs" (Gondolf, 2000, p. 205), qualitative research gives a voice to both the batterers and their partners, and the opportunity to share their experiences. Two studies have examined the efficacy of batterer intervention programs through qualitative means.

Gondolf (2000) conducted interviews with both the perpetrators of domestic violence and their partners to examine the avoidance methods used by the batterers. His study provided evidence that batterers attending treatment programs developed and became more skilled at using avoidance methods to cease their abusive behaviour. Additionally, Gondolf found a greater association between particular avoidance methods, such as discussion, and a decrease in re-abuse, as reported by both the men and women. A perhaps surprising finding pointing to the overall success of the programs is that the men reported needing to use some method of avoidance less frequently in later post-treatment interviews in comparison to those conducted earlier on.

Scott and Wolfe (2000) conducted interviews with nine batterers who had successfully ceased their abusive behaviour after attending a domestic violence treatment program. The semi-structured interviews gave the men the opportunity to explain how the groups had assisted them in changing their abusive behaviours. At least three-quarters of the men identified the following as being important aspects of treatment: (1) taking responsibility for past behaviour, (2) gaining greater empathy for their partners and the effects of their behaviour on the family members, (3) recognizing that they are responsible for their choices and actions, (4) acknowledging their partner as autonomous individuals with a right to her own feelings and thoughts, (5) developing better communication skills that allowed them to resolve conflicts more effectively and without violence.

Batterer Intervention Programs and Recidivism

Whether offenders re-abuse their partners has been the focus of a large body of research on batterer intervention programs, finding that the programs generally have a small but significant effect on reducing recidivism (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004). In their meta-analysis of 22 mostly quasi-experimental evaluations of domestic violence treatment, Babcock and colleagues found no differences between treatment models (Duluth compared to cognitive

behavioural, etc.) but that treatment had a significant but small effect on recidivism in addition to the effect of being arrested.

The findings from these studies are overwhelming positive. Stewart, Gabora, Kropp and Lee (2005) concluded that domestic violence offenders who failed to complete mandated treatment recidivated at a rate 3.76 times more than those who attended treatment programs. Babcock and Steiner (1999) reported that only 8% of treatment completers reoffended in comparison to 23% of non-completers, a statistically significant difference. These recidivism rates are similar to those in Cairn's 2005 study of three Calgary, Alberta treatment programs (6% versus 23.7%) and of Coulter and VandeWeerd's 2009 study of multi-level batterer treatment programs (8% versus 21%).

Another key question about batterer treatment programs is whether court-mandated offenders benefit in comparison to those who self-refer. Edleson and Syer (1991) compared six treatment conditions finding, that, at 18 month follow-up, men involved with the courts had lower levels of violence than "voluntary" group members. Similarly, Rosenbaum, Gearan and Ondovic (2001) found that court-referred men who completed treatment had significantly lower recidivism rates than self-referred men.

Other researchers have reported overall higher rates of re-abuse but showed the same significant reduction in recidivism based on treatment completion. Bennett, Stoops, Call, and Flett's (2007) study had a recidivism rate of 14.3% for batterers who completed the program, which compares favourably with the 34.6% recidivism rated for non-completers.

Other studies suggest that batterer intervention programs are associated with a greater reduction of re-abuse than incarceration for domestic violence offences. Using a quasi-experimental design, Babcock and Steiner (1999) and Ursel and Gorkoff (1996) found that batterers who attended treatment were significantly less likely to recidivate than those who were sentenced to jail. Babcock and Steiner (1999) found a remarkable 55% difference in recidivism between treatment completers (8%) and incarcerated batterers (63%).

Ursel and Gorkoff examined the recidivism rates of incarcerated individuals who received treatment in a minimum security jail with those in high security facility and no established treatment program. They confirmed that batterers who attended the established treatment program were less likely to recidivate. Caution may be needed in interpreting these findings as batterers who were sentenced to jail time versus those who were mandated to treatment may differ on other characteristics, such as criminal history or the severity of the offence, which may make them more likely to recidivate. Similarly, batterers completing jail time in a high security facility may represent more high-risk offenders that are more likely to reoffend regardless of treatment. In another quasi-experimental study, Labriola, Rempel and Davis (2008) compared attendance in a batterer intervention program to rigorous monitoring by probation and found no significant difference in reoffending between the two groups.

While these studies appear to provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of batterer intervention programs in reducing recidivism, their findings must be interpreted with caution. All utilized quasi-experimental designs. Therefore, the possibility exists that other variables may explain the difference in recidivism rates between treatment completers and non-completers. While it is promising that researchers who did control for differences in individual variables still found a significant reduction in recidivism (Babcock & Steiner, 1999 & Bennett et al., 2007), the

effect of differences between completers and non-completers cannot be ruled out (Bennett et al., 2007; Coulter & VandeWeerd, 2009; Feder & Dugan, 2004; Feder & Wilson, 2005).

In fact, researchers have suggested that there are significant differences between batterers who follow through with completing their mandated treatment and those who fail to attend or drop-out. In comparison to non-completers, batterers who complete treatment are less likely to have criminal histories (Babcock & Steiner, 1999; Ursel & Gorkoff, 1996), have greater incomes (Babcock & Steiner, 1999), higher education levels (Babcock & Steiner, 1999), are more likely to be employed (Bennett et al., 2007; Cairns, 2005), married (Bennett et al., 2007; Cairns, 2005), and be younger (Bennett et al., 2007). Additionally, Cairns (2005) found that completers show fewer signs of anti-social behaviour, mental health problems, or substance abuse.

Several researchers established support for the stake in conformity theory (Bennett et al., 2007; Feder & Dugan, 2004). Stake in conformity has been found to predict both likelihood of following through with treatment and re-offending. Feder and Dugan (2004) concluded that, "Men who are unlikely to be deterred by the consequences of missing their court-mandated SAAP sessions are also less likely to be deterred by the consequences of reoffending" (p. 8).

To avoid the affect of confounding variables, theoretically, the ideal method for evaluating the efficacy of batterer intervention programs is using a true experimental design that randomly assigns convicted batterers to treatment and control conditions. However, given the nature of domestic violence and the societal belief that some treatment is better than no treatment, for ethical reasons, the criminal justice systems may be reluctant to agree to an experimental design that assigns some batterers to a no-treatment condition. Consequently, only four studies were identified that randomly assigned batterers to receive treatment or to receive an alternative criminal justice intervention, most commonly probation. The results of these studies are mixed.

Two studies found that attending batterer intervention programs significantly reduced recidivism in comparison to only receiving probation (Davis et al., 2000; Palmer, Brown, & Barrera, 1992). It should be noted that in the Davis et al. study significant findings were based on official records of re-arrest. Victim reports of re-abuse showed the same general trend but the differences in recidivism rates were not significant.

In contrast to these studies, Feder and Forde (2000) found no significant difference in recidivism between groups of batterers randomly assigned to mandated treatment or probation only. Recidivism in this study was based both on self-reports from the batterer and the victim, and on official records of probation violations.

The fourth study using an experimental design, compared batterers who received treatment with those who were rigorously monitored by a case manager. Dunford (2000) again found no significant difference in recidivism. However, Dunford's experiment was conducted in a military setting and may lack generalizability to other populations in addition to also focusing on participants with a greater stake in conformity.

The randomized clinical trials in Broward County, Florida and Brooklyn, NY (Jackson, Feder, Forde, Davis, Maxwell & Taylor (2003), raised serious questions about batterer intervention programs when neither found statistically significant differences between violations of probation or re-arrests in men randomly assigned to either treatment or a control condition. These conclusions,

using the “gold-standard” of experimental research designs, created significant concerns about such treatment.

Gondolf (2002) responded with critiques of the implementation of the last two studies. In at least some instances, random assignment did not occur, the groups were characterized by high drop-out rates and it was difficult to access victims for follow-up reports, casting doubt on the interpretation of the findings. In his multi-site evaluation of four batterer treatment systems, with variation on whether referrals were pretrial or after trial, length (from 3 months to 9 months) and whether additional services were offered, Gondolf (1999) found no significant differences across programs in re-assaults, portion of men making threats and the quality of the victims’ lives. A subgroup of about 20% of the referrals was identified as dangerous men who continued to assault their partners despite intervention. Such offenders need a different treatment approach, however are difficult to identify. Further, Gondolf recommends screening for severe substance abuse and psychological problems that are associated with dropping out (2002).

Rather than the cessation of violence, Gondolf (2002) refers to “de-escalation of assault”, finding that, while nearly half of the men in the four treatment sites re-assaulted their partners at some time in the nine months following program intake, two and a half years later, more than 80 percent had not assaulted their partner in the past year (based on partner reports) and the severity of the assaults were reduced. This fits with the points raised by Jennings (1990) who has questioned whether the absolute cessation of violence during treatment was a fair standard, when in treatments for other problems such as alcoholism, clients are expected to relapse, but learn from these experiences to help them resist in future.

Gondolf’s final recommendation is to provide programs as early as possible and to shift the focus from program length to program intensity (2002, p. 214). For example, as soon as possible after charges and during the crisis when motivation tends to be the highest, offenders could attend counselling three or four times per week for the first four to six weeks.

Program Factors

Most comparisons of different models of batterer intervention programs conclude that no one model is better than others (Babcock et al., 2004; Bennett & Williams, 2001). Hanson and Wallace-Capretta (2000) compared four different treatment models and concluded that what is more important than program approach is that they are implemented soundly. In a study that seems to support this contention, Ursel and Gorkoff (1996) found that batterers who received treatment from an established program had the highest reduction in recidivism as compared to individuals who received treatment from new and less experienced program facilitators.

Research on the effects of program length is inconclusive. Bennett and Williams (2001) found no difference based on length of program. Similarly, Gondolf (1999) found little evidence of the importance of program length, however there was a general trend in his study that the longer, more comprehensive program resulted in a greater reduction of severity and frequency of repeat abuse. Davis et al. (2000) found that only the longer 26-week batterer intervention programs significantly reduced recidivism, with no difference in reoffending between the batterers who attended an 8-week program or received only probation. A plausible explanation is that a certain number of weeks or sessions may be required for treatment to be beneficial but beyond that, no further gains are made.

Some researchers have suggested that batterers' individual characteristics have a considerable impact on what type of batterer intervention program will be most successful for them (Bennett & Williams, 2001; Lohr et al., 2006; Medros, 1999). Much research has identified characteristics of batterers that make them more likely to recidivate, including a prior criminal history (Hanson & Wallace-Capretta, 2000; Shepard, 1992; Ursel & Gorkoff, 1996), the duration of abuse (Shepard, 1992), substance abuse (Fals-Stewart, 2003; Shepard, 1992), and witnessing or experiencing abuse as a child (Shepard, 1992).

High-risk offenders are typically thought to be some of the hardest to treat. Hendricks, Werner, Shipway, and Turinetti (2006) evaluated a program for high-risk domestic violence offenders. They found that batterer treatment is beneficial for even high-risk offenders, who recidivated significantly less after attending a combined psychoeducational and cognitive skills training program, 23.5% recidivism as opposed to 41.2% for program dropouts.

Therefore, the efficacy of batterer intervention programs may depend on the ability of the program to address the varied needs of batterers. Domestic violence researchers have speculated that additional interventions, in particular substance abuse treatment, may notably increase the effectiveness of batterer treatment programs (Cairns, 2005; Easton, Mandel, Babuscio, Rounsaville, & Carroll, 2007; Gondolf, 2002; Stuart, 2005; Stuart et al., 2007).

Areas for Future Research

As the results of the research on the efficacy of batterer intervention programs are still somewhat mixed and no single model of domestic violence treatment is superior, the continued evaluation and 'safe' experimentation of different treatment approaches is necessary (Bennett & Williams, 2001).

The large number of offenders who start treatment but fail to complete it is reason for growing concern (McMurrin & Theodosi, 2007). Research on batterer intervention programs suggests that those who fail to complete their treatment have significantly higher rates of recidivism. Therefore, additional research examining the predictors of program drop-out and what interventions may decrease the likely of batterers failing to comply with mandated treatment is warranted.

As suggested in the literature, individual batterer characteristics may not only play a significant role in program completion but also in the effectiveness of treatment. More research is needed to examine the effects of treatment duration on program efficacy and the effects of individual characteristics on the batterer's response to different treatment approaches (Stuart et al., 2007).

Lastly, the majority of research on batterer intervention programs has quantitatively measured short-term program outcomes with follow-up periods of one to two years. However, Klein and Tobin (2008) found that the average time to first re-arrest for batterers was over two years, and that just over 13% of offenders are re-arrested for the first time after three years of their initial assault and almost 7% are not re-arrested until at least five years later.

Research has also shown that even the batterers who do not physically assault their partner again tend to continue their use of psychological abuse (Johansson & Tutty, 1998; Rosenfeld, 1992). Therefore, studies using more self-report data, qualitative measures and longer follow-up periods are needed to effectively measure the efficacy of batterer intervention programs and long-term patterns of re-abuse.

General Conclusions on the Efficacy of Batterer Intervention Programs

Despite the mixed results on the efficacy of batterer intervention programs, generally domestic violence researchers agree that batterer intervention programs have at least a small effect at reducing re-abuse (Babcock et al., 2004; Feder & Wilson, 2006; Feder, Austin & Wilson, 2008; Lohr et al., 2008; Stuart et al., 2007). Bennett and Williams (2001) concluded that the effect of these programs should not necessarily solely be measured in terms of statistical significance but in regards to practical significance. Research using clinical measures and qualitative studies to examine changes in batterer's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours suggest that the efficacy of the programs is practically significant.

Batterer interventions are perhaps best thought of “not themselves as a cure but a reinforcing component of a coordinated community response to domestic violence, wherein a program's success reflects on the effectiveness of the overall system in addressing domestic violence” (Gondolf, as cited in Hanson, 2002, p. 437). Batterer intervention programs need to be a part of a *coordinated* community response in which the criminal justice system, batterer intervention programs, victim services and advocates work together and inform each other, and where the evaluation of these domestic violence interventions is ongoing.

In summary, while there has been considerable scepticism expressed by victim's advocates about the effects of batterer intervention programs for court-mandated clients, the research supports their utility for a relatively large proportion of those charged with assaulting intimate partners. The proviso that some repeat offenders and others with co-occurring problems such as substance misuse and psychological problems are not amenable to the models currently in use suggests the need to conduct further research on identifying these subgroups and developing appropriate interventions.

Chapter Three: Pathways to the Treatment Groups

Twenty men mandated by the court system to attend YWCA Family Violence Prevention Centre and Sheriff King Home groups for abusive men agreed to be interviewed regarding their experiences. The respondents participated in semi-structured interviews of approximately an hour in length. This chapter details the respondents' abusive behaviours towards their partners that led to their convictions; their experiences with the judicial system from police intervention, to court, including their comments about HomeFront, probation, and their group involvement with YWCA Family Violence Prevention Centre and Sheriff King Home.

The respondents attended the Paths of Change Men's Counselling Program. Due to program changes a few years ago, some respondents attended a Phase I/ Phase II 18-week group format while others attended a 14-week open group program. Also, a number of respondents attended the Sobering Effect group, a specialized 14-week Paths of Change Men's Counselling Program for men referred by probation who are mandated to both domestic violence and addiction treatment.

YWCA Sheriff King Home initially started groups for men using a two-step format: Phase I and Phase II. Phase I consisted of weekly open format group sessions for six weeks. After the men completed the Phase I introductory group, they carried on to Phase II for 12 weekly closed format group sessions. In total, men completing Phase I and Phase II attended programming for 18 weeks.

Several years ago, the YWCA Sheriff King Home revised the Paths of Change Program and integrated Phase I and Phase II program content into a 14 week ongoing open group format. In addition, the YWCA Sheriff King Home developed another program, Sobering Effect, in partnership with Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC), which is now within Alberta Health Services. Sobering Effect is a 14-week domestic violence and substance abuse group-counselling program. The men attending Sobering Effect have files opened in both agencies and make contact with the program three times a week for the 14 weeks. Whether the respondents attended the Paths of Change Phase I/Phase II format or the 14-week format depended on when the men attended; if they came before or after the program change was implemented.

Demographic Characteristics

The demographic information for the 20 respondents is divided into two sections. The first section reports on basic demographics, while the second section reports on the details related to the men's charges and convictions. Reported below are the demographics regarding respondents' ages, marital status, length of relationship with abused partner, and number of children.

At the time of the qualitative interviews, 13 of the 20 respondents reported on their ages, which ranged from 29 to 66 years. Table 1 provides further details regarding the age range.

Table 1: Respondents' Ages

Marital Status	#
21-30	3
31-40	3

41-50	1
51-60	4
61-70	2
Total	13

In addition, at the time of the interviews, the 20 participants identified their marital status as reported below in Table 2. Notably, when interviewed, seven of the 20 men were still with the partners they were convicted of abusing.

Table 2: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	#
Single	7
Married	7
Common-law	4
Divorced	2
Total	20

Eighteen men provided information regarding the length of their relationship with the partners they were charged with assaulting. The lengths of the 18 men's relationships varied from nine months to 38 years (further details in Table 3).

Table 3: Length of Relationship with Abused Partner

Length of Relationship	#
Under 1 year	1
1-5 years	5
6-10 years	6
11-20 years	3
21-30 years	1
31-40 years	2
Total	18

Nineteen respondents reported on whether they had parented with their partners. As indicated in Table 4, thirteen of the 19 respondents had children with their partners. While a further respondent stated that he had children with his partner, he provided no further information.

Table 4: Number of Children

Number of Children	#
No children	6
One child	5
Two children	3
Three children	2
Four children	1
Five children	0
Six children	1
Total	18

At the time of the interviews, of the 13 men with children, eight had adult children. Seven of the 13 men lived in blended family structures.

Lastly, three men reported being in relationships with new partners. Of these three, one was married to his new partner and two were living common-law. The lengths of the relationships with their new partners were between 2 and 2½ years. Of the men in new relationships, only one woman had children from a previous relationship; thus, this respondent also lived in a blended family.

Police Charges

This section details the demographic information regarding the police charges against the 20 respondents that led to the men being mandated to attend the batterer intervention groups at YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King. In addition, this section provides information on the men’s past criminal histories. Lastly, it provides information on the one partner who was also charged with assaulting her partner.

With respect to the current attendance at group, all 20 men came into YWCA Family Violence Prevention Centre and Sheriff King Home because they were mandated to attend; they had been arrested and charged with various crimes because of their abusive behaviours towards their partners. As indicated in Table 5, sixteen men reported the charges that the police laid against them (note that most had more than one charge, which is not reflected in the table). It should also be noted that, while four men indicated that they had been mandated to attend, they gave no information about what charges they had been given.

Table 5: Police Charges Leading to being Mandated to YW Program

Current Charges/Conviction	#
No information regarding current conviction	4
Common Assault	12
Assault Causing Bodily Harm	1
Aggravated Assault	1
Uttering Death Threats	2
Stalking	1
Harassment	1
Danger to the Public	1
Carrying a Concealed Weapon	1
Resisting Arrest	1
Failure to Appear	1
Breach of Bail Conditions	1
Total	16

Eight of the 16 men who reported this information had been charged with more than one count, and/or more than one criminal offence.

I’m arrested for two counts of assault: one on her and one on the baby.

I was charged with two counts of aggravated assault. One of them was using my body as a weapon to cause acts of harmful intent on another human being.

I was charged with assault; also with resisting arrest from all three [police] officers.

I went to the hotel with my girlfriend of five years. I started drinking and came over to the house. I was drunk and I wanted more whiskey and to smoke some joints. They got mad, so I pulled a knife; I was going to cut my girlfriend's throat and a bunch of other retarded things. The cops came. I didn't know I had a knife on me. I woke up in the drunk tank. I was charged with three charges of concealed weapon, danger to the public and uttering death threats.

As indicated in Table 6, fourteen of the 20 respondents provided details on their release conditions.

Table 6: Release Conditions

Release Conditions	#
No information regarding release conditions	6
Bail	2
Abstinence from Alcohol	4
Abstinence from Drugs	2
Attend AADAC (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission)	1
No Weapons	2
No Contact with Partner	10
No Contact with Children	2
Not Allowed to Return to the Family Home	9
Maintain a Curfew	1
Total number of men discussing their release conditions	14

Two men were required to post bail: one was required to pay \$500; the other was initially released on his own recognisance, but breached his conditions and was subsequently re-released after paying \$1,000.00 in bail.

As part of their release conditions, nine respondents were not allowed to return to their family home.

I had to leave the home, which I did. I wasn't very happy about it. I'm not sure that I agree with that because you are not found guilty, but then you are charged with that charge. But somebody should go, so the supposed abuser is the one they tell to go. That's the way the system works.

When I got out, I had no assets, nothing with my common-law wife. I could talk to her over the telephone. I couldn't go near my house, like a two block radius. My wife had it. So I went homeless for two months. I lived at the Calgary Drop-in-Centre (homeless shelter).

She was left in my house, which was in my name. She had only lived with me for four months or so. It really bothered me. I didn't think that was fair. It turned me away from her. I thought she was gold digging and freeloading and things like that. But the judicial system buys it. I realize she was a single mother and I think the best intentions were to look after her child so that her child has a safe place to live. I didn't think it was fair.

Fourteen of the 20 participants went through Calgary's specialized domestic violence courts; six men were charged in other jurisdictions/provinces and so attended court in those jurisdictions. After conviction, these six men came to Calgary and served their sentences here.

All 20 men reported on the sentences that they received and the conditions of their orders (see Table 7).

Table 7: Sentence and Conditions

Sentence and Conditions	#
Peace Bond	8
Stayed Conviction	4
Incarceration, followed by Parole	1
Probation	19
Domestic Violence Treatment	20
Addiction Treatment	5
Parenting Class	2
Mental Health Examination and/or FAOS (Forensic Assessment Outpatient Service) attendance	2
Abstinence from Alcohol	8
Abstinence from Drugs	2
No Weapons	3
Keep the Peace	6
Maintain a curfew	1
Fine Payment	4
Community Service Hours	1
Repair Broken Window	1
Total	20

Comments that the men made about the charges they faced and their subsequent convictions are detailed below.

I was charged with three charges of concealed weapon, danger to the public, and uttering death threats. They dropped two charges. Crown made a deal, if I pled guilty to uttering death threats, they'd drop the weapons charge and dangerous to the public. They dropped those two and I pled guilty on the other. I got one year probation.

I went to court, ended up getting a, what do you call it, I forget. Basically, I was on probation for a year and if I was a good guy then it all went away.

One man was sentenced to six months incarceration, followed by parole for one year:

I forget what all [the charges were]; assault causing bodily harm, three counts uttering death threats. It never went to trial but it dragged on for a year. I think I ended up pleading guilty to the assault causing bodily harm and two counts of uttering death threats. I tried to defend myself but obviously didn't do a good job because I ended up getting six months and served four months.

The other 19 participants were all required to be supervised by probation; 14 men were on probation for a year; two men were on probation for 2 to 2½ years; the lengths of probation for the other three men is not known.

As previously indicated in Table 7, four men were required to pay fines.

I got to pay a fine by the end of the month or do ten days in jail. I have to get an extension on that.

Two of the four men did not disclose the amounts of the fines; however one participant received a fine of \$500, and the other, \$1,000. One man was also required to complete 30 hours of community service.

Prior Convictions

In addition to discussing the charges and convictions that brought them to YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King Home, 14 of the 20 participants shared information regarding previous convictions as adults (see Table 8).

Table 8: Past Criminal Justice Histories

Past Conviction Histories	#
No Previous Convictions as an Adult	2
Past Convictions, but no information regarding the charges	4
Past Assault Convictions	5
Past Alcohol Related Convictions (i.e. impaired driving)	4
Past Weapon Related Convictions (i.e. carrying a concealed weapon)	2
Total number of men discussing their conviction histories	14

As indicated in the above table, two men had not been arrested previously as adults. Twelve men reported past convictions, eight of whom provided some details of these.

Everything is unrelated in my record. I had a couple of .08's (impaired driving convictions) before. I've got some other little things.

I had an assault charge when I was younger but for just regular fighting.

Since I was sixteen, I was in and out of prison. I spent fifteen years in prison all because of alcohol, fights, gangs. All my charges, assault causing bodily harm, robbery, violence, knife, guns: it's gang related every time. (Interviewer: Were any domestic related?) Most every one of them.

One participant mentioned that he had assault convictions in his past. The interviewer followed up by asking, "Was that a domestic assault or more like a fight?"

Different. It was an "S" in front of the assaults.

While the inference is that this man has past convictions for sexual assault, he provided no further information.

Only one man identified that his partner had a past criminal a conviction history. She had been charged with assault when she physically fought back against his assault on her and her child; she was sentenced to one year probation.

The Respondents' Abusive Behaviours that led to Current Charges

In the interviews, the 20 men were given the opportunity to discuss the abusive incident or incidents that led to their charges. One respondent declined to speak of his abusive behaviour, stating, "It's a long story; I don't want to get into that." However, the other 19 men described their abusive behaviour against their partners that subsequently brought them into the mandated groups at YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King Home.

Last year I was working twelve-hour days. I was very tired, totally beaten up. I had a few drinks. Normally I don't drink excessively but I probably had three and went to bed. Then [there] were some verbal arguments. My wife came and she started abusing me, turning the bedroom light on, light off, light on, light off. So I lost my temper; I really lost [my] temper. So this was some verbal exchange. I remember that I slapped her and went to bed and that was it. Went to work next morning. Again have like a busy day, came back and had a drink. When I had a drink (my wife doesn't like me drinking) she thought that I was going to be aggressive so she called the police. She was going to scare me. I didn't expect they were going to call back. But they called back and came very quickly. We had the interviews and she showed some mark on her head.

Things haven't been going well for quite a while, twenty years (laughing). Even more so the last little while. My wife wasn't black and blue; she was pretty sore. She went to see her doctor to get her nose checked. She got it x-rayed and it was broken. She told the doctor what happened and they suggested she take our daughter with her when she went up to (city) for work; not leave our daughter with me because there was a risk of me (laughing). My wife took our daughter so I was like wow! Then, my wife tried to get me to leave. She'd phone from (city) and say, "I want you out." I was trying to get that organized and I guess I wasn't fast enough because the police showed up at the door.

We got into an argument and to the point where she went into the bathroom. I pushed the door in, and grabbed onto her wrists to take the phone away. At the time, I didn't really believe, and I know differently now, that it wasn't that I really physically hurt her. It was more just sort of bumping. She had absolutely no marks on her. I just scared her because I was seeing red. I ended up breaking the bottom part of the cell phone off from trying to take it from her. I grabbed some things and ended up outside. Then I realized that I didn't have my wallet or my keys. At this point she was on the phone with 911 and I guess operator was saying not to let me in. I got even more mad. I remember sort of pushing my shoulder against the door and the door didn't go in. I went up to the deck where the bay window was and at this point I was extremely mad and I ended up putting my fist through the kitchen window.

We were listening to music. I turned the music down and then (wife) comes in. "Turn that shit off." Okay so [I] just had attitude, you know, drinking can set a person off. That was about it. I started yelling and she gets her cousin to call the cops. I ended up leaving the first time but I guess I was yelling some bad stuff. I don't remember saying that I'm going to kill you all.

She broke up with me and told me to keep in contact with her. She wouldn't say she was busy, she just wouldn't pick up. But if she did, it'd be, "I'm busy, I'm busy." But sometimes when you're a little pig headed you push and push until it's just too much. She basically goes, "You keep calling here, I'll call the cops."

In recounting the incidents that led to the police intervening and laying charges, the men tended to justify why they had responded in an abusive manner towards their partner or child/relative. All 19 men alleged that their partners were also abusive to them and often initiated the abusive behaviour, to which the men had responded by using physical force as a reflexive action, defence or to restrain and prevent further abuse. Their justifications served to minimize the abuse and to blame their partners or child/relative.

The worst part too is always bringing up things of the past. She always did it to me and those really just tick you off. Let it go; that was eight or nine months ago.

A lot of the problems were stemming from my drinking and her not willing to support or help me through it.

She had a short temper. I must admit that I was doing this when I was exhausted because she was nagging. The issue was nagging habits. I never start it. But, once she goes at you, you just start bouncing back. I talked to our doctor that she gets short spurts of aggression, which are unbearable. The doctor thought maybe hormones.

In addition to directly blaming their partners, the 19 men also used mutualising language in their descriptions of the abusive incidents, creating the impression that their partners were also acting abusively.

One night my friend was really sick and I went to bring him to the hospital. She exploded on me for not doing the dishes before I went. So, I essentially exploded on her. One thing led to another; we ended up in a pushing match.

It was over my daughter moving out. After two days of my wife telling me that she [daughter] is like that because of me, we got in this terrible argument. My anger got the best of me and I gave my wife a backhand and she attacked me. I pushed her and she fell over the computer chair and hit her back on the table. Then I left. I came back and we sat down and talked. She told me I had no right to do that. I said, "You are absolutely right" and that I was very sorry. I said, "It takes two." I wasn't trying to protect myself from what I did because I know how wrong I was. [I] said, "You can say things that provoke until, if I don't respond, it just gets worse." She phoned the police. She said, "I'm not comfortable with you here." I was asleep. I did have one and a half beers. She woke me up and said, "You have to go. I'm not comfortable with you here." I said, "I'm not going, I'm asleep. If you fear for your safety, that's absolutely ludicrous."

Every time we talked she seemed to be aggressive, always throwing things in my face about past stuff. Things that were said before: a comment about me not wanting to be with her anymore because she gave me the, 'my way or the highway' thing. I said, "Fine, I guess that's what we're doing." She threw a ball at my head and I blocked it. It bounced off and I tried to get out the door and she blocked me, saying that I was drunk. I said I was just going to the bar. Then it proceeded to me driving drunk. Then she didn't care about the relationship. That's when I proceeded to leave, "Go fuck yourself" or "stupid bitch or cunt." Like, "whore, slut" or those defensive things or insulting things that, when you're angry and someone is pushing your buttons, it's bound to drop out. Not just from the way that you're brought up, but if someone's attacking you verbally, you go back with verbal attack first. Not many people will pick up a gun after someone has called them an asshole and shoot them. There is a lot more that happens, like, if the gun gets picked up and then it gets loaded. That's the way the words are; the weapon is out there and you're talking. Then the weapon is loaded with profanity and insults and derogatory comments. Then the final punch is really a punch.

In their narratives, 15 of the 19 men tended to minimize their abusive behaviour, including minimizing the extent of the injuries they inflicted on their partners and/or children.

The paramedics responded with the police and checked her out and there wasn't a mark on her because I was careful to not hurt her.

I overreacted a little bit and pushed her through the kitchen wall. It's not like I hauled off and beat the hell out of her or anything.

I was a little pissed off. The whole incident shouldn't have happened; the police shouldn't have been called. I ended up leaving the first time but I guess I was yelling some pretty bad stuff. I don't remember saying that I'm going to kill you all, (laughs). But I'd left my glasses and my cigarettes so I came back. As soon as I got in the door, they [daughter] was on the phone with the police. I said, "If that's the police, I'm coming to get my glasses" and "I'll give you one warning to hang up the phone." We'd had lots of incidents before and nothing ever happened. So I decided, 'You are not going to hang it up' and give me a smart-ass look on your face. I said, "I've had enough of that." I gave her a little kick and a little slap and supposedly a punch. It wasn't a punch. It was more or less a wake-up; that was about it.

There was an accident. It fell under the guidelines of police. I pushed her away; I was trying to turn her to push her out the door and she tripped and knocked her head, so I called the ambulance. To this day, I've never slapped or kicked or shouted at her. I am a very gentle soul, but I became afraid and reacted in an inappropriate way and there was an accident. If anyone heard the 911, they would hear me with the calm voice and her frantic; I'm good in emergency situations. I held pressure on her wound and waited until the ambulance comes. My lawyer read from her statement: "He placed his hands on my shoulders and pushed." I was trying to turn her because she was between me and the door, I had no flight opportunity.

In the example below, the participant described the injuries that his partner had sustained after he pushed her out of his vehicle while driving.

They [RCMP] showed me some pictures they had taken of her and asked me, "What is this?" There was something like acne, I guess, on the side of her face, a little bit. I don't know what it was from but it looked like she'd been rubbing it or something. Then it was kind of red. She had a couple bruises on her knees from when I pushed her out of the car. I guess that was enough evidence for them that I was a woman abuser.

During the interviews, three men discussed their perceptions of having assaulted their partners.

The initial incident, I wish I had at that time the maturity to recognize it and not let it get carried away to where it did, but for whatever reason I didn't.

There were two other people in the house; they wouldn't leave. A fight started and somebody smashed a thing over the coffee [table] and I guess I pulled a knife and I was going for a gun and was being a total idiot. I don't even know. It's what I heard in court. I thought, "Man, this can't be true. I don't do this stuff." I finally say, "Well, I have to admit I have a problem. If I don't deal with my problem, I'm going to have this for the rest of my life. I'm going to die a lonely person." Even my kids didn't like me when I was drinking. That is how I know I have to. This is the biggest wake-up call.

While the participant in the above quote seemed to be taking responsibility for his actions, he also added:

I'm not a woman beater. If anything, when I get mad I say things, call her names. I don't hit women; I'm not a woman beater. I don't like to be classified as a woman beater. I'm not that. I call her names and I call her down. I make her feel really bad.

Experiences with the Criminal Justice System

This section details the respondents' experiences with the justice system. It explores who contacted the police, the men's views on police intervention and the courts. The details regarding who had alerted the police are an amalgamation of the experiences of the 20 participants. However, as previously mentioned, 14 participants were charged in Calgary and, thus, went through the coordinated community justice response to domestic violence; while the remaining six men were charged in other jurisdictions/provinces. Therefore, the information regarding the men's interactions with the police and courts is divided according to whether the men dealt with the justice system in Calgary or in other jurisdictions.

Police Intervention

Since all 20 study respondents went through the court system, it is a given that someone had alerted the police. Three of the participants did not know who had called the police. Thirteen of the men's partners had either called the police directly or requested that another person in the home call on their behalf.

I just started yelling and she said "Call the cops."

I pushed her down on the couch, anything soft so she wouldn't actually get hurt. Her friend called the police and said I was attacking her.

In another case, the neighbours called the police.

I wasn't talking in a calm voice and neighbours heard me yelling at her. They called the police saying that there was a domestic incident at this address.

Three of the men called 911 themselves. Two had made this decision because they considered that their partners were being aggressive.

She literally jumped on me and I had to throw her off. I called 911, I said, "Look she's losing it."

These two men provided no further details of the circumstances in which their partners had become aggressive. As noted above, one man called 911 for an ambulance after he had injured his partner. It is not clear whether the 911 operator dispatched the police as well as the ambulance or if his partner made a separate 911 call.

I called the ambulance. In her statement, she said she made the 911 call.

Calgary Police Intervention

After the police responded, the men were subsequently arrested for their abusive acts. The remainder of this section divides the experiences of the study participants according to whether they were dealing with the justice system in Calgary or in other jurisdictions. Of the 14 men who dealt with Calgary Police Service, nine stated that the police had intervened on previous occasions regarding domestic violence but had not necessarily laid charges.

They were there several times before. I would leave the residence on my own, how do you say it, recognizance or just on my own will, for the night.

One time in an argument she closed the bedroom door. I pushed the bedroom door in to the point where the moulding broke. The police did come. They said, "Go cool off and spend the night somewhere." Then, she told [me] that everything was over. Anytime I started getting upset she would threaten to phone the police and a couple of times they did come. One time, I was halfway out the alley and they let me go and told me not to come back for a few hours. It wasn't even like 24 hours. I honestly thought that I was just going to be told the same thing as: "Go sleep it off and come back the next day." I was a little surprised I was charged.

The other five respondents stated that this was the first time that the Calgary police had been to their homes.

I have never been arrested, never been in the system before.

All 14 men described their interactions with the Calgary police officers. Most of the men were of the opinion that the police had treated them badly in some way, either judging them for their abusive behaviour, being unfair or biased, treating them roughly, or not taking injuries that the men had sustained seriously. Five participants commented that the Calgary police officers had acted in a professional manner.

We were interviewed so I was put under arrest. I must say that the two policemen were very good, very professional. But they were doing their job.

The last incidence with the stalking and the harassing, they were really easygoing. They were probably the most professional officers I've ever seen. They're not here to be the bad guys. They've got a job to do like everybody else. A lot of people think they just hide behind that little piece of tin. A lot of people just see them as officers, not many people see them as human beings.

Two men stated that the police had charged them even though their partners had not wanted to have the charges pressed:

It's unfair. Maybe the police were tired of coming to the residence because of my drinking. My wife didn't want charges pressed against me. The police laid the charges. So that caused our family some grief.

Four men stated that the police were verbally and/or physically aggressive with them.

One police officer had racist comments and he looked at me with hate in his eyes, his veins were almost popping, his face was red. He had this hateful look.

They were really rough with me. When I woke up in the drunk tank my arm was all blue; I guess I was fighting with them.

The police were asking what is going on. I told them that my girlfriend and I had an argument and that she left. They wanted to come in to have a look. I said, "No it's just myself." I said we can talk outside but they were not going inside. I still had my defences up and because I didn't get a chance to calm down and absorb what had happened. I took out that frustration and anger but they could tell through the tone in my voice that I was not ready to talk about anything. They saw me as possibly a threat

and, in their line of work, they can't take my word for it. There could be someone lying dead on the floor or bleeding. I came to realize that afterwards. I could have been a lot more polite but I was really agitated. I had no time to cool down so I was responding with short answers in kind of a cocky way. Pretty much they attacked me, all three of them, and took me to the ground inside my house. They had handcuffs on me after about 30 seconds. Eight to ten hours later I had bruises all over my back, biceps and I knew that it was far too excessive force. When I was on the ground I told the police officers while they were screaming at me and telling me to quit resisting. They couldn't hear me. They were just too excited.

Three respondents indicated that they had needed medical attention for injuries at the time of arrest: two as a result of injuring themselves during their abusive actions towards their partners, while one respondent indicated that the Calgary police officers had used a police dog to subdue him.

I ended up putting my fist through the kitchen window. Shortly after, the police came, handcuffed me, and put me in the police car. Once I got to the police station, they cleaned it up, put some band-aids on. But I was still bleeding pretty good. They didn't take me to the hospital; they just put me in jail for the night. (Interviewer: The next day, did you get further medical attention?) No. I didn't. It was the least of my worries.

My wife was screaming at me that the cops were coming, so I took off. They sicced a police dog on me. I got bit by the police dog. My arm's never been the same. I have trouble doing certain things because there's holes in it. They didn't even call out to me. My partner told me that they were all laughing in the house, "Oh, the dog got him." It's a big frigging joke to them. They handcuffed me and took me to the hospital; got me fixed up a bit. Then they threw me into a jail cell with a whole bunch of hard guys. I'm still bleeding everywhere and I was in a lot of pain. They kind of taunted me. I got a blood infection from the dog.

Twelve of the 14 Calgaryans were of the opinion that the Calgary police are biased when attending a domestic dispute.

They maybe take sides, probably a woman's side.

I was feeling at the time that this was unfair. I did not do anything wrong. I was the one that got hurt. I was the victim. Afterwards I thought it was excessive, too much enforcement of the law.

I lost faith in the police department of Calgary. I did some wrong that night and she did wrong. But she got off scot-free. They should have charged both people, not just the male like they normally do. It's 50/50. I got the feeling that the police just go in there, take the male out, blame it on him and that way they can go on with their nights; that's how they portrayed it [to] me.

If I had done what she had said I had, you'd have thought there would have been some injuries. There's a hole in the system. I guess it's for the safety of all women but it puts the men on the downside of things, guilty until proven innocent. The pendulum swings both ways and eventually it settles in the middle. Right now, it's way over on the other side because it used to be the women that had to prove everything.

After the charges were laid, four men had further involvement with Calgary Police Service officers when they breached their release conditions by continuing to contact their partners.

I was arrested again on breach of the rules, the court order. I wasn't supposed to be around the house or talking to my wife or the kids. They came around the house with Child Services and the police took me away again and I got charged for breach.

Police Intervention in Other Jurisdictions

Of the six participants who had been charged in other jurisdictions, five of the men had not previously had the police in their homes regarding a domestic dispute:

That was the first time anything like that had ever happened to me without me being able to resolve it with words.

This is the first domestic dispute. I've never been involved in anything like that but I have been charged with assault. I used to drink in my early 20's. I got in a bar fight and was charged, and I was guilty. I've got no problem saying when I'm guilty and I ended up quitting drinking over it.

One participant stated the police had been out to his home before regarding his abusive behaviour:

We had a thing like about sixteen years ago—something crazy like that.

In terms of police intervention, only one man was of the opinion that he was treated in a professional manner:

The police were fine; I mean they were just doing their job. It's not fun, you know, but if you cooperate, it's not too bad.

The other five men raised concerns regarding how they were treated by the police officers.

They looked at me as a man that would just go around beating the wife all the time and I didn't like that I was looked upon that way.

I phoned and told [employer] that there was an incident between me and my girlfriend and I didn't think my state of mind was good to be at work. Work said, "That's good. But the RCMP showed up here looking for you." That brought me to phone them (RCMP). They said, "Either you come in the easy way or the hard way." I said, "Well, how you going to find me because you have no idea where I am." They said, "It only takes time." It took me about three hours to think about what had happened. Either I got to go or I was going to end up going to jail without even having to tell my side of the story. So I approached the RCMP with a willingness of trying to make them realize that there was another victim in the story. But it was a female officer and the female is 100% on her side. She had a couple bruises on her knees from when I pushed her out of the car. I tried to show the female officer that I had a bump on my head from where the bottle bounced off and multiple shots to the face. I was pretty much defending myself. They took it from her story that I was the one who was making her have to defend herself. My whole issue with the situation was the law enforcement.

In terms of the police response, five participants perceived the police in their home jurisdictions as unfair or biased when attending domestic disputes.

It was one sided towards her against me. The men are always wrong.

There is this chivalry aspect when you get these guys that are paid to enforce power over people like police officers, bouncers. All they need is a woman to say she has been hit or whatever and you could have ten cop cars show up. They just love that sort of thing.

Experiences in Court

Since Calgary has specialized domestic violence courts, those being charged with offences related to domestic violence will at least begin the process through the specialized courtrooms. Thus, the respondents' views on the court process are again divided in two sections to distinguish between the 14 Calgarians who went through the Calgary court and the six men who were charged in other jurisdictions.

Calgary Court Experiences

When the men described their experiences in court process, they did not seem to understand that Calgary has a coordinated community justice response to domestic violence. They did notice that most of the other men at docket court were also there for matters related to domestic violence; however, they did not appear to realize that they were in a specialized domestic violence courtroom. Six of the 14 respondents had further comments with respect to their experiences in Calgary's first appearance or docket court.

I had duty counsel. Because I had no information at that point, I was trying to do everything myself. She asked for the peace bond and the prosecutor asked for two weeks to investigate some things. The Crown prosecutor wanted to check some facts and she never called me. Do you not want to get both sides of the story and see what adds up?

My wife came with me. We were scared because we didn't know what to expect. In my limited college years, I thought that we were going to have a half an hour to explain what happened and the judge will look at it and my wife will make a statement. I'll make our statement and things will be over. But it didn't happen. It was just the appearance. The first session in court, you basically confirm your name, your address, who you are.

They lost my files. They told me to go to the court; they had no record. So they ended up re-charging me with the same thing. I had to go back downtown, spent an hour and a half down there.

Whether or not to retain a lawyer was an issue that 12 of the respondents discussed in their interviews. One individual decided against retaining a lawyer: he pled not guilty and the court encouraged him to connect with a lawyer.

They wanted me to hire a lawyer. I said, "I'm not hiring." Legal Aid wanted me to sign my house over to them. Fat chance! I don't care how much you are charging me, I'm not signing my house over to anybody so I can have some schmuck defend me when I already know we are both at fault. I agree I was guilty. I just figured, I've got three impaireds, I've got a record, I'll go to jail. Probably if I had hired a lawyer I would have got it dismissed on the second time [court appearance], but I don't like lawyers.

The other eleven respondents retained lawyers, deciding that it was in their best interest to be represented in court.

I found a lawyer because I didn't want to go to jail. You don't know what is going to happen. Both of us went to the lawyer, we explain what happened. He said, no problem, he was going to handle this case. This was the last time we've been to the court.

I had a lawyer. It was a serious thing. I don't want a criminal charge against me so I had a lawyer. I was nervous. It is not an ordeal I want to go through ever again. It's a scary thing.

One man stated that he had used retaining a lawyer as a delaying tactic to deal with the charges against him.

I put it off for about two months by not getting a lawyer. Then, I got Legal Aid.

When they discussed their experiences with their lawyers, four men were of the opinion that the quality of the legal service they received was related to their ability to pay.

I could have almost beaten it if I wanted to pay a lot but I didn't have the money.

It's a money-oriented society; you buy their law. If you have a good lawyer, you can do anything you want. That's not news. I was starting up a business so I was really tight on funds so I went to Legal Aid. I told her what happened and she goes, "That's assault." I should have known then that she wasn't on my side. The lawyer wouldn't call me back. I had to call four or five times just to talk to her. She rarely would call me back and pretty much seemed annoyed when I phoned. It seemed like her and the Crown were buddies.

Another two men also expressed frustration that they had paid for lawyers on their own; yet, their lawyers had not gotten them off on their charges.

My lawyer cost me thousands upon thousands of dollars and in the end, I could've kicked him in the ass because all he did was set up the meeting [for a plea bargain]. He did nothing for me.

One man believed that his ex-wife, who was in a strong financial position, bribed his lawyer.

I'm not trying to be a conspiracy theory fellow but I really don't understand why any lawyer would conduct themselves that way. I had all this information for him about my ex, and he refused to use it. He said that in court you are not allowed to bring up someone's mental health issues. [He said], "No, we can't use this stuff. The Crown won't accept it." Well, of course, the Crown has to hear it, which I find out later. She is a really unwell woman with an awful lot of money that can buy her way into just about anything. I wonder if she found this lawyer and paid him off. I don't think about it anymore because I get upset that the lawyer would tell me that this judge or this prosecutor is going for two months in jail. I'm going to get two months in jail and I can't use this other physical evidence that is in sworn affidavits from friends and business colleagues about her. This lawyer is terrorizing me telling me that I'm going to go to jail. I'd be a defenceless person in jail with bad knees. It scared the hell out of me. It's pretty much taken care of now, but I have an anxiety disorder. I hyperventilate and I get shooting pains in my left arm and shoulder and down my leg and I can't breathe.

Of the 14 respondents who went through Calgary's specialized docket court, 12 men commented further on their experiences in court. Four men stated that they gave an immediate guilty plea to their charges.

I just pled guilty and got probation.

Duty Counsel was pretty good. I explained what had occurred and she took a couple of pages worth of notes and explained to the judge who I was and what I was doing and that I was willing to accept a peace bond. She didn't really present my side of the story. I'm not sure why but I wound up with a one-year peace bond.

Six men entered into plea bargains to resolve their charges; three of whom were initially scheduled to go to trial.

I could've beat all these charges but I wanted to show that I was guilty on one charge. That's why I pled guilty on uttering death threats to my girlfriend. I'm happy I didn't walk away from it because I wouldn't have learned nothing.

If I pled guilty to the charge, there'd be no jail time. In the end, even after the plea bargain, the judge wanted to put me in jail. I have a previous record. I didn't enjoy it at all. It was a terrible experience.

As previously mentioned, all 20 participants gave details regarding their convictions and sentences. The 14 men who went through the coordinated community justice response commented on their dispositions.

I got a year of probation. I'm being punished for what I did and I'm trying to fix it.

Now I have a criminal record. I'm on probation. I can't leave the country. It really destroyed my whole life. I don't believe what I did was right. I'm bigger than her. But I don't agree with me getting slapped either.

I'm still not to have any contact with my wife, [go] two blocks within the house and not have any contact with my children, which to me is crazy. My kids and I are best friends, so that part really upset me. But I agreed to all the stuff that they laid out so I don't have a criminal record. You have to suck it up.

I was quite confused so I said okay to the peace bond. Now I have a permanent record and I had to stand up in court and say that she had something to be scared about. I was [given] calendar year probation. During that time, I had to attend the anger management, the gambling and the alcohol course. The only reason I had to take the alcohol and the gambling course is because she had told them that I was an insane gambler and alcoholic. So naturally, because she said it, I was never asked if I was, but was placed in those programs. I wasn't a big boozier. I like to drink as much as the next guy but not staying up all night turning into a ranting lunatic.

As noted earlier, when the men spoke about the court processes, it seemed as though they did not understand that Calgary has a coordinated community justice response to domestic violence. Only four men were aware that HomeFront was involved with their partners to provide support, safety planning, ensuring that the women's concerns were brought forward to court and were taken into account in the outcome. One man stated that he learned of HomeFront from his lawyer, one man learned of the agency from his wife, the other two men gave no details on how they initially learned of HomeFront:

The lawyer said that, "Okay, there is this organization called HomeFront involved." That was the first time that I was told.

My wife goes, "HomeFront wants me to go against you on this. They're telling me to do this." I said, "I'm not understanding any of it. Who are these people?" [She said], "They're there to protect me. I'm the victim." That's how she always put it. It was just unbelievable.

These four men shared their perceptions of HomeFront and the role of the organization.

They talked to my wife quite a bit to find out how she was feeling. She just wanted it to be over and done with, right. It was too bad that it did happen and she had nothing but good things to say about me. I look after my family, my kids. It was just a misfortune that the initial night took place.

They never spoke to me. It makes no sense. I have no idea what they do except for what my wife tells me. They'd call her to tell her what was going on with me.

These four men seemed to view HomeFront's involvement as a delay to the court proceedings and as a service that was against them.

We were waiting for HomeFront to contact my ex-wife. It just got put off. I was trying to explain, "All you need to do is come down to court and be in attendance. The people from HomeFront are there. They will talk to you. You don't even need to see me." But she continually refused to do that. I guess that's why I had to keep going back to court. I was getting a little upset about that. HomeFront finally got ahold of her. That morning I received my peace bond. The whole thing took about six weeks.

The courts didn't care; all they wanted her to do was to charge me and convict me. That's HomeFront. All they did was push things. I've never heard from them. HomeFront is telling her she's a victim and that none of this is her fault. You got the police pretty much doing the same thing. I'm trying to get help to make sure this doesn't happen again.

One man stated that he dealt with HomeFront's involvement by ensuring that he was with his wife when she initially talked with the HomeFront staff; some communication was put in writing, signed by both he and his wife, and then faxed to his lawyer and HomeFront.

HomeFront communicated with my wife. We went together to HomeFront. We sent a fax to my lawyer twice and we always copied HomeFront. Both of us were signing because we knew the lawyer was on our side. But HomeFront, we didn't know. So my wife signed it and I'm signing the fax to make sure we are in agreement to the statement.

Two men commented on the support that the HomeFront staff provided their partners.

They provided supports definitely. Did my wife need supports? Maybe for a limited time. She knew that somebody was representing in her in the court proceedings. But there was never an attempt by the court to look and say, "Okay you guys come and look at this. Is it worth the court's time? Is it worth HomeFront's time?"

The biggest problem is that she didn't have to go [to court]. She didn't have to do anything. It's not her fault. That's where some of the programs like HomeFront, I think they're a bunch of shit, a waste of my taxpaying dollars.

Although the 14 men had gone through the justice system from charge to conviction, seven reported that they had not necessarily understood the judicial process, what their options were, or what their dispositions meant.

I don't even know what happens after a year's probation. Does everything just get dropped? I have no idea.

Everything was stayed. I don't know what you call me, lucky, I don't know. I understand what not-guilty means. But the word "stayed;" it's got to linger in my record somewhere. It's stayed, whatever that means. To me, it was the way I had to go through it, even the peace bond. I'm still guilty, somehow, in their eyes, because you have to report to somebody in your conditions. I think it's saying that you're guilty.

One man had initially pled not guilty because he feared being incarcerated. However, after several court appearances he changed his plea when he had the opportunity to talk with the Crown prosecutor who assured him that he would receive probation and counselling:

I should have talked about what might happen to me over an assault charge because I truly thought I was going to jail. If they had explained that the first day how this works. Nobody said that. The Crown prosecutor said if I pleaded not guilty and tell the judge my story and he finds me guilty something worse could have happened. I pled guilty on her recommendation. She said, "We want you to go for counselling. You will get probation and go for counselling." I didn't get it in writing but she goes, "Yeah, that's what will happen." I went "I'll plead guilty then and we'll get this over with."

In the interviews, 11 of the 14 participants who went through the justice system in Calgary commented on their perceptions of the justice response to domestic violence.

I got myself into that predicament so I really couldn't say it was a bad experience, a good experience. The process had to go one way or the other but it went the better way. Certain things you want to be better at. You don't want to repeat things.

It's probably as good as it could be, but no system is perfect. It [would've helped] if they had given me a sheet or said this might be what is going to happen to you.

One man considered that the Canadian justice system could be improved by following the example of the United States by instituting harsher sentences for offenders.

They [U.S.] are a lot harder on you and there wouldn't be as many people in court. Here, they are pretty easy on you. It's made for criminals. They slap you on the wrist.

One man worked from home, but when he was charged, one of his conditions was that he could not be in the family home. While his wife ultimately moved out, it took the court three weeks to change the order.

There was a problem with the system. They wouldn't acknowledge that my wife had moved. It took about three weeks for them to acknowledge that she had moved and I was allowed to go home. It would have made sense, if I was potentially a danger to her, that the order should have been shifted to where she was residing. I was shut out from work and my home, while she basically had two places. I directed my anger towards her in my mind and finally came to realize that it really wasn't her fault. The system was creating this anger in me. It seemed like things moved really slow on the Crown side and my

lawyer's side. Three weeks to find out that this person has moved. Someone is not doing their job. I don't know if someone just wanted to punish me.

In total, nine of the 11 respondents commented that the judicial system's response to domestic violence is biased and unfair.

The judicial system or the enforcement system tend to believe the female over a man, regardless of how crazy the situation is.

When you take everything into context, I find it a little unfair, one-sided. Basically, they took rights away from my children [to see me], which they had no business doing.

I've lost faith in the law system. It's definitely focused on the male. You could see it in the courts. Every day the court is populated with males. That creates a sense of false belief in the female part; or they just don't realize that it took two. I'd like to see a little more equality in the whole thing. In my personal situation, if both parties had to go through the system then it probably would've made a lot better future for everybody.

Fear and assumptions are the basis for the [justice] system. When you combine fear and assumptions then you've got laws and you have to make people fit these laws so you assume a lot. Then you become blind to the other stuff. The system is like a make-work project. It creates a situation and then goes through the solution. We are round pegs going into round holes as far as they are concerned. If we are square pegs, we pound it so that they fit.

Court Experiences in other Jurisdictions

The six men attending court in other jurisdictions discussed their experiences. Four men commented on their experiences with docket or first appearance court.

The first time I appeared was just by myself pleading guilty or not guilty.

The lawyer talked to my wife and to the RCMP and then he came back with some options – and everything worked out legally fine.

Similar to the Calgary participants, these six respondents debated whether to obtain a lawyer to deal with their charges; two men decided against retaining a lawyer.

I didn't secure a lawyer. They said I could if I wanted to. But I didn't see any need because I knew it happened. Why spend zillions of dollars on something that's not going to change. I suppose if you've got a good lawyer you could beat it; but I didn't feel it was worth it. There is the lawyer at the court [duty council] that is there for people who don't have one and they represent.

I figured I could represent myself but I wanted to talk to a lawyer. I found out that I would have to pay \$3,000 for a lawyer or represent myself. I thought once I won the case I could sue her in civil court and get my money back for the lawyer because of her lies. The lawyer looked at me like I had three heads. He said, "No, it doesn't work that way. Even if you win, you can't go back and sue her," which I thought was ridiculous. All you need is the scorned female to shoot some lies and they don't need any proof.

While the other four participants had retained lawyers, three men gave no further details regarding their decisions. The remaining participant reported that he had consecutively retained

two different lawyers, was dissatisfied with the service each provided, and decided to represent himself.

The first lawyer quit on me. The second lawyer went on vacation, so it was dragged out for stupid reasons; it was a whole year. Not that I was in a rush to go to jail, which is why I let it drag on because I was scared I might have to go to jail. It turned out I did. Well, it's the lawyer's game. I came into it thinking I don't need a damn lawyer. I refused to play the game. If you want to get any kind of reasonable treatment, you step up to the plate with your money basically. That's what it comes down to.

Five men commented on their experiences in court. Two men stated that they gave an immediate guilty plea to their charges.

I didn't have to do much. My lawyer went and took care of it. I just told him that I am guilty and he told me I just had to sit there and listen so it was no big deal. There weren't many people there to make me feel bad. They kept things a little hush, hush instead of making this big scene so everybody could look at me thinking I was a big wife beater. It was very, very quick. They just gave me my sentencing and my punishment and then I was out of there.

The cases of three men then proceeded to trial. One man entered a plea bargain to resolve his charges.

It went to trial and then I pled guilty during the trial. I pled guilty. Three quarters of the way through my lawyer talked to them and I pled guilty for lesser charges common assault. Two counts of assault.

The six men who were convicted in other jurisdictions commented on their dispositions.

They gave me everything they could; I didn't like that. They could have put me in jail. I was worried because I didn't know how bad the courts would look at the situation. I was worried they were going to lock me up, so anything was happier for me. Plus, I was still able to go home and do my job.

My lawyer persuaded me to take what they served. I was to cooperate with no attitude. Anything they told me, I pretty much had to go and do it. There was no way out of it. This is not my normal behaviour.

I had to do 30 hours community service, which leads me to believe that the judge may have believed me but still couldn't let a woman beater get found innocent. Most people in my situation would have gotten a lot more community service. I got 30 hours so this judge can't have letting a woman beater go free on her record.

One man attended court in another jurisdiction that also has domestic violence partner support specialists.

They have a domestic violence person who talked with my wife for about four hours. I guess it wasn't long but it seemed long. I was relieved to get through that step. I never met with her but she wanted to talk to [wife] and the lawyer talked with her to see where they. They were quite happy with the process and what was happening.

The participant had no opinion about court having a domestic violence specialist in the proceedings. *“There’s a lot of it (abuse) that goes on so I guess they need somebody to do that. I have no real opinions one way or the other.”*

Three of the six respondents gave their opinions of the justice response to domestic violence.

It was court. You are guilty until you prove yourself innocent. You feel angry because you have to prove yourself innocent.

They are out to get you. It was like a machine and it’s set up to go against the most resistance and I wasn’t offering the most resistance. I confessed to it and pled guilty to it. It’s set up for somebody who is going to plead ‘not guilty.’ I felt like I got trampled. They want to destroy you. I don’t really feel like I got treated fairly.

It is really hard to criticize the domestic violence portion because if they changed it to benefit me, there are probably a lot of women getting beaten up out there. How do you change it? It’s a lose-lose situation. That question is beyond me really. I’m not a legal genius by any means. I’m in a very small percentage here and I think there is always going to be a very small percent of the population that are going to get screwed.

Probation and Parole

After appearing in court, the men went on to serve the conditions of their peace bonds or their sentences. One man was incarcerated and, upon release, was paroled in Calgary. The other 19 men immediately began being connected with probation services. Since all 20 men served their parole or probation in Calgary, the experiences of the interviewees are amalgamated. The one man who was paroled stated that his parole went well:

That was fine, he was reasonable (laughing). I was doing everything that was asked and not doing anything I shouldn’t. I saw him monthly and then every two months. Some of it was over the phone; some was in person. There were no problems so that went smooth.

The length of probation varied for the 19 participants: 14 men were on probation for a year, two for 2 to 2½ years; the lengths of the probation for the other three men are unknown. One respondent commented that he was able to finish his probation early.

I never had to do the whole thing because I got this letter saying that I had been a model person (laughs). After nine months. I guess it was because I never got into any trouble, I was working, doing what I was supposed to be doing.

Ten men commented on how frequently they were expected to report to their probation officers. The frequency of reporting was not standard; it varied from weekly, to every two weeks, to monthly, to every two months. However, at the beginning of their probation it seemed that most of the men were expected to report more often; then, over time, they reported less frequently.

I made my weekly visits. They turned into monthly and slowly, through the year, that was it.

It was fine. I went for six or seven months once a month and then it would just be phone-ins, which I don’t believe ever happened.

I had three mandatory meetings in the first month and after I complied with that it was down to once a month. I think that's how they set it up for me.

Luckily, my probation officer, right off the bat, only wanted to see me every other month and then every other month in between I had to phone in.

One man made a conscious decision not to remember these details because, when he thinks of his probation, he is reminded of his ex-wife, his charges and conviction, which makes him angry:

She turns my stomach to this day and it's two years later. It's a sickening experience to go through. I don't want to be anywhere near her. I've disassociated my trips to the probation officer. It is the only thing that helps.

Reporting regularly to their probation officer, either in person, or over the phone was discussed by 13 participants.

It was all right. I didn't mind that. You take 20 minutes out of your day once a month or once a week sort of thing, big deal.

Since I work for myself, I'm on my own hours so I don't have problems to get down to the meetings.

I work downtown and the probation office is downtown so it was convenient. I was hoping to go to phone calls after seven months but it just was a constant reminder, which in my case was good.

They couldn't have made it more difficult. The office was downtown. Parking is at a premium. I either had the choice of walk a long way or ride the train downtown; it was difficult either way. The meetings were always first thing in the morning.

It was a pain in the butt cause I had to take a C-train downtown. You go in for two minutes, if that. Sometimes it's longer, depends on what her [probation officer] mood is; if she wants to talk to you. But it's not like I'm a criminal. I didn't rob anybody. You see other people, you know they're criminals. Trust me, you're a criminal if you're a wife beater but when you're sitting in the office and see the people coming in and out you know there's some trouble there.

The worse thing is that I lose time out of my day when I could be working. Right now in probation, they all want to see you in the morning. I'm only working till noon. If I miss the first two hours due to probation, I've lost a day and money's tight right now.

It was quick and simple. Generally, the meetings only lasted about five minutes. Seemed like he was just typing responses on his computer, logging in statements about what's happened in the last 30 days or so. To me, time is worth a lot. I work a lot, I make a lot, that was more of a pain in the ass than anything.

It is a real hassle. I have to leave work early and, in my trade, it's hard to leave early once a week; go to counselling one week, see probation officer the next. If I be straight with him [employer] I've got to tell him I'm going to counselling and probation for domestic violence; then I'm a woman beater around the shop. It's been a disaster. I'm always on the verge of getting laid off because I don't want to tell my employer why I have to leave early every week.

Ten of the 19 men commented on the quality of their relationship with their probation officer.

I did it for a year, never got in trouble and I had a good rapport with my probation officer.

When I met her the first time I hated it. I thought that she hated me, that she was the same as the police officers. She felt that I was useless, alcoholic, woman beating, whatever labels I had gotten from the court system. I had lost my job and everything. I felt that she was the same way, against me. But she also helped me realize that I was against myself. I really appreciate her help.

She was excellent, always kind to me. She was kind of like my second counsellor. I'd go in talk to her for about an hour and a half on what I was doing.

I got an excellent probation officer. She's said she's proud of me. I did good. I'm proud of myself. Like when I go in there, "Hi, how you doing? Are you drinking?" She's just so supportive. I talk to her when I go in. I get to see her one more time and my probation's over.

He was quite judging. Even after the fourth week, he's like, "I'll be seeing you again." I was like, "Thanks for giving me a little faith there, my man (laughs)." I had a couple of things when younger and he saw a couple of things that made it seem like that nobody changes after they get things on their record. I don't blame him. I would judge a guy too, if I saw that. I understand how people look at it that way, but it makes me super embarrassed. This is how everybody looks at you. He was being hard on me.

The young lady was the most unprofessional angry person I've ever dealt with in a professional position. Very angry, dressed like she was at a night club; very tight clothes, low cut top. When she walked down the hall, she wouldn't talk to me; she would lead me into the room and out the back door and there was never a single word, never a 'hello, how are you' or anything.

Four men mentioned that their probation officers offered them a level of support that was beyond their expectations. They reported that their probation officers listened to them, offered them resources, support and advocacy as needed.

You never get to have your say in court, or to your lawyer. At the probation office, a little bit. It's not until you get to probation that you can actually tell your story.

He knew something was really biting me that day because I got fired from my job. The firing wasn't my fault. I was really down and depressed. He saw that I was down and out, so he goes, "Cancel my next two appointments. Re-schedule them." So we talked. He even tried to get my job back. He's that kind of a person. He's not a judging person.

In two cases, the respondents' probation officers found resources that could offer the men additional support: one probation officer helped the respondent find additional anger management counselling; the other probation officer helped the participant access additional counselling that was not part of the participant's court mandated conditions.

This probation officer had me see a psychologist [at] the FAOS (Forensic Assessment Outpatient Service) program. I learned a lot from her. That's one of the best things he

did because if I didn't understand something that was going on in the group, she could explain it.

In cases of domestic violence, volunteers with the Partner Support Program, connected to probation office, may contact the offenders' partners or ex-partners. Yet only four of the participant's expressed awareness that this would happen. One man stated that, since his wife was living out of province, he deliberately refrained from giving that information to his probation officer.

The probation officer didn't even know my wife's name. I just keep that stuff to myself.

Another man commented that his probation officer had contacted his wife when he requested that the no contact order rescinded. Once he had completed the counselling conditions on his probation order, his probation officer agreed to contact his wife and children to see if they were also interested in the order being rescinded.

After I had finished she said, "I'll process this and see if we can't get it to the courts." She asked to meet with my wife. That's the process she followed, to go before a judge to see if we can get restrictions dropped. My wife's very willing to do that. She's going to ask if the restrictions can be lifted so that I can go to birthdays or special dinners and have contact with my children.

When the men discussed their probation experiences, only five commented on the conditions on their orders, all indicating that they thought these conditions were unfair. In particular, three men raised concerns regarding their inability to contact their partners directly or indirectly.

I wasn't allowed to call her, write her or anyone she knew. That essentially eliminated my entire circle of friends. We were together eighteen years, so everyone I knew, she knew. I had about three weeks of probation left and she said, "Why don't me and the kids meet you at the mall?" I said, "No, no, no, no. Nice try." If I had done that, I'd be in jail. So from that point, she said, "He's not willing to do anything to see his kids."

I was given a no contact order. The probation officer explained that we can get that lifted. My probation officer contacted my wife. I explained it to my wife even though I wasn't supposed to because she kept asking "Why aren't you talking to me?" I said, "I'm allowed to stand two feet in front of you but I can't talk to you." So it started causing issues. My wife says, "That's stupid. Do you think I'm going to turn you in?" I said, "I have no idea what you are going to do." It was never lifted until my peace bond was up.

Two men were breached or faced the potential of being breached because their probation officers had decided that they were not complying with the conditions for counselling on their probation orders.

Three times, she threatened to have me breached. While she was doing this she was striking her hand on the desk. When you get in a situation like that you dummy up and, with your body language start to, I tried to cower and it was, "Whatever you say." That seemed to be what she wanted and it calmed her down. Another time, we had a death in the family and the service dragged on longer than we'd thought. It started late and I was late for group. If I had been five minutes earlier they would have let me in. I explained what happened and they said, "No we just can't let you in." That was one time I was

told I was going to be breached. I don't appreciate being talked to like that by anyone but you know if that's what it is, okay, that's fine.

The probation officer basically made one of her own conditions, "The next time you see me, I want you to have gone to one session [of anger management]." I walked out of the first intake session and was supposed to have one done. It ended up being a different probation officer, and did I do an intake session, and I hadn't because I hadn't finished. I just said no. She didn't tell me, she just breached me; put a warrant out for me. She let me leave the office and never told me. It wasn't until a month later I found out that she had breached me and there was a warrant out for my arrest so I had to turn myself in.

Conclusion

To summarize briefly, the 20 men had been mandated to attend domestic violence counselling after having been charged by police with offences ranging from common assault, to assault causing bodily harm, to aggravated assault to uttering threats against their partners, or children/relatives. One man was initially incarcerated and then paroled in Calgary, while the other 19 men were supervised by probation.

Regardless of jurisdiction, the majority of participants saw the judicial system as biased in their approach towards domestic violence. For example, 12 of the 14 men charged in Calgary, and 5 of the 6 men charged in other jurisdictions stated that the police service with which they dealt favoured women. They seemed resentful that the attending officer identified them as the dominant or primary aggressor, and that their partner, or child/relative was not seen as equally responsible, especially if the woman had physically resisted the man's abusive behaviour. They commented that the system favoured women; and that they were assumed guilty, having to prove their innocence.

Chapter Four: The YWCA of Calgary Sherriff King Groups

To recap, the twenty participants had been mandated by the court system to attend YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King groups for abusive men. The respondents attended one of three group programs at YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King Home: Phase I and Phase II, Paths of Change, or Sobering Effect. The agency initially started groups for men using a two-step format: Phase I and Phase II. Phase I consisted of weekly group sessions for six weeks. After men completed the Phase I introductory group, they carried onto Phase II for 12 weekly group sessions. In total, men completing Phase I and Phase II attended programming for 18 weeks.

The YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King staff revised the Phase program to Paths of Change, an ongoing open group for 14 weekly group sessions. In addition, the agency runs another program, Sobering Effect, in partnership with Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC). Sobering Effect is a 14-week domestic violence and substance abuse group-counselling program. The men attending Sobering Effect have files opened in both agencies and make contact with the program three times a week for the 14 weeks.

Whether the respondents attended Phase I and Phase II groups, or Paths of Change depended on when men attended YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King groups—if they came before or after the program change was implemented. Men who attended Sobering Effect had been identified as having addiction issues as well as being abusive. While the men's comments about the groups have been amalgamated, at the end of this chapter is a section highlighting the participants' addiction issues and experiences specific to the Sobering Effect group.

The Men's Group Experiences at YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King Home

Nineteen of the 20 respondents had successfully completed their group at the YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King Home. One man did not complete; he attended a number of sessions before he was asked to leave the program. At that point, he decided to attend another treatment program for abusive men.

The 20 men discussed their experiences of the groups, including whether being mandated to attend affected their involvement in the group, the significance of other group members, as well as identifying the topics or exercises that were particularly noteworthy or helpful. This section also explores the individual changes that the men perceived in themselves as a result of attending YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King groups. The men's suggestions for changes to the groups are included. They also discussed the overall impact of their experiences at the YWCA.

Interviewers asked the 20 men to discuss whether being mandated by the court system to attend the YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King groups for abusive men affected their involvement in the group. Three men debated this issue and were not able to come to a conclusion, while five men stated that they were unable to overcome the view that they were forced to attend.

I was pretty resistant to it. In a lot of ways it felt like going back to jail.

I went with the wrong attitude, 'I'm not guilty.' I brought a feeling that I had been wrongfully accused and that's a mistake. When you go into those programs you have to say, 'Okay, whatever you say I'll agree with.' They [facilitators] felt that I was disturbing the class. The program manager called me upstairs and was telling me that I was going to be breached. After that, I just told them whatever they wanted.

The other 13 participants disclosed that, while they had initially resented being required to attend, they found ideas and information that were personally beneficial.

When I first went in, I wasn't even going to give it a chance: this sucks. But I gave it a chance after a bit. The third week the topic hit home. I was like, "Yes, I can relate to that." Then everything was good.

At first, I didn't want to; I felt that I was not guilty and was being forced to go. It was a pain in the butt that I had to make time to do that every Thursday. But after two sessions, I felt comfortable because the groups were so small; it was generally the same people. I felt more and more comfortable every Thursday going and sharing my feelings.

You were brought by the court but I wanted to be there, to better myself; to see why I did this, where it came from so I wouldn't have this problem again.

I thought, I'm going to do it. I don't want to lose my partner so I went to the YWCA Sober Effect Program. She's a great person. I'm glad she gave me a chance. She didn't have to. She cares enough to give me a chance. I think I owe her that much and that's why I did the program.

After being mandated, the next step in the process is for the men to attend an intake session. The men first complete some paperwork and participate in an interview with a counsellor. A total of 12 men commented on their experiences at intake; ten stated that it simply seemed like a formality they needed to complete, they had no strong feelings or judgements about the intake night.

I couldn't really make any judgement. Basically they tell you what is going on and ask you a few general questions.

The actual paperwork part wasn't too bad because it's basically the same as with my probation officer. I didn't find that too bad. When I met with the lady, it didn't take long because they have all the legal paperwork. They have a lot of information already.

However, two respondents found the intake night difficult.

I went to an intake and walked out early because they make you sign things, saying that I have to pay them. I didn't know that I had to pay for this; that was a shocker. Then I read further and I have to admit my guilt. So I said, "This isn't for me" and I walked out. Then, thoughts set in that I could go to jail, so I ended up going back in the next week and going through intake.

The intro could be more personal. I'd watched fifteen other guys go through. It made me feel like a piece of the system. You show up and there's a room full of guys with clipboards. I recognized people from junior high and elementary school. None of them said nothing to me, but I knew that they knew that I knew. I'm thinking, "What the hell am I doing here if that guy's here?" That was tough. It was very emotional. Then waiting for that personal interview. If they've got this much information from this many people then I'm going to get grilled. Once I had the clipboard filled out he was asking how much money I make. I just felt I don't need to be here. For me that would definitely be the part that was tough.

The men described their group experiences including the group facilitators; what they found helpful including the ideas, exercises and social support; their reactions to group

completion and to the partner checks. Lastly, the men provided details about what they found less useful for them in group and provided suggestions for improvement.

Fourteen respondents shared their views about the group facilitators. Seven men described the facilitation positively.

The facilitators were good.

I miss (counsellor). She was a great counsellor. She was funny. She made me laugh. She was a person that took for a woman in front of a lot of men that all violence and she's the only lady in the group. I give her a lot of credit.

The whole program was very good. The facilitators allowed you some freedom and they try to make it as best as possible for the people who are there, for all people. They really did a good job with everything.

Nine respondents made further comments about the quality of the facilitation and the counsellors' abilities to pay attention to group members' attitudes and viewpoints, and to manage the needs of the group.

They have a copy of the police reports and the court orders; at least that's what I was told by a counsellor. So they know who's bullshitting and who's telling the truth.

A lot of guys hadn't accepted what was going on. A lot said, "I am here because my probation officer and the court told me I had to be here, period." The counsellors here are very good and they are able to pick that out right away, people's attitudes.

I have a high respect for those counsellors because they deal with whole range of people. It's not people like me only. They have to work with good people and bad people and not speaking English people.

The facilitator did a great job to get to know us. She was really paying attention. But I do understand that there's so many people.

They force you to talk, so that's a good thing.

You need to be able to fit in, not be the outcast. I've even had the group leader say, "You've got to give somebody else time to talk because if you're overpowering everybody else they're not going to be able to say what's bothering them."

Two men commented on differences in counsellors' abilities.

Some counsellors are better than others.

I don't know if that person running my group was burnt out. I think she is capable of doing a good job but she might have been burnt out; it was a lecture and very little interaction between the participants. When the instructor was on holidays, they brought somebody else in twice. These other people broke us down into groups of three and four and had us do interactive exercises. That's the way it should be. But, for the remainder of the courses it was more of a lecture. I think she was just trying to keep control of the group because once you let people talk maybe they get out of hand.

The men were asked what they had learned in the group. Several men mentioned that had this interview been conducted sooner after group completion, they would have been able to remember more details of the exercises and ideas presented in group. Although a number of

ideas and exercises remained meaningful to the men over time, there was little consensus among the 14 men discussing the ideas they remembered; different men remembered different ideas.

The strategies that most men remembered were those related to time outs. Six men stated that they have continued to use ideas related to defusing situations, using time outs and techniques to calm themselves.

If things get too heated up, you should take a break, leave, take a breather.

Know what is bugging you instead of holding it in. I go for a walk. Just tell them and take a couple of minutes, just talk about it and then go for a walk. At least they'd know, and you would be able to talk about it more reasonably. Once you start yapping, there's no talking, a communication breakdown. I just go for a walk instead of letting her get me all worked up. I won't allow it to happen.

Learning about different forms of abuse was helpful to three men.

I learned a lot about the types of abuse from verbal abuse to physical. It really reminded me of the different types of abuse I can inflict on someone.

Other ideas that were meaningful to the respondents included discussions on family of origin, assertiveness, and communication; however, they gave few other details about these ideas. One man stated that he is now more careful about his wording.

I found myself trying to change a lot of words and watch how, just word it different so that somebody's not hurt.

Another man mentioned that the suggestion in group to journal was helpful to him.

There was a hint from them to keep a journal. It is processing. I would come home and process. I was coming back to an empty house and I had total control of my environment so I was able to process. But if you are going back to that environment that is creating problems I don't know how people do it.

One man stated that in his personal life meditation had been useful to him and he suggested that YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King staff consider including teaching this technique in the groups.

There are positive things for everybody; this is what I was trying to tell them. Maybe focus on meditation instruction; it could be very beneficial. I've had it myself and it is incredible. It could be positive if they incorporated it.

There were ideas and exercises that six men found were not helpful. One individual mentioned that likening abusive behaviour to an erupting volcano was not a helpful concept. He gave no further explanation of his viewpoint. The other four men objected to certain exercises or how material was presented.

I went to the first session and they put on a movie showing some husband beating his wife. It was gross, sickening. I expected counselling to be a positive atmosphere, focusing on positive change. To sit through however long that movie was... it was most of the session watching this guy beat his wife. I didn't want to be there and I was surrounded by a bunch of other women beaters. I didn't want to be associated with women beaters at all. It sickens me to think of it.

I'm not being rude or boorish, but a lot of the programs were quite childish with crayons and pictures and that sort of thing. But if that's what it takes for people to think then that sort of visual aid is fine.

The facilitator brought a basket with slips of paper in it with words on them. We were supposed to pick something out and talk about it. The fellow next to me was the first and he got the word humiliated. She smiled at him and goes, "Can I ask when you were humiliated?" My jaw hit the floor. A group of strangers and you are supposed to tell how you were humiliated. I tried to say, "People need to feel safe to be able to express."

One man did not like the way gender roles were presented; he thought it was too stereotypical, and ethnocentric. He stated that other group members supported his views:

It was pretty much the 1960's version of what a woman is and what a guy is. I guess you could define a male and a female that way but that's not who we are or what they are. It's not even culturally synonymous. We had to jump in and disagree.

The social support that the group members offered each other was an aspect discussed by 16 study participants. They noticed how they were different from other group members, how they were similar, the opportunities they had to learn from one another, and the support they offered one another.

Coming into group, the study participants were curious about the other group members; six men said they were struck by the differences between themselves and other group members.

There's a lot of defensive guys there. They're putting blame on whoever they hurt. I didn't like being in the room like that.

I found it rather enlightening [that] each person has a different experience and a lot worse than me. A guy there killed people and a guy just got out of prison. "Oh my God, what am I doing here?" When I first started I thought what a waste this is going to be. What are you going to get out of this? Interacting with other group members and seeing what they've been through and saying, 'I recognize that' or 'I've haven't been there.' You get as much out of that sometimes as from the information the counsellors are trying to get across.

Yet at the same time, 11 men noticed the similarities in themselves and other group members.

I'm not the only guy. It has happened to the other twelve people in the room.

It was good to go there once a week and talk about the problem. I didn't have a lot of people that I could talk about it with, so it was good that way.

Additionally, seven men saw part of the value of the group as sharing with the other group members and hearing about their experiences. The men often helped one another explore situations in their lives and search for alternatives in dealing with those circumstances.

You want to explain the situation. Maybe you realize the steps that escalate to an incident. If you identify these, even talking about them will make you realize stuff that you didn't realize when it was happening.

I'm totally different from when I started, everything from seeing other people in my predicament. You hear other's stories; they hear your story. You could ask each other

questions; was it because of this or did this happen? What made this progress to this? So everybody had different ways of coming across and saying something that would impact what was being said.

When one man reported that the group facilitator had misunderstood a comment he made, he did not pursue the matter with the group leader, but processed his feelings with other group members.

One facilitator took something I said wrong; that I made a racist remark. It was all how they translated it. I was angry, wanted to leave, but that would have meant getting kicked out of group. I didn't want that so I processed it with the guys on coffee break.

As the men went through group together, three respondents started forming friendships with other group members. However, for two of these men, the friendships did not survive beyond the group.

It is a pretty intimate group. The last day of the course everybody would like to maintain ties but you don't.

However, one man remained in contact with former group members.

There's a couple of guys that I keep in contact with once in a while. Just, "How's life? How are you?"

Since Paths of Change is an open group, men enter and leave the group at different points from each other. When men attend their final group session, the usual procedure is that they talk about what the process was like for them. Two men commented on their experiences in the final group meeting.

I almost cried the night I left. You got to give a speech. I laid my cards all out on the table because lots of guys walked in there, charging, "I didn't do anything." I used to tell everyone, "I'm the only one in here that's guilty. Nobody else ever hit anybody, only me." When I gave my speech and everybody gets up and gave me this big standing ovation, I was kind of flattered. In giving that speech, I had seen where things had started in the relationship, where things were at now that it's time for me to leave the program. It was a drastic difference in everything for me. I was pretty emotional that I had to leave. [Interviewer: Were you ready?] I don't know. You get used to it. It's like getting up for work. After so long it seems like a part of life. Maybe next winter I might come back and do it again. I mean, there's nothing else to do when it's cold outside.

When people graduate, there is no ceremony, no sense of accomplishment. I told the facilitator it was my last week and she didn't believe me. Normally in a last week the person gets to say something about what they learned to the group. I told them the week before I had one more week left. The facilitator didn't believe me so everyone left and they spent 20 minutes looking through the records to say, "Yeah, this is your last week." So I never got to say anything to the group; no sense of achievement or accomplishment. It's like, I had to do this and it's done.

During the interviews, the study participants were asked whether the agency partner checks had affected them in anyway; 11 men commented on this question, all stating that it had no impact on them.

My partner did tell me. They just wanted to make sure things were going alright at home. That's when she mentioned she was getting [ideas] from my notes and stuff I brought home, she was doing that. I had no problem with that.

I remember the partner checks. As far as I know, there were two, not a big deal.

One man questioned whether the partner checks had been completed with his wife because she had left the province.

I don't think they knew her name. The next day, after the police came, she went back to (province). I've never said a word to her since then.

Seven men mentioned that they were not aware or had forgotten that partner checks were being conducted.

I don't remember them being done (laughs). So I guess no, no impact.

I never heard about it. So, everything's good I guess..

The men were also asked what it was like for them when the group ended; seven men commented on this process. Six men were relieved that it was over.

Good, I guess. I didn't enjoy like having to rush off to there.

It was good. You can get a lot more constructive things done.

Happy because it was long and the charges were dropped. I was happy it was over.

It was a good accomplishment. It's not a feather in your cap or anything. But when you're in a situation where you have been labelled, it's nice to be labelled as someone who has achieved something, even if you just go there just because you've been told to. You did go there. That, in itself, is an accomplishment. So it gave me good confidence.

One man was sad when the group ended.

I still remember my first Monday after I was done and I didn't have to come here. I was lost, completely lost. I met a lot of good guys here and the facilitators were great. I had no idea what I was going to do. It actually sucked. I almost came back the next week and did it again just because I needed to fill my time.

Fifteen respondents commented on their overall impressions of the YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King groups for abusive men.

All men that have anger problems should take a course and take it serious not just because they have to. There is hope out there for everybody that wants it.

If they offered this to people on their own instead of having to be sent by the courts, that would be great, although it would probably overload the system.

By attending the group, six men mentioned that they had the opportunity to learn about themselves, how they treated their partners, and how to change their abusive behaviours.

If I didn't go to the Sheriff King I would never of been able to kind of heal that part of myself. That, for me, was a big part of it.

Overall, it is a pretty good process. I learned a lot of things that I should have been doing. I wasn't aware, wasn't thinking. I'm glad I was able to come because it makes

you realize a lot about yourself; your faults or shortcomings. Sometimes it takes that to bring it out.

From that course, there was a lot of things I actually learned. They teach you more than just about women beating. There was lots of things: how to not get worked up, morale, basic lifestyle and management type situations.

I really didn't think I had a problem. But I realized that maybe I did. I'm not saying that I have completely changed. I'm happy that somebody could make you realize that we're not all bad. You're not lost forever just because of one thing; it's not who you're going to be forever.

Two men suggested that it would be useful if they could repeat the group or have a follow-up or check-in group created for those who had already completed.

Sometimes I think I should come back because, after a while, you start to forget some things. I noticed the other day when I was talking, I was pointing the finger, instead of stopping and thinking. I was kind of being a bully to one of the guys I work with; it was like, "Fuck you, you're doing it wrong." That's not the person I'm trying to be anymore. I don't think I need to come back and do fourteen more weeks; come back for a week or two, get everything put back in.

If people were offered the opportunity to get together, like twelve-step programs, and see how everybody was doing. Or the people that aren't doing so well might do another course. I'd never even thought of it until [my partner] suggested another course. Not even a course, just a check-in, say hi have a coffee and see how your fellow group-mates are doing. We can utilize each other. After you've shared of yourself with those other people, getting back together would almost seem mandatory. I think it would be successful.

The study participants were also asked if anything could have been done differently so that their group experience could be more helpful; six men discussed various issues that had created barriers in their group experience and presented ideas for improvement.

For various reasons, four men felt like they could not be honest in group about what was happening in their lives. In part, the men were concerned about the possibility of legal sanctions, such as being charged with breaches, being placed against them.

They want you to take responsibility for your actions. Lots of things I was dealing with I couldn't get help with because they don't want to talk about the other person.

Another man stated that while he was attending group he was again abusive to his wife to the point that she again called the police; he stated that he did not feel that he could talk about this in group, nor did he feel that he could admit that they were no longer together.

The police were involved but I wasn't charged again. I b.s.'d my way through group where we share our thoughts and the truth. I was shy to share the truth. I realized that my partner and I were irresolvable and I wanted us to break up.

As previously mentioned, at the time of the interviews, six participants reported differences between group members. Two men commented further suggesting it would be helpful to complete more in-depth assessments so that more similar men could be grouped together.

You've got to do more of an assessment before you just lump them into family violence curricula. Assessments are big and it takes manpower and wages to do that. But, if you could get guys together that are in similar situations it would be much better. I didn't feel like I was in my element when I was surrounded by these guys that go home and beat their wives. Certain people you don't want to be associated with. If more thought was put into who you are putting in these groups; that would be really beneficial.

Two men thought that smaller groups would be helpful.

There were 18 people in the room and I said, "How can you do anything with that many people?" My sister has a degree in adult education and she told me, "Groups have to be six or less." My experience has been groups of five or six are very functional. Adults learn from each other.

Another respondent thought that it would be helpful to either offer individual counselling concurrently or as an alternative to group.

I would have preferred one-on-one. Groups are not helpful to me—or maybe a mix because I'm not really able to speak in a group. If they forced me I would say something, but I don't know how many people there are like that. I go to groups and I hear lots and get some ideas but I think it is important to speak too. To really learn things, communication has to be more than one-way. It would have been better for me to have even one or two individual sessions.

Including opportunities in the curriculum for group members to relate their story and to discuss their anger with the justice system was suggested by another respondent.

One thing that was never really addressed was dealing with the [justice] system. The system creates anxiety and the anger and that issue was always skirted. There should be some way for people to understand the system, which is just not addressed. That should be dealt with right from the beginning. There is no opportunity to tell your story. What we've just done [qualitative interview] is probably the most in depth that I've been able to speak. No one has time. People are too busy and too full of assumptions.

Three men seemed to maintain their stance of blaming partners' behaviour as the cause for men's abusive behaviour. They commented that it would have been helpful if YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King made greater efforts to correct their partners' behaviour.

I know my part in all this crap. I know that I caused grief too. But I also know that it wasn't all me. I'm in a bad relationship. Things got out of hand. I don't blame her. I don't blame me. It was between the two of us. We had a shitty way of communicating and that seemed to be how it came down in the end. There's no point me sitting back and saying, "If I wouldn't have done that, if I wouldn't have done this." It would've happened sooner or later at the rate things were going. If the guy's got to take it, why not fix both people? In the worst case scenario, you're both going to learn something. It doesn't mean the relationship's going to be any better or any worse. But at least their eyes are open; they can see some of their wrongs as we have. I believe that both people in the relationship should be forced to do it. It shouldn't be just one sided.

If you really want to highlight something about group, all the talks about both people going really stood out. It's not just me. A lot of people believe if you don't fix both

people then you're just going to end up back. Nothing's done. No sense patting yourself on the back because you really haven't done anything.

The Mens' Addiction Issues

As part of the interview process, the respondents were asked whether their use of substances, gambling, or pornography had impacted their relationships with their intimate partners. None of the participants reported gambling, pornography use, or prescription drug use as an issue.

Of the 20 respondents, five reported that they had no addiction issues, and that substance use was not related to their charges for assaulting their intimate partners. Another five men stated that they had no addiction issues, but that others, such as their partners or the attending police officers, thought that they did.

I spent pretty close to 24 hours in the drunk tank. I also had to attend an alcohol awareness seminar and I'm a very little drinker.

I'm patient to a certain point and then I lose patience. When I have two or three drinks, patience wears off faster. I have too many drinks. She [wife] doesn't approve. Telling the policeman that I'm having too many drinks, it sounds good. I don't think so because I'm not drinking excessively. I only drink after work and have a few drinks. But it's spread over time. I told my wife, with those few drinks, I'm drinking almost a litre of water. So it is all diluted; is just a relaxer for your body.

The other 10 respondents identified addiction to alcohol as a central issue in their lives, and two of these men were also addicted to drugs.

We never seemed to start to fight after we'd had a few drinks. A few drinks would sort of bring us together. I am a pretty mellow person normally and even when I drink I'm pretty mellow. But, if I'm going to fly off the handle it's more likely to happen if I've had a bottle of wine.

I started the aggressive behaviour really obviously. That would've been the beginning point. Then I think the second part would've been the alcohol.

Four of these men attended Sobering Effect at YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King; three of whom commented on the requirement to attend three times a week.

I was ready to stop [drinking] as soon as I started the group. I don't think that it held me back. Going three times a week really limited the opportunity to drink. Yeah, coming three times a week did help. It was a bit awkward especially after I lost my license.

I don't think you have to go to two or three meetings a week but at least once a week you get anything that happens.

It's a good setup but it's hard to get there all the time. Whether you are trying to stay sober or not, it's better if you do that because it breaks it up but then you still have the weekend, a long weekend so I don't know if going three times a week really help matters. You almost have one on the weekend I would think.

Three men commented on what they had learned through the group regarding the intersection between their substance abuse and their abusive behaviour.

I think the best one is just to take the cool off period and think it over. But you don't do that when you are drinking or drunk anyways.

We saw movies about abuse of relationships and how people change. They went from, a nice guy to the bad guy. I learned how to more control my anger and how to not call her bad names. I was cutting; I was calling her, like way down to the gutter. I was telling her that she was no good. Now I don't drink. When I get upset I go for a walk and I come back when I'm calmed down. We sit down and we talk and we laugh. It's just so much different not having alcohol involved. If it wasn't for the YWCA I don't think I would've quit drinking. I don't think I would've gone through the program seriously but I did. I took the program very, very serious.

The social support that the Sobering Effect group members offered each other was an aspect discussed by the four men.

You got to hear how other guys dealt with things.

I was there for the worst. I was going to kill my girlfriend. I felt like I didn't fit in; but after a while I did. A lot of supportive people in there. Nobody knocked nobody down. Nobody degraded nobody. They were there for the same reason.

When I finished there were some people that gave me their phone numbers but I never pursued any relationships out of it. To me they weren't the type of people that I wanted in my life. Just because, at that point, who knows what would trigger a relapse.

Generally, the four men were positive about the Sobering Effect Program.

I actually enjoyed the program. The first week I was sitting back not really saying much. Second week sort of half way through, by probably the fifth or sixth week I was spilling my guts. A lot of the things that were said and the way it was set up, I enjoyed it really.

Every time you came you got to get something off your chest. We go to the meeting and they [counsellors] always ask you, "Anything bother you this week?" So you can get it out in the open. You got to voice your opinion.

I learned a lot from it. I got a lot out of the system, the program, a lot of feedback. Everything I needed to do, I got from the program. I just carried on with it. I made it. That was the first time I ever in my life finished the program. I always fell back on my alcohol except for this time. I put my mind like I'm not going to lose my family. I had no choice: quit drinking, quit my drugs, be a man and support my household and be a loving person. So that's what I am.

However, two men did make suggestions for improvements; both seemed to be suggesting that YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King offer something additional. One man stated that he had taken a course when he was in a federal penitentiary, and he liked it better because it was more in-depth.

The OSAP program (Offender Substance Abuse Pre-Release program) was well thought out and they [facilitators] just went through every step of like how your mind works and everything. It was really in-depth.

I wished there was something after the program was done. I was hoping that there would've been something else. I would love to take another course. If there were more

options to take the program. To tell you the truth, I wish it was longer because I really miss the program. I miss the people.

Of the ten participants who identified themselves as having addiction issues, six had not attended Sobering Effect, likely because the programs had not yet been developed. One of these men commented that he would have liked his program at YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King to have more specifically addressed substance abuse.

I had to be sober for two hours to be here. There were times I wanted to [drink] but I knew I had to be here. We didn't talk about drinking. There were other people besides me dealing with addictions. It can become pretty hard when you start taking a course and you're trying to clean up at the same time.

However, these ten men had accessed other addiction-specific programs. Four discussed using self-help programs such as AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and Smart Recovery; one man mentioned attending residential addiction treatment; eight men had accessed AADAC (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission).

I go through AA, a lot of useful information, anger, contentment, respect. How do you live and get along and no anger. You're always going to have anger, trust me. But it's a lot more controllable and it's something you use every day. AA is everything for basic living. It's great in personal life as well. Even with my marriage. I have a sponsor.

I started Smart Recovery [self-help addiction recovery program]. It's based on rational emotive behavioural therapy. If you can change your thinking it changes your feelings, which changes your behaviour. It's actually a pretty good program. I really enjoyed it.

The eight men who had accessed AADAC discussed their experiences.

I was out on bail for a year and part of the bail condition was I couldn't drink and had to go to AADAC (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission). A couple of group sessions, more presentations and then I was in individual. I forget how many meetings but it was maybe six months. The guy that I talked to, I kind of enjoyed talking to. I'm not sure if he really changed much the way I thought of the thing. But a little, I suppose.

The young lady who did the session — charming, intelligent, well spoken. There was certainly some good information on what alcohol does to people, long term use, binge drinking, that sort of thing.

Three men found the AADAC Awareness program was too broad because it dealt with all forms of addiction.

I kind of felt sorry for their facilitators because they were dealing with people who just put themselves into the Awareness program. They weren't sanctioned by the court to go there. They just needed to go because their life was such a mess. Basically at Sheriff King they were dealing with abuse; they [AADAC counsellors] were dealing with all kinds of different people with different issues.

It was too general and too many people and there was like a bunch of jackasses there that didn't pay attention; always yapping and going out. It was a waste of time as far as I'm concerned.

After his Sobering Effect program ended at the YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King Home, one man continued working with the AADAC counsellor.

I carried on with the AADAC counsellor for about four months. I still phone him once in a while, see how he's doing and tell him that I'm okay, I'm doing fine and not drinking. I'm not in jail. I don't want to go back to jail.

The ten men discussed strategies for maintaining their sobriety. Six identified the bail and/or probation condition of not using alcohol or drugs as a successful deterrent for them.

I wasn't allowed to for the first year but, I'm allowed to now and I haven't been. So obviously, it was a wakeup call for sure.

As more time goes by it's easier. It's not like the first while when you're sick. I'm not allowed to, so I just kind of continue on, remembering if I do I'll get thrown in jail.

End of July I'm finished my probation. I'm not going to start drinking. If I have one drink of whisky I'm gone. If I start drinking I know what's going to happen. It's going to go right back into the gutter. I'm going to end up back in jail. That I don't want. When I drank whisky I was ten feet tall and bullet-proof. I was rude. I was ignorant. I didn't know this until I seen it. People were telling me, you are a nice guy when you're sober. When you're drunk then you are a total idiot. You are dangerous. You are going to kill somebody. This is going through my mind all the time. I don't want to hurt my wife. I love her with my life. I want to spend the rest of my life with her. I don't know how many more years I have but I want to spend it and I want to be happy. It's just a taste of whiskey. I don't know about beer. I don't know about nothing else but I know whiskey is a killer for me. Every time I drink whiskey I'm in jail, every time, never fails.

After completing their probation, the men discussed how they continued coping with their substance use. Some men were maintaining their stance of abstinence, while others were moderating their alcohol consumption by not drinking as frequently or as much.

For some reason, I didn't have a non-consumption of alcohol on the probation order. That was missed, which ended up getting me in trouble again. I started the group around the beginning of December. I lost my driver's license in the middle of December. When I lost my license my kids were in the car. Almost losing my kids; I had to jump through a lot of hoops to have access to them; that was put on by my wife and her lawyer, which I completely agreed to. I haven't had a drink since so obviously it's a good thing. I do a lot of bike riding now. I think one of the biggest contributors to that is I'm not drinking anymore. Everything that I've been through in the last two and a half years — nothing is worth it anymore for me to feel that way. What's the point of getting upset? Usually it's not going to change the situation.

I have drank three times—there are slips, yes. I never drink during the week. I only ever drank on weekends. So now, it's not a major concern, like I don't want to get drunk every weekend.

During the weekend I still drink a fair bit, like on a Friday night, and maybe a Saturday if some boys come around but through the week is pretty good. If there's a hockey game on I'll go for some wings and a couple of beers with a friend. It's not like I was going there to get shit-faced every day.

The men's discussion of their addiction issues highlights the complexity of the connections with intimate partner violence. The men who appeared most determined to make changes seemed to have made personal commitments regarding their use of substances. They implemented a variety of strategies, including the YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King Home Sobering Effect group and addiction-specific programs to help them reduce or abstain from abusing drugs and/or alcohol.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As a qualitative study with 20 men whose police charges for assaulting their intimate partners led to their being mandated to treatment, we cannot make any conclusions that are generalized to the larger population. However, this was not the intent and the rich comments from the men about their experiences with the criminal justice response to domestic violence and treatment are valuable.

As previously noted, the men who lived in Calgary and had gone through the specialized domestic violence courts had more police involvement before charges were laid than those men from other jurisdictions. Nine of the 14 Calgary men had dealt with the police on previous occasions before the charges leading to their current convictions were laid. Yet, only one of the men from another jurisdiction had previous dealings with the local police regarding his abusive behaviour. There is no information from the participants that could explain this difference. One can only conjecture why there may be this difference: it could be that women living in Calgary are more willing to seek police intervention; it could be that Calgary Police Service members are more reluctant to charge.

It may be useful to explore the police response in greater detail; for example, to examine how Calgary police officers determine when it is appropriate to mediate and when it is appropriate to press charges. It might also be useful to talk with the partners to understand their views of police intervention. In addition, the respondents had expected to only be told to leave the residence for a period of time and resented that charges were laid. It may be interesting to explore whether the act of pressing charges serves as a deterrent to men's abusive behaviour in future.

The participants seemed confused by the judicial process. While it is reasonable that men with no previous contact with the judicial system would be unfamiliar with the process, the participants with conviction histories did not seem any better informed. It may be useful to strategize how to better inform the accused about the specialized domestic violence court processes. One participant suggested that a fact sheet be created. While his vision of this fact sheet might not be feasible (he was hoping for detailed legal advice), it might be possible to ensure that men have access to brochures regarding services that could be of use to them. As well, a basic fact sheet explaining terminology, and providing practical information about the court process could be useful.

The men described their experiences with the justice system as if this was something that was done to them, as if they had been taken advantage of, that they had been victimized. They did not acknowledge that their contact with the justice system was a consequence of their abusive behaviours. Yet, the majority of men were positive about their experience with probation services. One participant reported that it was not until he met with his probation officer that he was able to tell his story.

This respondent further suggested that the YWCA change the curriculum to provide men with opportunities to discuss their anger with the justice system and to tell their stories, a point with which another interview participant concurred. Indeed, Waldman (1999) contends that when men blame systems, it impedes their ability to examine their own responsibility. His stand is that by creating the opportunity for men to explore these issues, they are more likely to examine their own behaviour and take responsibility for their abusive behaviours. Moreover, the findings from Scott and Wolfe's (2000) qualitative study support the importance of men's ability to take responsibility for past abusive behaviour as an important aspect in men's ability to make lasting changes. Therefore, the YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King could consider incorporating ways to address the men's confusion and anger, as long as it remains linked to opportunities for the men to examine their responsibility and accountability.

The study participants were mandated to attend the groups. These results suggest that the men who got the most out of group were those who were able to shift their thinking from viewing the group as a punishment to viewing it as something that could enhance their personal lives. The YWCA could explore how such shifts in viewpoint could be encouraged and incorporate further opportunities for men to examine personal meanings to the various ideas presented in the curricula.

The group participants identified a variety of exercises and concepts as helpful; most commonly, the strategies to assist them de-escalate and defuse contentious issues with their partner, or child/relative. These findings are consistent with two published qualitative studies (Gondolf, 2000; Scott & Wolfe, 2000), and clearly represent an important emphasis.

Half of the respondents (10 of the 20 men) reported addiction issues. A further five men did not believe that they had addiction issues, but others thought that they did. According to these men, either their intimate partners or the attending police officers had expressed concerns about the men's use of substances. Given that this is a significant proportion of the study interviewees, this finding highlights the potential usefulness of providing opportunities for the men to explore their substance use and its possible intersections with their abusive behaviours.

Only four of the ten men who identified addiction as an issue had attended Sobering Effect. Thus, it may be useful to implement the suggestion presented by one participant that YWCA of Calgary Sheriff King Home create more opportunities for men to discuss substance abuse in the Paths of Change groups.

Suggestions regarding how the programs might improve included reviewing some of the current materials, such as using different videos and looking at the timing of exercises. Suggestions for improving the program structure included adding follow-up groups, sharing best practices, a reduced group size and a greater focus on how to repair existing relationships. The men recommended that the facilitators focus on building rapport, taking a non-judgemental stance and lessening the focus on reinforcing guilt and instead, role model and explore appropriate behaviours and answer questions posed by the men.

Even though 19 of the 20 men had completed their group programs, in describing the incidents that led to their arrests, many exhibited a willingness to blame their partners, mutualise the violence and minimize their own abusive behaviour. This may not be surprising, as these narratives would have been repeated numerous times to the police, courts, probation and agency personnel and have, perhaps, become rote. While some men's lack of responsibility and accountability around the precipitating incident highlights the complexities involved in changing

abusive behaviour, it should not imply that the men did not change. When describing how they had improved their interpersonal behaviours in response to the groups, the words of the majority reflect important shifts.

Jennings (1990) raises the question of whether we expect too much from men who attend batterer intervention programs. Attitudes are difficult to shift permanently and interpersonal patterns often become well-entrenched. Both Calgary group programs are relatively short in length, yet a number of men reported having made important changes. The significantly lowered recidivism rates in the previous chapter support this contention.

Perhaps a better question is whether justice was served? The men were very aware that they were attending the programs because they had been mandated to do so by the criminal justice system. It did not matter to those given peace bonds that they are essentially considered not guilty. Rather, the monitoring by probation for one year and mandatory group attendance for three months or more highlighted that the criminal justice system considered their actions as serious and as needing considerable societal intervention. That the Calgary specialized court model, in conjunction with community agencies, has adopted a number of strategies to better hold domestic violence offenders accountable suggests that assaults against intimate partners are being taken much more seriously and in a way that incorporates the victim's wishes early on in the process.

In summary, the 20 men who were willing to discuss their experiences with the criminal justice system and their mandated group interventions were frank about their views of both aspects. Despite perceiving a bias in the judicial system towards the women victims, and while minimizing the details of the incidents to which the police were called and laid charges, most acknowledged their responsibility for their own behaviours and used the group intervention to make important changes in their interactions with others.

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