Australian Domestic & Family Violence
CLEARINGHOUSE

ISSUES PAPER 7

Responding to men[1] who perpetrate domestic violence:

Controversies, interventions and challenges

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Introduction

Developing a response to men who use violence and abuse in their intimate relationships[2] is one of the most controversial issues facing the field. Debate tends to centre most strongly around the issue of treatment/education programs for perpetrators, often with people adopting polarised positions either 'for' or 'against' the development of such programs. Many of these debates can be understood as being about at which level – the individual, the institutional, or the social – efforts to end violence against women and children, are best directed. Are efforts best directed at the men who use violence? At the institutions, such as the criminal justice system and mental health services, which have not always responded appropriately to the crime of violence and the impacts of violence on women, or to developing a society that does not tolerate violence and that promotes gender equity?

Debates also centre on the possible 'unintended consequences' that may arise from efforts directed at any one of these levels of intervention as they reverberate through the other levels (Laing, 2001). Does working with individual men suggest that the problem lies solely with one identified group of 'deviant' individuals and obscure the role of social structures and attitudes which perpetuate violence against women (Ashcroft, 2000)? Do perpetrator programs take scarce resources away from services for women and children? Do they lull women into a false sense of hope that the men who abuse them can change, and thus work against the core goal of enhancing women's safety? (Feder and Dugan, 2002) Early research by Gondolf and Fisher (1988) with women in refuges in the US, for example, found that their partner's participation in perpetrator counselling was the most influential factor in women's decisions to return to the relationship. In a recent longitudinal study of four US perpetrator programs, Gondolf (2002a, p. 105) found the women partners' hopes for the outcomes of their partners' participation to be 'somewhat inflated and overly hopeful', despite having received advice of the programs' limitations, and despite histories of severe abuse over prolonged periods prior to their partners' arrest and mandated program participation.

At a time of growing interest in the development of perpetrator programs in Australia, this issues paper reviews the evidence of their effectiveness, based largely on recent international research. It begins, however, with a discussion of the dominant ways in which the causes of domestic violence are understood, and the types of intervention with perpetrators that flows from these perspectives.

Theories and interventions

Approaches to intervention with perpetrators are based on differing theoretical explanations for their abusive, violent and controlling behaviour. These perspectives, in part, reflect different emphases on different levels of intervention. This section of the paper describes three explanatory perspectives on male violence in intimate relationships, and the types of interventions which they underpin.

Through a socio-political lens

The recognition of domestic violence as a serious social problem is an achievement of second wave

Partnerships Against Domestic Violence

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feminism, a social movement originating in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Feminism applied a socio-political framework to understanding domestic violence, a vastly different perspective from the (then) prevailing medical model which saw the causes of domestic violence as lying within the pathology of the individuals involved. A socio-political approach to understanding domestic violence seeks answers at a social or group level, rather than at the level of the individual man. 'Instead of examining why this particular man beats his particular wife, feminists seek to understand why men in general use physical force against their partners.' (Bograd, 1988, p. 13) Because domestic violence is a common (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996), rather than a rare event, the focus is on the social conditions which support it, rather than on attempting to identify the characteristics of a small 'deviant' group of men.

Key to this perspective on domestic violence are the concepts of gender and power: men as a social group have greater power than women and violence is an important way by which men maintain their dominant position. Rather than a 'safe haven', 'the family as a social institution mediates between oppression at the broadest social level and the personal relationships of intimate adult partners.' (Bograd, 1988, p. 14)

From a socio-political perspective, violence against women can only be understood in its social context:

Men are violent to their women partners in a wider context of family, friends, and the general cultural and institutional settings in which such behavior and accompanying attitudes are more or less condemned or condoned. The messages and responses are often mixed and ambivalent, showing support for men's authority over wives, boundaries of 'appropriate' behavior for women in the role of a wife, and more or less tolerance for the use of violence under certain circumstances. Sanctions for the use of violence are often weak or nonexistent and men incur few if any costs for its use.
(Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 2000, p. 31)

Increasingly, feminist writing and action has attempted to grapple with the 'intersection' (Crenshaw, 1991) of gender with race, class and ethnicity in order to more fully understand all the dimensions of the socio-political context in which violence against women occurs (e.g. Bograd, 1999; Hanmer, 2000). Also arising from a socio-political perspective is work which explores the ways in which 'masculinity' is socially constructed and related to violence. (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1998; Frey & Bellotti, 1995)

A focus of feminist intervention has been on understanding and validating the experience of women and exploring the ways in which they have coped with the terrifying and oppressive situations with which they live (e.g. Campbell, Rose, Kub, & Nedd, 1988). It is sometimes assumed, therefore, that the voice of men who use violence is ignored by those working from this perspective. However, some researchers operating from a socio-political perspective have explored men's accounts of their violence through qualitative methodologies. For example, Dobash et al. (1998) used in-depth interviews to compare the accounts of men and women of the violence that resulted in the men's arrest and referral to a perpetrator program. The men's and women's accounts revealed 'profound' differences in their reports of the nature and extent of men's violence, controlling behaviours, and the injuries which result: 'women provide much more detailed and lengthy accounts than men, usually enter the narrative at a much earlier point in the violent event, and extend the narrative beyond acts of violence to include injuries and other consequences.' (Dobash et al., 1998, p. 407) In another study which sought to understand abuse from the man's perspective, the men's narratives were similarly noted to be narrow and thin (Stamp & Sabourin, 1995).

Cavanagh et al. (2001) used Goffman's concept of 'remedial work' and his three related devices of 'accounts', 'apologies' and 'requests', to analyse the accounts of abusive men. They found that men's accounts seek to mitigate their culpability yet, at the same time, paradoxically seek 'absolution' and forgiveness from the women they abuse. They argue that the men's accounts of their violence reveal the intentionality of the violence: 'Through these accounts which dominate their reports, men seek not only to neutralise and eradicate women's experiences of abuse but also to control the ways in which women themselves might interpret and respond to the violence.' (Cavanagh et al., 2001, p. 711)

Interventions shaped by a socio-political perspective

The socio-political perspective has not generated consensus on the most appropriate response to violent men. On one hand, some who explain domestic violence from this perspective strongly oppose intervention with individual men, a position exemplified by the following remark:

If you look at people who have brought about major social changes in our country and other men…people like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King or Ghandi. Can you imagine anger management classes for white supremacists? 'How did you feel right before you burnt the cross?' 'Can you recognise your anger cues?' This is just something we would not do. (Pence 1990, cited in Townsend, 1991, p.2)

An alternative position is that a socio-political explanation for violence can be incorporated into

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work with individual men as part of the larger process of social change:

Even the more modest agenda of turning down the volume of violence for increasing numbers of men and turning up the volume of safety for increasing numbers of women is not only a small undertaking, it is a necessary and inevitable part of the pathway to the elimination of <u>all</u> violence against women. (Dobash et al., 2000, p. 40).

Those adopting this position, however, advocate that the work done with men who use violence must address as its core the social context of gendered inequality. 'Pro-feminist' or 'gender-based' group work, discussed in more detail below, has been the most common response to working with men who use violence in their intimate relationships, stemming from a socio-political understanding of domestic violence.

It is paradoxical that, despite the wide acceptance of socio-political explanations for domestic violence, most interventions with men who perpetrate violence in intimate relationships have been individualised (Blagg, 2001). When their review of interventions with men who use violence identified no interventions addressing the sociocultural level, Eisikovits and Edleson speculated that: 'It may be easier and less threatening to society to target individuals and families for change rather than the norms or values that are part of an intricate web of social order.' (1989, p. 407)

A recent Australian example of an intervention that aims to bring about change in men's behaviour by targeting the broader social context is the NSW 'Violence Against Women – It's Against all the Rules' community education campaign (Cheetham, 2001; Violence Against Women Specialist Unit, 2000). This targets young men via their interest in sport, and invites them to be agents of social change in challenging the use of violence against women. Approaches such as these which give the strong message from the community that violence is not acceptable, represent creative ways of undermining the socio-cultural support for violence against women. The many creative programs working with young people in schools to foster the development of egalitarian and non-abusive relationships are also examples of work addressing the social and cultural roots of violence (e.g. Sidey & Lynch, 2001; Zuchowski, 1999).

The development of programs for men who use violence, based on a socio-political framework

In North America, intervention with men utilising gender-based (sometimes termed 'pro-feminist'), cognitive behavioural group work is currently the most commonly used approach stemming from a socio-political understanding of domestic violence. The first such group was established in 1977, at the urging of advocates working with women escaping violence, and involved voluntary participants (Adams, 2000). Similarly, in Australia, some women's services have argued the need for involvement in the development of such programs (e.g. Taylor, 2000; Woodbridge, 2000):

The drive by a women's service to take a lead in the provision of men's programs may be seen by some as contentious and controversial. However, DVS remains convinced that the safety of women and children demands of us to be involved. For men's programs to function in isolation to women's services and vice-a versa is fraught with danger. (Taylor, 2000)

From the mid 1980s, the 'mandatory' arrest policies in the US presented the practical problem of how the criminal justice system could deal with the increased numbers of men arrested for domestic violence. Gondolf (2002a) suggests that referral to perpetrator programs was a 'convenient option' for the criminal justice system, but notes that there was often poor follow through and few consequences if men failed to attend or dropped out of the programs.

Because Australia has not gone down the US path of adopting 'mandatory' arrest policies, there has not been the same impetus to develop mandated programs in concert with the criminal justice system. A comprehensive audit of Australian programs for National Crime Prevention (Keys Young, 1999) found that Australian programs have tended to develop in an 'ad hoc' manner. Factors such as lack of funding for the development of specialist perpetrator programs, increasing identification of violence as an issue in many presentations to generalist relationship counselling services and requests from women to provide counselling options for their partners, encouraged the development of voluntary programs (Shaw, Bouris, & Pye, 1999). The National Crime Prevention audit identified considerable resistance to the concept of court mandated, rather than voluntary, programs for perpetrators. Nevertheless, many of the programs surveyed claimed to have been influenced by the well known Duluth Domestic Violence Intervention Project in the United States (Pence & Paymar, 1993), despite the fact that:

…a core aspect of the Duluth program is that it exists in the context of an integrated community response in which a strong pro-arrest policy and mandatory

attendance at group education programs as part of sentencing are key features. These features, in general, appear to be notably absent from most programs currently provided in Australia. (Keys Young, 1999, p. 49)

In the time since the Keys Young audit, the situation in Australia has begun to change. More perpetrator programs are being developed in co-ordination with the criminal justice system. Such programs now exist in Western Australia (Kraszlan & Rebecca West, 2001), South Australia (Central Violence Intervention Program, 2002; Mort, 2001), Queensland (Eglington, 1999; Taylor, 2001; Woodbridge, 1998), the Northern Territory (Demos, Rudd, Gzik, & Griffiths, 1998) and the ACT (Keys Young, 2000), with a pilot program underway in NSW. Some policy differences have emerged. For example, the NSW Government, through its Council on Violence Against Women (1999) supports the development of mandatory[3] rather than voluntary programs, while the Victorian Government supports programs being made available to men who self-refer as well as for those who are directed to attend and for those within the criminal justice system (Office of Women's Policy Victoria, 2001).

Gender-based, cognitive behavioural groups

Socio-political perspectives on domestic violence have resulted in the development of a specialised type of group work intervention, commonly termed 'gender-based, cognitive behavioural' group work. These groups can be differentiated from more traditional group work in several key respects. Emphasis on social context results in a focus on education[4] of men about gender inequality and the tactics of power and control in relationships. Stopping the violence, abuse and controlling behaviours is the goal of intervention, rather than providing a therapeutic response to the man's individual psychological problems such as 'low self-esteem' or 'poor impulse control'.

Education groups focus on male and female social and cultural roles. If it is accepted that abuse stems not from anger but from a belief system wherein men are convinced they have the right to dominate and control, and men force their relationships to become deeply embedded in such assumptions, then that belief system has to be confronted for abusing men. (Orme, Dominelli, & Mullender, 2000, p. 97)

The notion of the man accepting responsibility (Boyle, 2001; Hall, 2001; Jenkins, 1990) for the abuse, for its effects and for stopping violence and controlling behaviour, is central to this form of intervention:

Violence is seen as intentional behaviour chosen by men as a tactic or resource associated with attempts to control and dominate women…defining violence as

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intentional leads to a moral discourse identifying men as responsible and accountable for their acts. (Dobash & Dobash, 1992, p. 248)

Key characteristics of these groups include the following:

- Most importantly, perpetrator groups are not seen *on their own* as an adequate response to domestic violence. Rather they are but one component of a co-ordinated community response[5] involving, at a minimum, the criminal justice system and services for abused women. (Adams, 2000; Dobash et al., 2000; Gondolf, 2002a; Murphy, Musser, & Maton, 1998; Tolman & Bennett, 1990; Woodbridge, 1998)

- The safety of women and children is the primary goal (Woodbridge, 2000): 'Victim safety is the "gold standard" for batterer intervention programs, the primary criterion by which program effectiveness will be judged.' (Bennet & Williams, 1998, p. 1)

- Wider accountability to women (e.g. Boyle, 2001; Hall, 2001; Laming, 2000; Mullender, 1996) 'In doing this work it is vital that the program used is accountable and transparent to women's lived experience of domestic violence.' (Woodbridge, 2000, p. 9)

- Limited confidentiality. In contrast to the norms of conventional therapeutic encounters, the confidentiality offered to participants is sharply curtailed, with the program given permission to contact partners and the criminal justice system in order to ensure victim safety and offender accountability. (Mederos, 1999)

- Respectful interventions. In Australia, the work of Jenkins (1990) and White (1989) has been particularly influential in developing approaches that respectfully invite men to address their violent behaviour as the focus of work, but without unproductive confrontation. Based on narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1989), these Australian developments are different from some of the 'educational' group work approaches developed in North America. This approach is

reflected in the following excerpt from a group work manual reflecting the narrative therapy approach: 'It is (therefore) important that workers do not reproduce abusive behaviours by using their powers to impose opinions and values on clients. This includes the use of "beneficial bullying" to break down a man's denial of the problem.' (Northern Metropolitan Community Health Service, 1997, p. 33). The respectful stance from which the worker operates makes it possible to acknowledge factors such as child abuse which may be part of the man's history, while maintaining a clear focus on stopping violence.[6]

The Emerge program in Boston provides an example of the operationalisation of the principle of accountability to the women (ex)partners of men in its program. 'Emerge views its primary mission as building accountability, as opposed to changing batterers.' (Adams, 2000, p. 318) Therefore, the program devotes considerable attention to documenting the men's violence and non-compliance with the program requirements, since their experience indicates that many men will drop out of programs or will deny previous admissions of abusive behaviour once away from the program. This documentation of the man's violence includes behaviour acknowledged by the man and other information from the victim, police and child protection records. This documentation is made available to women on request, for example in matters of child contact. 'The report may be the only documentation of the batterer's problems which is independent of the victim's allegations.' (Adams, 2000, p. 319)

As work with men has developed, many educational programs have also incorporated cognitive behavioural interventions, which are based on social learning theory. Socio-cultural explanations for violence can incorporate social learning theory through their emphasis on gender role socialisation and acknowledgment that violence is learned and sustained in many social contexts: friends and relatives, peers, the response (or non-response) of the justice system and the popular media. Cognitive behavioural approaches aim to change behaviour though challenging the thinking on which abusive behaviour is based – ideas, for example about male entitlement and victim blame. The following is a typical description of gender-based cognitive behavioural groups:

This approach confronts men with the consequences of their behavior, holds them responsible for their abuse, confronts rationalizations and excuses, and teaches alternative reactions and behaviors. It combines components such as skill training and anger management with education and confrontation about power and control issues.
(White & Gondolf, 2000, p. 468)

For some, the incorporation of behavioural techniques such as assertiveness training and anger management strengthens the intervention by providing men with skills for developing non-violent relationships. For others, including such components is seen as a diversion from addressing the gender issues that underlie violence against women. Their inclusion implies that violence arises from skills deficits, rather than from a sense of entitlement and belief in male authority to decide on female standards of behaviour and to enforce these standards. From this perspective, including behavioural techniques such as these, represents a movement away from a social to a psychological framework in responding to men who abuse (Gondolf, 2002a). The key issue appears to be whether such elements can be incorporated within a broader framework which challenges men's domination of women.

While there is disagreement about whether or not such components have a place in group work with men who use violence, there is more consensus that the use of such behavioural interventions alone, outside of a socio-political perspective on domestic violence, is an incomplete and inadequate response to men's violence (Orme et al., 2000). This debate is heard most strongly with respect to the use of 'anger management' as the sole intervention. 'Stand alone' anger management programs are regarded as inappropriate interventions because, for example, they may imply that the victim bears some responsibility for 'provoking' the anger and thus the abuse; because they fail to address the premeditated, controlling behaviours which are a core part of the abuse; and because they fail to address the social supports for wife abuse (Gondolf, 2002a).

Individual/psychological perspectives

Another body of literature, contrasting sharply with socio-cultural perspectives, focuses on understanding the characteristics of individual men who are violent towards their partners. This literature follows one of two lines of inquiry. The first compares domestic violence perpetrators to men who do not perpetrate violence in their intimate relationships, while the second attempts to identify the different types of domestically violent men (Hamberger, Lohr, Bonge, & Tolin, 1996).

Attempts to Identify the characteristics of domestic violence perpetrators

In a comprehensive review of the literature comparing 'maritally violent' and 'maritally non-violent' men, Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (1997) conclude that maritally violent men show more: psychological distress, personality disorders, attachment/dependency problems, anger/hostility and

alcohol problems, than do non-violent men. They also found that violent men 'may hold attitudes (towards violence against women) and make attributions (regarding both wife behavior and their own violence) that increase their risk for using physical aggression. They may lack resources or feel powerless.' (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997, p. 94). Men who perpetrate violence in their intimate relationships are also more likely to have experienced violence in their family of origin.

Among these characteristics of violent men, the psychological variable of adult attachment style is attracting increased theoretical, research and treatment interest (e.g. Dutton, 1995; Scott & Wolfe, 2000; Stosny, 1995). Mauricio and Gormley (2001, p. 1069) describe the concept of adult attachment style as 'the propensity to interact in patterned ways in close adult relationships'. It is proposed that the quality of the infant-caretaker relationship provides a 'blueprint' for the individual's later interpersonal relationships. This theoretical perspective proposes that: '…excessive interpersonal dependency among abusive men is…a consequence of insecure attachment in childhood'. (Buttell & Jones, 2001, p. 376) However, a recent study which compared the level of interpersonal dependency of a sample of men who were court mandated to domestic violence treatment with a comparison group of non-violent men did not find that the domestic violence perpetrators exhibited greater interpersonal dependency than the comparison group (Buttell & Jones, 2001), in contrast to two earlier studies which had found some evidence of a relationship between high interpersonal dependency and violence perpetration.

Interest in the impact of trauma symptoms in adult perpetrators of violence is another, connected area of emerging interest. Dutton (2000) suggests that both experiencing child abuse and witnessing violence between parents are risk factors for the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and that this is associated with violence perpetration: '…PTSD may be a link or mediating variable between childhood abuse victimization and adult perpetration of intimate abuse.' (Dutton, 2000, p. 301) This theoretical approach has promoted studies which explore the existence of trauma symptoms in perpetrators compared to non-violent men (e.g. Dutton, 1995) and which explore the extent to which perpetrators of domestic violence evidence symptoms of dissociation[7] (Simoneti, Scott, & Murphy, 2000). It has been hypothesised that dissociative coping mechanisms facilitate 'the extreme detachment necessary to engage in severe violence towards an intimate partner'. (Simoneti et al., 2000, p. 1264) This perspective, however, does not address the gender difference in violence perpetration: both male and female children experience violence in their families of origin and may dissociate in response to these traumatic experiences, yet domestic violence is perpetrated by men in the majority of cases (Taft et al., 2001).

Identifying typologies of abusive men

Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (2000, p. 1000) argue that:

…the understanding of marital violence is more likely to be advanced by drawing attention to (these) differences (between violent men) than by continuing to treat all violent husbands as one homogenous group…the identification of batterer subtypes opens the possibility of patient-treatment matching that may increase intervention effectiveness.

In a widely cited paper, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) developed a batterer typology based on the three dimensions of:

- the severity and frequency of the violence, including psychological and sexual abuse

- the domain of the violence (i.e. family only or extra-familial violence and other criminal behaviour)

- the batterer's psychopathology or personality disorders.
  (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000, p. 1000)

These dimensions generated three sub-types of perpetrators: the 'family only (FO)' perpetrators, who it was hypothesised would engage in the least severe domestic violence, the least violence outside the family and be engaged in less criminal behaviour; the 'borderline-dysphoric (BD)' group, whose abuse of their partners would be moderate to severe, who may exhibit some violence outside the family and who 'would be psychologically distressed, evidencing borderline personality characteristics and some problems with substance abuse' (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000, p. 1000); and the 'generally violent-antisocial (GVA)' group whose abuse of partners would be moderate to severe and who would engage in the most extra-familial violence and criminal behaviour. This last group would have antisocial personality disorders and problems with substance abuse.

Drawing on a number of theoretical approaches, Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) then suggested a developmental model for identifying risk factors on the basis of this typology. Their model incorporated both 'distal-historical correlates' such as growing up with child abuse and parental violence and associating with violent peers and 'proximal correlates' such as impulsivity, social skills and attachment and dependency (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000). A number of studies have subsequently been undertaken to test this theoretical model (Hamberger et al., 1996; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000).

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In a review of batterer typologies, Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (2000) find that many 'fit' with the direction of the Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) typology. For example, Jacobson and Gottman (1998) identified 'cobras' (similar to the GVA group) and 'pitbulls' (similar to the BD group) while Tweed and Dutton (1998) identified 'instrumental' (similar to the GVA group) and 'impulsive' batterers (similar to the BD group).

Linking psychological characteristics to treatment

Holtzworth-Munroe et al. (2000) argue that future work needs to explore how men in the different perpetrator sub-types respond (or not) to different forms of treatment. For example, they postulate that a sub-group of the 'GVA' men may be psychopaths for whom treatment is likely to be ineffective. In a similar vein, Huss and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (2000) suggest that it would be useful for the domestic violence field to become aware of the literature on psychopathy in addressing the policy and treatment implications arising from identifying this sub-group of batterers.

Despite the burgeoning interest in typologies, and conviction that their development will lead to a movement away from a 'one size fits all' approach to perpetrator treatment, there has to date been little research which addresses the differential benefits of treatment approaches for different perpetrator sub-types. An exception is a study by Saunders (1996) which randomly assigned 218 perpetrators (the majority court mandated) to one of two treatment types: a feminist-cognitive-behavioural group (FCBT) or a process-psychodynamic group (PPT). The study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of these two treatment models in preventing reassault and to test whether offenders with particular personality traits and developmental histories would have better outcomes depending on the type of treatment received. Drawing on the Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart typology (1994), it was predicted that the feminist-cognitive-behavioural treatment approach of skills training and attitude change would be best suited to men with antisocial personality traits, and that, the more dependent the abuser's personality, the more he would benefit from the less tightly structured process psychodynamic group (PPT) which concentrated on building trust and uncovering and reconnecting with childhood traumas. The study found that recidivism rates were almost identical between the two treatment conditions. The findings regarding the interaction of perpetrator traits and intervention type were in the direction predicted.

Those who understand domestic violence as linked to childhood experiences of abuse and witnessing violence, argue that treatment for perpetrators should include addressing and resolving childhood trauma in the sub-group of perpetrators who have symptoms of PTSD. The issue of how to address these issues for men within a framework that does not undermine their acceptance of responsibility for the abuse which they have perpetrated, is a treatment issue which many grapple to address (e.g. Hall, 2001). The main concern which is voiced in respect to these perspectives is that a focus on providing treatment for men's psychological problems 'can too easily reinforce the sense of entitlement, self-righteousness, and narcissism so often associated with men who batter women.' (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 11)

The recent large multi-site, longitudinal study of perpetrator program outcome (Gondolf, 2002a) which is discussed in detail later in this paper[8], offers some interesting findings about the utility of attempts to identify the personality profiles of abusive men, the development of "batterer typologies' and the link to intervention. Using the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI), the instrument that has been widely used in previous studies of perpetrators, this study attempted to verify the findings of previous studies which had indicated that: '(1) the vast majority of batterer program participants show evidence of psychopathology, and (2) batterers may be distinguished by their personality tendencies and disorders.' (Gondolf, 1999c, p. 2) The MCMI-III was administered to 840 men, 82 per cent of whom were court mandated, at entry to perpetrator programs in four cities.

In contrast to previous studies, the findings revealed 'less pathology' in this sample of men, with the most notable trend being towards narcissistic or antisocial personalities. Gondolf suggests that this finding is consistent with characterisations of perpetrators as acting with a sense of entitlement, dominance and self-centredness. Further, the study found no support for the proposition that perpetrators are characterised by borderline tendencies: '…there is little evidence for a prevailing "abusive personality" typified by borderline personality tendencies, and little support for a preponderance of post-traumatic stress disorder among our sample, in contrast to

findings of a Canadian study (Dutton, 1995).'
(Gondolf, 1999c, p. 13) Gondolf concludes, on the
basis of this study:

*These findings raise caution to characterizations that
may overly 'pathologise' batterers and battering.*
(1999c, p. 15)

Gondolf also explored the notion that identifying
perpetrator typologies would allow a better 'fit'
between the man and the treatment approach.
Proponents of individual/psychological approaches
have argued against the dominance of feminist-
informed cognitive behavioural approaches, on the
grounds that a 'one size fits all' approach cannot
respond to the treatment needs of different sub-
groups of perpetrators (eg. Holtzworth-Munroe et al.,
2000). White and Gondolf (2000) drew a random
sample of 100 perpetrators from the larger study.
Based on MCMI profiles for the sample, the study
identified three levels of personality pathology: low
(56 per cent of the sample); moderate (29 per cent of
the sample) and severe (15 per cent of the sample).
Six major personality groupings of perpetrator
profiles were identified which were consistent with
previous typologies. Further examination of the
profiles, however, led to the identification of another
trend: '...a continuum of narcissistic and avoidant
tendencies that cut across the groupings'. (White &
Gondolf, 2000, p. 483) The authors argue that
treatment recommendations associated with the
MCMI profiles identified in this study suggest that
cognitive behavioural treatment approaches are
appropriate for most of the men in the sample. There
is a small group of men with severe personality
problems or psychopathology who may need referral
for additional psychiatric help or close monitoring
for violations of limits. The authors conclude, on the
basis of this study, with respect to the link between
personality types and treatment, that:

*The prevailing gender-based, cognitive behavioural
group treatment may, however, be appropriate for
most men referred to batterer programs. It appears
that although one size does not fit all, one size
appears to fit most.* (White & Gondolf, 2000, p. 486)

Systemic perspectives

Systemic theories focus on the patterns of interac-
tion between couples and underlie interventions
with the man and woman as a couple. Reviewing
approaches in the 1980s, Eisikovits and Edleson
(1989, p. 388) noted that: 'The language that
systems-oriented practitioners use often replaces
"victim" and "abuser" labels with such terms such as
"abusive or violent couples". Such approaches have
been vigorously critiqued on the grounds that couple
counselling may jeopardise the woman's safety,
because she is made vulnerable to retaliation
through disclosures made in the therapy situation;

that it implies that the problem is mutual and that,
as a contributor, the woman is expected to change;
and that the focus will be on saving the relationship
rather than addressing the violence and coercive
control exercised by the perpetrator (Lipchik, Sirles,
& Kubicki, 1997). In most states in the US, this form
of intervention is regarded as inappropriate and
dangerous (Austin & Dankwort, 1999b) and is
typically limited until the man has completed a
perpetrator program and has been 'violence free' for
a prescribed period of time (Trute, 1998).

However, Lipchik, Sirles and Kubicki (1997) argue
that there should be a place for conjoint therapy in a
co-ordinated interagency response to domestic
violence, because 50-75 per cent of couples 'continue
in the relationship despite the best efforts of police,
prosecutors, shelters and advocates', and because
there is as yet little evidence of the effectiveness of
perpetrator groups, the most popular form of
intervention. Over the last decade, a number of
approaches which attempt to address the concerns
and risks of conjoint therapy have been described in
the literature (Goldner, 1999; Goldner, Penn,
Scheinberg, & Walker, 1990; Lipchik et al., 1997;
Shaw et al., 1999).

Summary – perspectives and intervention approaches

From the previous discussion it can be seen that
approaches to understanding and responding to
perpetrators of domestic violence have tended to be
polarised, emphasising either an individual/psycho-
logical or a socio-political perspective (Goldner,
1999). Mankowski, Haaken and Silvergleid (2002, p.
172) describe the dilemma as a struggle over
whether the response to perpetrators should be
'therapeutic treatment to overcome a psychological
problem or rather, directive re-education, and
punishment to interrupt criminal behavior.' This
polarisation leaves each side with concerns about the
other. For those who emphasise the individual and
psychological context:

*...focusing on the political context and ignoring the
individual context seems dehumanizing and
dismissive of men's experience, which often includes
histories of abuse or neglect. For proponents of the
power and control model, however, ignoring the
political context is oppressively dismissive of women's
experience.* (Mankowski et al., 2002, p. 173)

It seems unlikely that this debate will be easily or
quickly resolved. Resolution will involve well
designed studies which evaluate the outcomes of
different types of intervention. The next section of
this paper turns to the current evidence for the
effectiveness of perpetrator programs.

Evaluating the effectiveness of perpetrator programs

Introduction

Because of the controversy surrounding responses to perpetrators of domestic violence, the question of the effectiveness of perpetrator programs has been extensively canvassed. Yet it is clear that there is no easy answer to the question as to whether or not perpetrator programs 'work' and that teasing out the complexities which underlie this apparently simple question is a challenging endeavour.

The earliest efforts to evaluate outcomes of perpetrator programs were plagued by an array of methodological problems, including, for example:

- Lack of agreement about what constitutes 'success' or 'effectiveness' (Muller, 1997). Is it, for example, a total cessation of all forms of abusive, coercive and controlling behaviour; cessation of physical abuse; or a reduction in the amount of physical abuse? (Edleson, 1995; Gondolf, 1997a)

- Small sample sizes. This is common in the Australian research. (e.g. Hewitt & Cavanagh, 1998; Nankervis & Donne, 1993; urbis keys young, 2001a)

- Disagreement over what constitutes an adequate follow-up period. This relates to concerns that men may revert to violent and abusive behaviour when no longer under the scrutiny of the program and/or the legal system.

- Reliance on self reports of change by the men or rearrest records as outcome measures, both of which under-count re-offending. (Palmer, Brown, & Barrera, 1992)

- Low response rates in follow-up because of high rates of program drop out and difficulty in tracing participants over extended follow-up periods. For example, in one Australian study, 69 of 86 men completed a 12 week program; only 23 men and their partners participated in follow-up at the six month point, and 20 at 12 months. (Poynter, 1991)

- Difficulty of involving partners in follow-up, for example because of the risks of infringing on their privacy, jeopardising their safety, or other reasons. (Frances, 1996; Gondolf, 2000c; Palmer et al., 1992; Taylor, Davis, & Maxwell, 2001)

- Inclusion of only initial partners, leaving unanswered the question of whether men simply transfer their abusive behaviour to new partners.

- No control or comparison group used so that any changes identified cannot necessarily be attributed to the program. Much of the international

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'first generation' research in the field was of this kind (Eisikovits & Edleson, 1989) as is the current Australian research evaluation literature. (e.g. Baum, Brand, Colley, & Cooke, 1987; Poynter, 1991; urbis keys young, 2001a)

- Evaluations conducted by staff with a bias towards demonstrating 'success'. (Gondolf, 2002a)

- Problems in operationalising outcomes for women which aim to increase their safety and well being. (Austin & Dankwort, 1999a)

More recently, a number of studies have attempted to address some of these methodological challenges. Other areas of debate have also emerged, such as the debate about which type of research design can provide the best evidence for perpetrator program outcomes. There are some who contend, for example, that nothing less than evidence of effectiveness from evaluation of perpetrator programs using an experimental research design is required to validate their operation. Experimental designs randomly assign participants to two groups – a control group, which does not receive the intervention being tested, and a treatment group which does receive it. The results for the two groups are then compared, to establish if the intervention has had an impact:

…random assignment ensures that the groups being compared are similar prior to the implementation of the experimental stimulus. As such, random assignment provides the most unambiguous results concerning the efficacy of treatment… No other method is better able to rule out competing explanations for changes in the dependent variable… (Feder, Jolin, & Feyerherm, 2000, p. 381)

However, random assignment can be difficult to implement in field situations, as evidenced in a number of the studies to be discussed shortly.

Another type of research design, 'quasi-experimental', uses a comparison group, but without random assignment. In perpetrator program evaluations, for example, the comparison group may comprise program 'dropouts', rather than men randomly assigned to a 'no intervention' group. The obvious problem here is that the comparison groups may be different - perhaps the men who drop out are more dangerous and disturbed, hence any differences between the groups are due to the characteristics of

the two groups of participants rather than to the impact of the program. Statistical techniques are employed to attempt to control for such differences between the groups.

'Non experiments' measure participants before and after intervention, and have no comparison group. Hence is it not possible to attribute identified changes to the program since they may be due to other, intervening factors. Non experiments dominated the early attempts to evaluate perpetrator programs and as noted above, this is the design used to date in all Australian evaluations.

While some argue that it is unethical to legally mandate treatment that has not been proved effective using an experimental design, others argue that in a complex area such as domestic violence, where programs for perpetrators are but one component of a coordinated system of intervention, experiments are 'artificial' and 'naive' about program context (Gondolf, 2001). For example, experimental programs tend to treat men who drop out as part of the treatment group, when the ideal within a co-ordinated community response would be that dropping out should lead to consequences such as jailing or more intensive probation supervision (Gondolf, 2002a).

Evaluations which use an experimental research design

In the first evaluation to utilise an experimental design, Palmer, Brown and Barrera (1992) compared 59 court ordered perpetrators who participated under probation in a 10 week psycho-educational, client-centred group program with a control group assigned randomly to probation only. Follow-up questionnaires were mailed to both groups 12 months after program completion. Although the research design aimed to collect outcome data from the men, their partners and from police reports, the low response rates, particularly for the women[9], led to reliance on police data. Recidivism, measured by police records, was significantly higher for the control group than for the program group. However, this study suffered from small numbers and reliance on police data.

Using a random group assignment of men who had physically assaulted their wives, Dunford (2000) compared four, 12-month interventions with naval base personnel: a men's cognitive behavioural group; a couples' counselling group[10] using a cognitive behavioural approach; rigorous monitoring of the men; and no intervention with the men (although safety planning was implemented with the women partners). Four outcome measures were used: self report by the men and their partners of three levels of abuse (fear of abuse; physical abuse; physical injury); the modified Conflict Tactics Scale; police

and court reports; and date of the first repeat case of spouse abuse. The men and their partners were interviewed four times at six monthly intervals: before treatment; at the end of six months treatment; and twice more at six monthly intervals[11]. This study found no difference in outcomes between the treatment conditions during a year long follow-up. Dunford (2000, p. 475) concludes that: 'The interventions of the cognitive-behavioural model failed to produce meaningful changes in the behaviour they were designed to impact.'

In many ways, the men in this study were not typical of other men referred to perpetrator programs: all were married, were much younger, and had shorter abuse histories and less drug and alcohol problems than non-military perpetrators. Dunford argues that the failure to demonstrate the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural group intervention in this 'optimal' setting sounds a note of caution for programs run under more typical community settings.

Others (e.g. Bennet & Williams, 1998; Gondolf, 2002a) have interpreted these results differently. Bennet and Williams note that the overall recidivism in the study was low (30 per cent on the women's report and four per cent by arrest) and attribute this to the fact that the men, by virtue of their being in the navy, were subject to more extensive supervision and decisive sanctions (loss of job and housing) than are men in the general community. Hence they argue that this study:

…while questionable as an indicator of batterer program effectiveness, is nevertheless useful as an indicator of coordinated community intervention…If communities take a proactive response to domestic violence, including assertive probation work, sanctions for non-compliance, victim safety monitoring, and batterer intervention programs, they will reduce the incidence of repeat violence. (Bennet & Williams, 1998, p. 6)

In New York, 376 men were randomly assigned[12] to a six month Duluth-style perpetrator program or to six months community service (Taylor et al., 2001). During the evaluation, some men were assigned to an alternative treatment program of two months

duration, with two sessions a week rather than one. The control group comprised the men assigned to community service. Outcomes were measured by interviewing the women partners of the men at sentencing, and again six and 12 months later and by police record search 12 months after sentencing. Completion rates for victim surveys, however, were low: 51 per cent at intake; 48 percent for the second, and 50 per cent for the third interview. Thirty five per cent of victims could not be contacted at any time during the follow-up period.

The evaluation found that the men in the longer (six month program) were significantly less likely to be arrested for domestic violence than the men in the control (community service) group and also men in the shorter treatment group. This treatment effect did not diminish significantly between the six and 12-month follow-up periods. However, when the researchers looked at the *victim reports of new incidents*, there was no statistically significant difference between the groups. As mentioned previously, criminal justice recidivism data tends to identify lower rates of re-offending than do victims. However, the low victim response rates achieved in this study mean that it is possible that the criminal justice recidivism data is more reliable and that the findings on victim report measures are due to response bias or to other, intervening variables (Gondolf, 2001). This study also encountered difficulties in implementing random assignment: judges over-rode the random assignment to community services in 14 per cent of cases, and the shorter program was introduced to appease defence lawyers.

In Broward County, Florida, all men (404) convicted of misdemeanour domestic violence in two specialist domestic violence courts over a five month period were randomly assigned to either one year's probation with 26 weeks' court mandated perpetrator counselling[13], or to one year's probation, with no perpetrator program (Feder & Dugan; 2002; Feder et al., 2000). Data was collected from batterers, victims and criminal justice records. The men and their initial partners were interviewed at adjudication, six months later, and the women 12 months after adjudication. Tools measuring attitudes towards women and wife abuse, the criminalisation of domestic violence, responsibility for domestic violence, the likelihood of hitting/being hit again and the revised Conflict Tactics Scale, were administered to the men and women. Probation and arrest records were also checked at 12 months post adjudication.

No evidence was found that the men in the program did any better either behaviourally, or in attitudinal change, than the men who only received probation.

The results show that, in this county, there were no clear and demonstrable positive effects of this court-mandated SAAP [spouse abuse abatement] program on the offenders' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.

An analysis of the offenders' self-reported and victims' reports of psychological and physical abuse, using the CTS2, suggested that the offenders' behavior did not change over time. Of note, there was still evidence of physical abuse 6-12 months post-sentencing. Analyses failed to uncover differences between control and experimental subjects in their likelihood of reoffending and being arrested during the follow-up period.
(Feder and Dugan, 2002, p. 371)

The researchers in this study have documented the difficulties which they encountered in implementing this randomised field trial within the criminal justice system, in a climate in which the use of mandated perpetrator programs enjoyed wide support (Feder et al., 2000). One consequence of this was limited access to victims[14]. However, the researchers argue that the low victim response rate was compensated for by the use of multiple sources of data. Opponents of the experiment believed that women were being placed at greater danger if their partner were not mandated to treatment, yet the researcher's position was that:

...it was unethical to mandate an intervention that had not been rigorously tested such that persons understood the possible positive and negative consequences of the treatment.
(Feder et al., 2000, p. 384)

Summary – experimental studies

It was hoped that outcome studies using an experimental design would unequivocally answer the question as to whether or not perpetrator programs are effective. However, reviews of the results of these experimental studies have led to varying conclusions by different researchers. For example, Feder and Dugan (2002, p. 351) review these studies and identify a number of problems in their implementation, concluding that: '...there are inconsistencies and (that) questions remain about the integrity of these experiments and the generalizability of their results.' They argue that experimental studies of perpetrator programs need to address three issues (Feder and Dugan, 2002, p. 351-352):

• They must include men from the general population so that the results can be generalised (a weakness of the study which included only navy personnel)

• The sampling frame must not be limited to men who volunteer or who are assessed by others as suitable to attend a perpetrator program (as in the New York study)

• Participants must receive 'the same things in the same amount – other than the experimental stimulus…men in both experimental and control conditions would have to receive the same

amount and duration of criminal justice supervision, monitoring and nontreatment contact so that the only difference between the two groups would be that one group was court mandated into counselling and that the other was not.' (p. 352)

Feder and Dugan outline the ways in which the Broward County study met these criteria and argue, therefore, that their findings suggest that:

…an unquestioning acceptance of domestic violence batterers' intervention needs to be challenged. There is evidence from multiple sources that it did not work in Broward County. (Feder and Dugan, 2002, p. 372)

Bennet & Williams (1998) conclude that the evidence on program effectiveness to date is inconclusive. They argue it is both difficult and undesirable to try to distinguish the effects of perpetrator programs from the impact of the co-ordinated responses within which they are located. Gondolf makes a similar point in his review of the experimental studies:

The evaluations together suggest that the effectiveness of batterer programs alone is not readily apparent or rather weak and that claims of overwhelming success should be regarded with suspicion. They also indirectly imply that more attention needs to be given to program context. The encompassing intervention system of arrest, court action, victim services, and probation monitoring may substantially affect program success. (Gondolf, 2001, p. 87)

It is this exploration of batterer programs within their context which is addressed in Gondolf's own multi-site study, discussed in the next section of this paper.

Recent quasi-experimental evaluation studies

Russell and Rebecca Dobash and colleagues compared the effects of two Scottish court mandated men's programs with alternative, traditional forms of criminal justice dispositions such as fines, probation or imprisonment (Dobash et al., 2000; Dobash & Dobash, 1997; Dobash & Dobash, 2000; Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1999). The study compared two naturally occurring groups: the 'Men's Program Group' comprising men who were sentenced to and who completed one of two abuser groups as a condition of their probation; and the 'Other Criminal Justice Group' (Other CJ) comprising men sentenced by the courts for a domestic violence offence, who received some other form of sanction (Dobash et al., 2000, p. 72)[15]. Data was gathered via an initial in-depth interview with the men and women and by postal questionnaire at two follow-up times, three and 12 months after initial contact. The methodology included using both men and women partners as respondents and the development of four new tools to study 'violence',

'injuries', 'controlling behaviour' and 'quality of life' for men and women. In this way, the researchers attempted to move beyond using re-assault as the sole measure of outcome.

The study found that very few men in either the program group or the comparison group were charged with further violence towards their partners, indicating no difference on the outcome measure of criminal recidivism. In contrast to the recidivism data, the women's reports revealed much higher rates of re-abuse for both groups. However, the program group were more successful at reducing their violent and controlling behaviour. Three months after the initial interview, 62 per cent of the 'other' (non program) group had perpetrated at least one act of violence, compared with 30 per cent of the 'program' group, a statistically significant difference. At the 12 months follow-up, 75 per cent of the comparison group had re-assaulted, compared to 33 per cent of the 'program' group. Further, at the 12-month point, 37 per cent of the women partners of men in the comparison group reported frequent violence compared with seven per cent of women partners of men in the program group (Dobash & Dobash, 1997).

Women living with men in the program group also reported significant reductions in controlling behaviours. With respect to findings about quality of life, women partners of men in the program group were:

…much more likely than women in the Other CJ group to say they were happy, more relaxed and less frightened than before the intervention…An overwhelming majority of women in the Programme Group also indicated that their partner was less likely to try to restrict their lives and more likely to take responsibility for their violence.
(Dobash & Dobash, 1997, p. 251)

An important feature of this study was its use of the women's reports as its main indicator of outcome and in the development of new tools which attempted to more adequately capture all aspects of abuse – the violence, its impact, and the core dynamic of coercive control. In order to gather as rich a picture as possible, the interviews began with open-ended questions before the more specific measurement tools were introduced. In the interviews, respondents were shown numbered cards so they could identify abuse which they had experienced or perpetrated; this technique introduced to address the impact on reporting of victim shame and the tendency for perpetrators to minimise their abusive behaviour.

Dobash et al. (1999) assert that their results point to the need for mandated treatment, since the programs studied suffered little attrition, a common problem for many programs. While this is a

> **An important feature of this study was its use of the women's reports as its main indicator of outcome and in the development of new tools which attempted to more adequately capture all aspects of abuse – the violence, its impact, and the core dynamic of coercive control.**

commonly held position, Feder and Dugan (2002) point out that, in the Broward County study discussed earlier, offenders' behaviour was monitored by probation officers and they were sanctioned when they did not attend. Nevertheless, they point out that it was still not possible to ensure that all the men attended all the required sessions. This study explored the impact on perpetrator treatment outcomes of 'stake in conformity' variables, such as age, employment status, residential stability and marital status, as identified in the original Minneapolis Spouse Abuse Experiment and the replication studies about the relationship between arrest and repeat domestic violence offending.[16] They found that:

Despite the monitoring and sanctions, the men still self-selected into compliers (treatment completers) and non compliers (treatment dropouts). Additional analyses indicated that stake-in-conformity variables predicted both whether a man would comply with his terms of probation (specifically the court mandate to attend his SAAP program) and whether he would reoffend during the follow-up period.
(Feder and Dugan, 2002, p. 371)

In Seattle, Babcock and Steiner (1999) conducted a study that examined recidivism within a co-ordinated community response involving mandatory arrest, the courts, probation officers and domestic violence and chemical dependency service providers. Recidivism was measured by police records two years following the initial domestic violence incident, approximately one year after treatment completion. Despite the association between domestic violence and substance abuse (Bennet, 1997), the authors note that this was the first study to explore the impact of chemical dependency treatment on domestic violence recidivism. Controlling for demographic differences and differences in prior criminal history, the study compared 387 domestic violence perpetrators who were court mandated to either domestic violence group treatment, domestic violence treatment plus chemical dependency treatment, or incarceration. Thirty one per cent of the men mandated to domestic violence completed it, as did 43 per cent of men mandated to chemical dependency treatment. The results suggest that

completing domestic violence treatment is related to a statistically significant reduction in criminal recidivism during a two year follow-up. Those who were mandated to treatment but who failed to complete it, were more likely to reoffend. The study found little evidence that chemical dependency treatment is related to a reduction in domestic violence.

In the USA, a large multi-site evaluation using a quasi-experimental design was funded by the National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control, Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Its findings have been released in a large number of journal articles (e.g. Gondolf, 1997a, 1997b, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000a, 2000b, 2000d; Gondolf, Chang, & Laporte, 1999; Gondolf & White, 2000).[17]

In designing the study, the research team aimed to address many of the methodological problems identified in earlier outcome studies and to be sensitive to the concerns of those working with perpetrators and with abused women. Key to the approach adopted was the recognition that perpetrator programs do not operate in isolation, but rather, are embedded in a broader context:

…batterer intervention programs are part of a broader intervention system. They depend on – or at least are related to – arrest practices, court procedures, probation supervision, battered-women's services, and other community services.
(Gondolf, 2002a, p. 2)

Hence, the evaluation is of the 'batterer intervention system' (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 2), rather than of batterer 'programs'. The importance of this approach is emphasised by a number of evaluation studies which find that men can fail to attend court mandated programs, with no consequence. For example, Palmer, Brown and Barrera, (1992) who evaluated a court mandated treatment program, comment on their finding that men could opt out of the treatment with impunity:

The lack of pursuit of those subjects who failed to attend the required number of group sessions…raises questions about the legal system's failure in responsibility to society in general and to the abused partners of these men in particular.
(Palmer et al., 1992, p. 282)

The Gondolf research design comprised several innovations, compared to previous studies. These included:

- Use of 'naturalistic comparison'. Four programs were examined as conducted within their communities. Site visits by members of the research team explored the program approach and contextual changes over time.

- A multisite study. Research participants were recruited from four sites in different geographical

areas and with different client racial and ethnic mixes – Pittsburgh, Houston, Dallas and Denver.

- Sites were selected with different formats and lengths. They ranged from a three month, pre-trial program to a nine month, post-adjudication program with additional specialist components such as personality assessment at intake, alcohol treatment and a women's services co-ordinator. However, the four programs had a common structure and format, meeting criteria for being 'well established': compliance with the relevant state standards, collaboration with the battered women's services in their communities, use of a cognitive-behavioural approach; and being operational for five years or more with at least 40-50 referrals per month.

- Uniform intake procedures were implemented at each site. Each site used the same assessment tools and compiled similar records about issues such as attendance and drop outs, contributing to the large sample in the study.

- Longitudinal follow-up. Phone interviews were conducted every three months with the men and their initial partners, initially for 15 months from program intake, with a subsequent extension to four years. The researchers argue that the frequent follow-up assisted with locating study participants, increased the accuracy of the data through less reliance on recall over long periods and assisted to build rapport which facilitated disclosure by the women.

- New partners were included in the follow-up where they were identified. This study found that at least 20 per cent of men in the sample had a new partner for some period during the 48 month follow-up period.

- Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected.

- The main measure of reassault was the women's reports. The study aimed to achieve a 70 per cent response rate[18]. These reports were further supplemented by arrest records, the men's reports and medical records of a sub-group of the women.

- Intervening variables were assessed, including not living together, no contact, shelter contexts, legal action, counselling, drug and alcohol treatment, economic assistance, informal help

- Large sample size (840) compared to many previous studies. Of this sample, the majority were court mandated (82 per cent), rather than voluntary (Gondolf, 2002a, pp. 65-68).

In this study, the main outcome measure selected was reassault. Reasons for this included that this is the focus of criminal law and that stopping the violence is the key goal of perpetrator programs. The

The use of reassault as an outcome measure has been challenged, particularly by women's advocates, as too narrow, in that it fails to address the fact that domestic violence represents a pattern of coercive control achieved through the combination of tactics such as social isolation, threats and economic deprivation.

use of reassault as an outcome measure has been challenged, particularly by women's advocates, as too narrow, in that it fails to address the fact that domestic violence represents a pattern of coercive control achieved through the combination of tactics such as social isolation, threats and economic deprivation (Almeida & Durkin, 1999). While acknowledging this concern, Gondolf argues that assault is highly correlated with these other forms of abusive behaviours, and with the severity of the impact of abuse. A complex array of data was collected in order to determine reassault. The multiple measures of reassault, providing both qualitative and quantitative data, provide a richer and more detailed picture of the women's experience than the identification of 'reassault' as primary outcome measure initially suggests.

The cumulative reassault rates were calculated for all court mandated men, whether they completed the program or dropped out. Based on the women's reports, 32 per cent of the perpetrators reassaulted during the first, 15-month period of the follow-up. This increased to 37 per cent at the 30 months follow-up and to 42 per cent by the 48 month follow-up. When adjusted for under-reporting by the women (Gondolf et al., 1999), using men's reports and arrest data, the percentages who reassaulted at the three points in the follow-up were: 40 per cent at 15 months; 45 per cent at 30 months; and 48 per cent at 48 months (Gondolf, 2002a). Sixty per cent of the men who reassaulted a partner inflicted a bruise or injury, and of the injured women, one in five sought medical assistance. Two men murdered their partners, and one committed suicide.

From the cumulative reassault rates, it can be seen that almost half the sample committed at least one reassault. However, a different slant on the outcomes can be seen when the *trends in reassault over time* are identified. This different view is possible because of the longitudinal research design. This makes it possible to test the hypothesis that men may reduce their violence while under the supervision of the program and the legal system (in cases of mandated attendance), but that after this

period of surveillance they again employ their abusive behaviours. In this respect the study's findings are illuminating:

Overall, the cumulative reassault rate showed that a substantial portion of the men reassaulted, but the trend of the reassault revealed a de-escalation over time and a sustained cessation of violence for the vast majority of men. (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 113)

The results of this study suggest that the majority of men in the programs 'eventually do stop their violence, apparently for long periods of time.' (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 123)

- At 30 months, 'more than 80% of the men had been violence-free for at least a full year'. (p. 122)

- At 48 months, 'nearly 90 per cent of the batterers had reportedly not reassaulted a partner in the previous year; and three quarters had not been assaultive for the previous 2.5 years'. (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 122)

The different findings from looking at cumulative rates of reassault and trends in reassault over time initially appear contradictory. They suggest that a high proportion of men commit at least one reassault, but that much of this reoffending occurs early in their involvement with the program. This is understandable given the serious nature of the problem which perpetrator programs are addressing, at a point at which the men have had only minimal exposure to the program. The finding that the risk of reassault is highest when men are first in the program, has implications for the intensity of the program offered, the intensity of the legal supervision of the men, and the level of support offered to women in the early stages of perpetrator programs. Gondolf suggests, for example, that men might be required to attend three or four times weekly for the first month or so.

The study identified a group of men who reassaulted repeatedly and at dangerous levels throughout the entire follow-up period. The research team devoted considerable effort to establishing whether this dangerous group of men could be identified, by looking at the utility of commonly used risk assessment tools, personality profiles, and batterer typologies. However, the predicative power of these tools was found to be weak.

The repeat reassaulters – the most dangerous men in our evaluation – were not as readily distinguishable as we had thought and hoped. Remarkably, the majority appeared to be acceptable candidates for conventional batterer counselling. Most did not appear pathological, and only a small portion appeared to be truly psychopathic. The mode of violence among these men was also not substantially different from those of other men. The one striking difference was that their partners were less assertive and additional

intervention was less certain. Little was done to apprehend or stop the men from continuing their violence. (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 191)

What emerges about this group of men is that they were able to continue to reassault and inflict serious harm because of a *system's failure*: they reassaulted and faced no consequences. Based on these findings, Gondolf suggests that, in contrast to current practice, where risk assessment is undertaken at the beginning of intervention, risk assessment needs to continue throughout the intervention period, since risk markers such as drunkenness and the women's perceptions of dangerousness emerged during the follow-up periods.

A commonly voiced concern about perpetrator programs is that the men may simply substitute and increase other, non-physical forms of abuse to maintain their coercive control over their partner (Gondolf, 1997a). In this study, the women were asked about these other forms of abuse. Instruments used included an inventory of controlling behaviours (which included items such as kept from talking on the phone, kept from spending time with friends, taking money from the person); verbal abuse; property damage; and threats (e.g. threatened to kill any person, threatened to take away or harm children) (Gondolf, 1997b). Based on the women's reports, all forms of non-physical abuse reduced over time, along with reassault. However, they remained at relatively high levels, and Gondolf recommends that programs develop better methods of addressing these other forms of abuse. Notably, the researchers did not ask women about sexual violence[19].

The research also aimed to address a common criticism of perpetrator program evaluations: that they pay insufficient attention to the subjective experience of the victims. Is a program successful, for example, if the man's violent and abusive behaviour decreases or stops, yet the woman continues to live in fear? This issue was addressed by exploring the women's subjective view of their own well being using a 'quality of life' inventory. This tool was developed through consultation with women's advocates and women who had experienced domestic violence (Gondolf, 1997b). The research found that: 'The majority of women in our evaluation…indicated that they were "better off" or "felt safer" and their experience corresponds with the decreases in reassault and abuse.' (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 127) The area of greatest concern reported by the women was financial, with over a quarter of the women reporting increasing financial problems at the 15-month follow-up point. At the 48 month follow-up, 85 per cent of initial partners said that they felt 'very safe', and 84 per cent indicated that it was 'very unlikely' that their partners would hit them. Unfortunately, little detailed information about the way in which 'safety' was measured, is supplied.[20]

Gondolf also notes that, corresponding with the group of men who assaulted at frequent and harmful levels, there was a group of women who were 'worse off' (12 per cent at 15 months and six per cent at 30 months) following their partner's participation in a perpetrator program:

These women told the kind of horror stories that have given batterer programs a bad name. Their experiences are the ones that raise concerns about batterer programs among some battered-women's advocates and confront batterer program staff with the limitations of their efforts. (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 128)

The study identified some interesting outcomes about matters which have frequently been cause for speculation. On the issue of whether men go on to assault new partners, it found that:

The new partners in our follow-up were half as likely to be reassaulted than the initial partners, and most of the men who did reassault new partners had also reassaulted their initial partners. Rather than reassaulting a new partner instead of the initial one, some men simply continue reassaulting from one partner to the next. (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 118)

It is frequently assumed that men who attend programs voluntarily will be more motivated to change. However, in this study, the voluntary participants (approximately 18 per cent of the sample) were almost 'twice as likely to drop out as the court-referred men (61% vs. 33%), and they reassaulted their partners at a significantly higher rate at the 15 month follow-up (44% vs. 29%).' (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 119). He postulates that 'coerced participation' may, in fact, be essential for program completion.

Although only one of the four programs in this study offered culturally specific services, African American and Latino men in the study were found to have similar rates for reassault (with Latino men lowest) and similar rates for women's perceptions of safety, as 'Anglo' participants.[21]

Since this study did not use an experimental research design, it faces the challenge of demonstrating that the reduction in assaults and other forms of abuse is due to the men's participation in the programs. For example, it could be argued, that it is the intervention of the criminal justice system (arrest, court appearance and disposition) which is associated with the outcomes. In order to test this, the study adopted three approaches. In the first instance, it used men who dropped out of the program ('dropouts') as a 'quasi-control group' (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 136). This group's reassault rates were compared with those of men who attended for at least two months ('completers'). It found that the cumulative reassault rate at 30 months was 55 per cent for 'dropouts' and 36 per cent for 'completers'.

Secondly, a complex statistical analysis of

It is frequently assumed that men who attend programs voluntarily will be more motivated to change. However, in this study, the voluntary participants (approximately 18 per cent of the sample) were almost 'twice as likely to drop out as the court-referred men'.

demographic and behavioural differences between 'dropouts' and 'completers', was undertaken to determine whether these differences, rather than the program, may have accounted for differences in outcome. Finally, the researchers conducted qualitative research on the perceptions of the men and the women about the program and about the process of change (Gondolf, 2000b). Ninety per cent of men reported using techniques learned in the programs to avoid reassault. They reported that they used behavioural techniques (e.g. time out) most frequently (50 per cent). Given the programs' goals in terms of attitudes about gender equality, disappointingly only five per cent of the men reported utilising notions of respect and empathy for their partners (Gondolf, 2000b). Qualitative data also showed that around fifty per cent of women attributed changes in their partners to their participation in the program. Another study (Heckert & Gondolf, 2000) found that perception of the likelihood of criminal justice sanctions on their own did not prevent reassault or dropout. This leads to the following conclusion:

Our analysis of the program effect suggested a relatively moderate-sized effect for the programs involved in our multisite evaluation. Attending batterer counselling as opposed to dropping out appeared to reduce the probability of reassault according to cross-tabulation, effect-size analysis, logistic regression, and structural equation model. Thus, we might assume that the programs added something beyond the practice of men just being arrested and put on probation.
(Gondolf, 2002a, p. 159-160)

One interesting and unexpected finding of this study was that the outcomes were relatively equivalent across the four program sites included in the study, despite the fact that the programs varied in length (from three to nine months) and that the longest program offered an additional array of specialist service components. One possible explanation is that this finding could be due to the quality of program implementation at the different sites. However, Gondolf (1999b) suggests that the equivalent success of the shortest program (Pittsburgh) may be due to characteristics of the broader system in which it is located. This is a three month, pre-trial program,

with swift court involvement and regular court review: 'In sum, the men were held more quickly and decisively accountable for their behavior.' (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 203)

In summing up the findings of this comprehensive research project, Gondolf (2002a, p. 199) concludes that the major implication of the study is that *the system matters*. He argues that, rather than a refinement of therapeutic/educational techniques used in perpetrator programs, what is most needed is system development, echoing the calls for the development of co-ordinated or integrated responses to domestic violence (Holder, 2001).

The main challenge appears to be in making the existing components of intervention work together more decisively and consistently. They need to hold men accountable for their behavior…the notion of 'accountability', so frequently urged in batterer counselling, warrants some reinforcement. (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 218)

The failure of a prompt and certain response by the criminal justice system to reassault, with its implications for the safety of women, was identified in this study as the main characteristic of situations where men continued to abuse and to inflict the greatest harm of their victims. Hence we turn now to a discussion of studies which seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the co-ordinated intervention system as a whole.

Studies of perpetrator programs within a co-ordinated response to domestic violence

Shepard (1999) points out that, despite the emphasis in recent years on developing co-ordinated responses to domestic violence, most evaluation effort to date has focussed on the individual components of that response, such as perpetrator programs, or arrest. However, a body of research which attempts to focus more broadly is emerging.

Findings from an early study which explored the impact of a community intervention project on re-offending, suggested that lower recidivism was associated with 'police making arrests on first visits with the use of mandated treatment by the courts as a consequence. The strength of this finding appears to increase the longer men are monitored.' (Syers & Edleson, 1992) More recently, a study found that each additional intervention in a co-ordinated community response increased the reduction in domestic violence, measured by criminal justice re-offences (Murphy et al., 1998). Lower recidivism was found to be associated with the cumulative effects of successful prosecution, probation monitoring, receiving a court order for counselling, attending counselling and completion of counselling. The

offender's prior domestic violence history did not predict recidivism: 'In brief, more serious offenders tended to experience more intervention; yet greater system intervention was associated with lower recidivism.' (Murphy et al., 1998, p. 279) However, the researchers note that only four per cent of cases in the study were subject to the full range criminal justice system responses.

The Seattle study described earlier (Babcock & Steiner, 1999) highlights the challenges in implementing co-ordinated responses to domestic violence. Less than a third of the men court mandated to domestic violence treatment completed it. Fifty eight per cent of program 'non-completers' in fact did not attend any sessions; and only 37 per cent of men who did not attend mandated treatment had their probation revoked. The majority – 64 per cent – received no legal consequence for failing to attend court-mandated treatment:

The failure of the majority of batterers to complete treatment despite the fact that it was court-mandated renders questionable the potency of the coordinated community response to batterers' treatment. Treatment may be most effective when offered as one component in a well-orchestrated coordinated community response with consistent, legal consequences for noncompliance with treatment. (Babcock & Steiner, 1999, p. 55)

A recent study (Shepard, Falk, & Elliott, 2002) evaluated the effectiveness of a project which aimed to enhance the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP). Despite the project's international recognition, which often focuses on its education program for perpetrators, the authors stress that:

…the core of the DAIP has always been focused on institutional change to effectively coordinate community responses to domestic violence. The philosophy has been that communities, rather than individuals, must be responsible for holding abusers accountable for their violence and ensuring the safety of victims. (Shepard et al., 2002, p. 552)

The study evaluated the impact of the enhanced DAIP (EDAIP), which involved criminal justice personnel and victim advocates collecting and sharing risk assessment data which was used to determine the level of sanctions applied to domestic violence perpetrators. Recidivism rates, measured by criminal justice data, were compared for male offenders across several years: 1994 (prior to implementation of the EDAIP), 1996 (pilot year for EDAIP), 1997 and 1998. Recidivism rates were significantly lower for 1997 and 1998, compared with 1994 and 1996. The authors conclude that: 'The results are encouraging in that there was evidence of reduced recidivism rates with enhanced coordinated responses.' (Shepard et al., 2002, p. 568)

This study also highlighted the challenges in implementing coordinated responses to domestic violence. Even when the EDAIP was to have been fully operational, police followed EDAIP protocols in only 37 per cent of cases and probation officers in 55 per cent of cases.

To date, the only Australian research which has attempted to address the wider context of the intervention system is the evaluation of the ACT Interagency Family Violence Intervention Program (Keys Young, 2000; urbis keys young, 2001b). The FVIP is a co-ordinated criminal justice approach which emphasises 'improved investigative practice imbedded within a project comprising detailed training, close management and monitoring, new technology, and closer working relationships between the Office of the DPP and the non-government Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS)'. (Holder, 2001, p.14) The Perpetrator Education Program (PEP) component of the FVIP began in September 1998. Although the evaluation does not look at the link between coordinated intervention and recidivism, it does provide a blueprint for systemic components which need to be explored in evaluations which take a broader view than focusing on a perpetrator program in isolation. Among the emerging outcomes, it has been noted that:

The arrest rate of all incidents in the pilot patrol area has increased from 16% to 27%. In Phase I of the FVIP about 70 per cent of criminal family violence matters proceeded to full hearing. In Phase II, this has almost reversed with 60-70 per cent of defendants entering a guilty plea at the mention stage (the first or second court appearance). This saves the victim from the stress of waiting time and appearance at court. (Holder, 2001, p. 14)

Some challenges for intervention with perpetrators

Avoiding a narrow focus

Some commentators have argued against the emphasis on perpetrator programs as the key response to men who use violence against their partners. For example:

While, at best, they [perpetrator programs] may stop individual men using violence against family members, this does not equate, in our view, with the prevention of men's violence. If we accept the analysis that men's violence is socially constructed, as well as individually willed, strategies to prevent men's violence would need to be more oriented towards structural and social change rather than individual behaviour change alone. We need to be alert to the danger that men's behaviour change programs may

be seen as 'the solution'. (Pease & Fisher, 2001, p. 50)

In a similar vein, Bennett and Williams (2001) argue that men's programs should ally themselves with those parts of the broader men's movement which are working to eliminate violence against women and children and that they should be involved in community education to raise awareness about the social conditions that support men's abusive behaviour and which are expressed in a range of ways including bullying, sexual harassment and dating violence. They argue that there is currently an imbalance in community education activities, with most of this work left to women's advocates: 'An unintended effect of this imbalance is an overemphasis on the question "Why does she stay?" and an underemphasis on the question "Why does he batter?" and equally as important, "Why do *we* let him batter."'(Bennett and Williams, 2001, p. 275)

In arguing for a broader role for perpetrator programs in the movement against domestic violence, Bennett and Williams also suggest that this agenda should include programs more adequately addressing what they term 'responsible fatherhood' (p. 273). They suggest that modules in perpetrator programs on parenting are too often an 'afterthought' and that an emphasis on generic parenting skills is less important than assisting a man to understand the impact of his violence on his children:

A responsible father is a man who, in addition to caring for and guiding his children, is a coequal to his children's mother, even if he does not live with her; contributes to the support of his children regardless of where they live; and accepts responsibility for his controlling behavior and its effects on his children and his children's mother. (Bennett & Williams, 2001, pp. 273-274)

This highlights the fact that the growing volume of literature about the links between child abuse and domestic violence and about the impact of living with violence and abuse on children, focuses almost entirely on mothers (Edleson, 1998). While collaboration between child protection services and women's domestic services is regularly urged to address this issue (e.g. Fleck-Henderson, 2000), Bennett and Williams break new ground in urging that such collaborations be developed between perpetrator programs and child protection services in order to identify and respond to men whose behaviour threatens the safety of children. In a similar vein, the Victorian framework for developing best practice in programs for men who use violence towards family members, explicitly identifies the child protection system as one of the pathways via which men may be directed to participate in a program:

Men may be directed to be assessed for their suitability to attend a program as part of a case plan

> **'If we accept the analysis that men's violence is socially constructed, as well as individually willed, strategies to prevent men's violence would need to be more oriented towards structural and social change rather than individual behaviour change alone.'**

developed by a regional child protection unit, or as ordered by the Children's Court. Depending on the assessment, a man may then attend a MBCG, individual counselling, or be referred to other service options. A comprehensive report on the man's attendance and participation in the program(s) would be made available by the program to DHS. (Office of Women's Policy Victoria, 2001)

Developing responses to Indigenous family violence

When saying that 'the system matters', it is important to consider whether this system needs necessarily to be the criminal justice system. For groups such as Indigenous people, who suffer racism and discrimination within the criminal justice system, urging an increased criminal justice role, and programs only within that context, may seem limited and insensitive to the historical and social contexts in which family violence has developed as a widespread problem (Thompson, 2000). In the international literature, similar concerns have been raised about building criminal justice based systems for men in an environment which 'already overly criminalizes men of color'. (Mederos, 1999) Mederos raises the possibility of other types of systems for building accountability and safety:

Do we need to think more carefully of community interventions that are educational and cultural – of integrating discussions and awareness of domestic violence in community settings such as schools, churches, social service agencies, and similar sites – rather than marginalizing those discourses to shelters and batterer intervention programs. (1999, p. 143)

A criminal justice based approach is seen by some as inconsistent with the community based response emphasising family and community healing which has been identified by some Indigenous groups as a preferred way to develop a response to family violence. Such an approach more readily acknowledges the contributions of colonisation, racism and dispossession (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence, 2000). For example, Atkinson & Atkinson (2000) argue against the use of the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator' in

addressing Indigenous family violence. High levels of violence are seen as reflecting the intergenerational transmission of trauma, to which a criminal justice response represents a continuations of the damage, dispossession and trauma imposed by the process of colonisation:

In colonised societies there have been multiple layers of both acute and overt acts of violence, and the establishment of chronic and covert conditions of control…In many instances the pain has been internalised into abusive and self-abusive behaviours, often within families and communities. The rage is not only turned inwards, but compounds across generations and becomes complex. The bureaucratic interventions of the state, the processes of law, social welfare and health care have not addressed the core issue of human traumatisation… On the contrary, by their interventions, they have acted to increase and compound the trauma by creating and increasing victimisation and dependency on the State, criminal incarceration, and escalating violence against members of our own families and communities. (Atkinson & Atkinson, 2000, pp. 143–144)

From this perspective, restorative justice [22] approaches have been proposed as an alternative response to using the criminal justice system (e.g. Braithwaite & Daly, 1994). Restorative justice approaches draw on a range of processes such as mediation (regarded as inappropriate in situations of domestic and family violence where there are power disparities between participants) and the dispute resolution processes used by the Maori in New Zealand. The essence of this approach is that after an offence where guilt is admitted, victims, offenders and their supporters meet together with a facilitator and are encouraged to work out a plan for repairing the damage and minimising harm from the incident: 'These interventions promise social justice through healing encounters between victims and offenders, sponsored by community members.' (Presser & Gaarder, 2000, p. 175)

Despite the apparent 'fit' between restorative justice approaches and notions of community healing, serious questions about the applicability of restorative justice in situations of domestic and family violence have been raised (e.g. Greer, 2001; Martin, 1996; Stubbs, 1997). Restorative justice approaches developed in the field of juvenile justice. Family violence is a very different context in that the violence is part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour, rather than a one-off crime committed by a stranger. Restorative justice assumes that hearing the victim's perspective will promote shame in the offender, and promotes the concept of the offender's apology. Yet many women living with domestic and family violence are familiar with 'apologies' as a part of what Walker (1977–78) identified as the 'cycle of abuse' (Stubbs, 1997). As Stubbs points out, it cannot

be assumed that a woman who has been subjected to violence and abuse will be willing or able to talk about that abuse in a conference, and indeed it may be unsafe for her to do so. Nor can it be assumed that the 'community' will totally condemn violence, rather than minimise it and join with the victim blaming by the offender. Martin cautions about the consequences of restorative justice approaches in the following terms:

We must be careful that proposals to have family violence dealt with by the 'community' or criticisms of police arrest policy do not result in the decriminalisation of family violence and a return to the viewing of family violence as a private matter or 'just a domestic'. (Martin, 1996, p. 59)

At present in Australia, programs for Indigenous and non-Indigenous men appear to be developing along very different lines. Writing of the situation in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Balzar (1999) describes the process for Maori activists in the refuge movement to support the pilot of a 'Duluth' type program in Hamilton. The socio-political perspective informing the Duluth program was attractive, not solely because it challenged victim-blaming, individualistic perspectives, but because:

…it also allowed an analysis that accounted for the impact of colonisation on Maori life and violence against Maori women by Maori men…The Duluth report had widespread appeal to both Maori and non-Maori women within the refuge movement as it provided a framework that explained the current status of women and Maori within New Zealand, a status that evolved through the culturally supported subjugation of both groups. (Balzar, 1999, p. 240)

Other Maori groups, in contrast, were concerned that the approach would legitimate increased involvement of the State in the lives of Maori. What emerged from the debates, was a clear imperative that a 'Maori-controlled, Maori-centred program be offered as part of the overall project'. (Balzar, 1999, p. 250)

Including cross cultural perspectives

Perpetrator programs are frequently criticised for failing to address cultural diversity in their curricula, staffing and understandings of domestic violence (e.g. Bennett & Williams, 2001; Gondolf, 1997a). Taft et al. (2001) note that despite the considerable interest in the issue of dropout rates (e.g. Gerlock, 2001; Rondeau, Brodeur, Brochu, & Lemire, 2001; Rooney & Hanson, 2001) from perpetrator programs – estimated at 40-60 per cent – racial differences in treatment dropout have attracted little research attention. In a study which explored the differences between African Americans

> **…The over-representation of men from minority cultural groups in the criminal justice systems suggests that mandated court programs should actively pursue 'cultural competence'.**

and Caucasians in attendance at a domestic violence program, taking into account other demographic factors which might account for differences, 'race was the strongest predictor of treatment dropout and number of treatment sessions completed by individual members… Only 55% of African American clients, versus 79% of Caucasian clients, attended three fourths or more of scheduled sessions'. (Taft et al., 2001, p. 395-396) Similarly, in their evaluation of the Seattle Co-ordinated Community response, Babcock and Steiner (1999) noted that ethnic minorities comprised a high (but not quantified) proportion of program non-completers. They suggest that this finding points to a need to make programs more culturally sensitive, or to tailor treatment specifically to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

Since research indicates that maintaining attendance in programs is linked with more effective intervention (Gondolf, 2002a; Taft et al., 2001), program failures to engage men from marginalised groups have important implications for the safety of women. Further, the over-representation of men from minority cultural groups in the criminal justice systems suggests that mandated court programs should actively pursue 'cultural competence'[23] (Bennett & Williams, 2001).

This aspect of work with perpetrators is similarly under-developed in Australia. A literature review undertaken by the Clearinghouse in 2001 identified only two programs specifically working with men from non English speaking backgrounds. Bhattacharjee (2000) writes about working with men from the Lao, Vietnamese, Khmer and Chinese communities on issues of child abuse and domestic violence and argues the need for a different approach from that adopted by mainstream services, such as the use of conjoint counselling. An ethno-specific group for men who abused their partners was developed and delivered in cooperation with the Vietnamese community (Melvin, 1998; Melvin, Muller, Chapman, Shine, & Edwards, 1999). In the Australian literature, the utility of simply 'adapting' mainstream programs, as opposed to working with communities to develop suitable programs, has been questioned (McCallum, 2000).

In the international literature, Almeida and Durkin (1999) are among the few to address the issue of cultural diversity in perpetrator programs. They

describe what is termed the 'cultural context model' for intervention. This work is unique in describing an approach with men who use violence which works simultaneously at the individual and socio-cultural levels of intervention. Links are formed with relevant communities to recruit 'cultural consultants' who participate in the intervention system (1999, p. 319). Socio-cultural education process via separate 'culture circles' for women and men are the first stage of intervention. This model addresses intimate partner abuse within a context which also explores the contexts of migration history, colonisation and racism and so provides an example of an approach which addresses 'multiple oppressions while addressing personal responsibility'. (Almeida & Bograd 1991 cited in Bograd, 1999, p. 284)

Increasing the safety of women and children

Since most programs state that increasing the safety and well being of women and their children is their key goal (Keys Young, 1999), developing methodologies to assess the extent to which this is achieved, is clearly an important priority. Two of the studies discussed in this paper addressed this goal by using women's reports as their main outcome measure of program effectiveness. Both studies (Dobash et al., 1999; Gondolf, 2002a) gathered qualitative data and also developed tools for collecting standardised data about women's feelings of safety and quality of life following their partners' participation in a program.

Austin and Dankwort (1999a) and Gregory and Erez (2002) note that women's reports are often included in studies of perpetrator programs with the limited purpose of verifying the men's self reports of re-assault and change. They suggest that the perceptions of partners of men in perpetrator programs should be studied with a broader focus to better understand women's perspectives on these programs.

Austin and Dankwort interviewed 25 women within a year of their partners completing a Canadian Batterer Intervention Program (BIP) which was attached to a women's refuge and based on the model developed by Jenkins (1990). All but three of the men participated voluntarily in the program. At the time of the interview, 16 women were living with their partners, and nine were separated from them. The results indicated that most of the women experienced some positive changes in their lives after their partners completed the program. Although most of the women indicated that they felt safer:

…most women said that they still remained somewhat fearful of their partners, even if they felt safer. More than half the women stated that they would likely never feel completely safe for two reasons. First they feared that changes their partners had made would not last, indicating that feeling

safer might be only a temporary condition….Second, the women feared that a reduction of the abuse did not mean it would ever cease completely, introducing the idea that a relative change in safety was not adequate for the security and well-being they required. (p. 33)

Only two women reported that they felt no increase in personal safety with their partners. In both cases, the women said that they were separating from their partners and that they had been supported in this decision by the program counsellors. These women reported that the program had helped them to make the decision not to continue the relationship. One said: 'The program saved my life. I would have taken him back, and taken him back, and eventually, I would have been killed'. (Austin & Dankwort, 1999a, p. 34) This outcome demonstrates the complexity of evaluating program effectiveness. These two men were judged by the program counsellors to have made no positive changes, yet the outcome reported by the women was extremely positive in addressing the goal of increasing safety.

Three quarters of the respondents reported a sense of enhanced well-being after their partner's involvement in the program, this being associated with factors such as increased positive self-esteem and feelings of empowerment or relief that the program was now shouldering some of the burden of supporting their partners. Other benefits described by the women were the validation which they received from the program counsellors, the fact that they were not blamed for the abuse they had experienced, and the information which they received about the abuse, such as the abusive nature of forms of behaviour other than physical assault. The authors conclude:

These findings additionally illustrate how BIPs can be experienced as a positive resource by battered women, even if their partners make few, if any, changes towards non-violence. For example, women's feelings of validation and their increased knowledge of abuse were evidence of the strategic role that BIPs can play in providing battered women with crucial information, validating their realities of abuse, and assisting them in acquiring a sense of trust in their own capability to make decisions about their lives…once their male partners are unequivocally identified as solely responsible for their abusive behaviour by program facilitators, battered women can feel a greater sense of self-worth and gain empowerment. (Austin & Dankwort, 1999a, pp. 38-39)

Gregory and Erez (2002) conducted a similar qualitative study, interviewing 33 women about their reactions to their partners' participation in a perpetrator program. However, in this study, the men's participation in the program was court mandated. A majority of the women reported positive outcomes from their partner's participation. For example, 55 per cent of the women reported that the

program completely eliminated physical violence. Nevertheless, in a finding similar to the previously described study, 'most women remained cautious and did not completely rule out further abusive outbursts'. (p. 227) Given that the men's participation was court mandated, it is important to note the finding that over three quarters of the respondents reported experiencing fear and anxiety at the time the man commenced the program, because of his anger at being compelled to attend. Hence, the authors argue that safety planning and support services need to be actively offered to women in the initial stages of their partner's involvement in a perpetrator program.

The evaluation of the second phase of the ACT Family Violence Intervention Program (urbis keys young, 2001b) includes a survey of victims. The survey explored the nature of the abuse experienced by the women, their perceptions of the policing and prosecution of their case and their views about the outcome of their case. It also explored the women's perceptions of safety from further family violence after the completion of the case:

Most victims (57%) felt either 'very safe' (18%) or 'fairly safe' (39%). However, a substantial proportion (41%) reported feeling 'not very safe' (23%) or 'not at all safe' (18%). (urbis keys young, 2001b, p. 83)

The finding of the Gondolf study that very few women partners of men in the perpetrator programs studied accessed assistance for themselves – despite experiencing long-term, severe violation and abuse (Gondolf, 2002b) – raises many challenges and questions for perpetrator programs and for women's services. Each of the programs in the study was part of a coordinated community response to domestic violence and it was anticipated that women's help seeking would be enhanced through their contact with victim advocates in the criminal justice system. Gondolf notes that the extensive literature on women's help seeking has not to date specifically addressed the women partners of men in perpetrator programs. At the 15-month point in the follow-up study, Gondolf found that only eight per cent of the women partners had contact with a women's program during more than one of the three month follow-up periods. Further, this contact was 'primarily in response to repeated reassaults… mostly "reactive" as opposed to preventive'. (Gondolf, 2002b, p. 219) In exploring the reasons for this, the study found that 59 per cent of respondents reported that they did not perceive a need for additional services, and almost half of these reported that they used support from family and friends and church members rather than from specialist domestic violence services. Further, most of the women (70 per cent) reported that they did not want additional services from the perpetrator programs.

A number of explanations are canvassed for the low

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service utilisation by women partners of men in perpetrator programs, given the severe and long-term nature of the abuse most had experienced prior to their partner's referral to the programs. It may reflect the reduction in the men's violence and abuse, the effects of having been subjected to severe abuse, or the women's sense of self determination and agency.[24] Only one of the four sites (Denver) in the Gondolf study employed women's service co-ordinators at the time of the study. Women partners of men in this program were found to be twice as likely to seek additional counselling or support services (Gondolf, 2002a). Consequently, Gondolf recommends that increased resources be made available for outreach services to the women partners of men referred to perpetrator programs.

The Central Violence Intervention Program (VIP) in Adelaide is an example of an Australian coordinated response to domestic violence which includes outreach to women (The Central Violence Intervention Program, 2000). The VIP is an integrated, collaborative and co-ordinated interagency response which includes the criminal justice system. Key aims are to promote the safety of women and children and to challenge men's use of violence against women and children (Central Violence Intervention Program, 2002). Assistance is offered to women on referral of their (ex)partner by the court, and a service is provided whatever the outcome of their partner's assessment for, or participation in, the program. A recent evaluation (Power & Kowanko, 2001) demonstrated the potential for women's programs which are part of a co-ordinated response to achieve their goals in relation to the core principles of promoting safety, responsibility, respect and empowerment. However, the evaluation highlighted the necessity for this intensive work with women to be adequately resourced. This is particularly important given the finding that 50 per cent of the women who received a service from the Central Violence Intervention Program had not previously had contact with a domestic violence service, highlighting the importance of outreach:

Most of the women were directly contacted by the CVIP women's worker, and acknowledged that they

would not have been assertive or confident enough to make the initial contact themselves. (Power & Kowanko, 2001, p. 18)

The impact of perpetrator programs in women's lives can be powerful, beyond the changes that their partners may make. For example, women who have been holding onto hope for change in their partner receive new information about his commitment to taking responsibility through the quality of his participation in the program. For some women, the support offered to their partner by the program provides a 'breathing space' in which to consider their needs and to take stock of the relationship. One perpetrator program evaluation suggested that for some women, the man's participation in a program may provide a way for her to leave the relationship safely (Shaw et al., 1999). Clearly, further research is required to better understand the range of impacts for women of their partners' participation in a perpetrator program.

Conclusion

Currently in Australia there is considerable interest in developing programs for perpetrators of domestic and family violence. Working with men who use violence is one of the priority areas in phase two of the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative, and policy and best practice frameworks are being developed by a number of States and Territories (e.g. Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, 2000; Golding, 2001; Office of Women's Policy Victoria, 2001). For many years it has been said that the effectiveness of such programs is unknown. The recent international evaluation studies cited in this paper provide sound guidelines about the ways in which evaluation strategies could be built into newly developing programs to address the shortcomings of previous evaluations and to focus research on outcomes for women and children.

It is also important to identify the ways in which Australian programs are developing which are different to overseas models. An example is men's group work using narrative models of therapy which offer new possibilities for engaging men beyond 'confrontation' and 'education'. (Northern Metropolitan Community Health Service, 1997). In the Australian context, division of programs into 'mandatory' and 'voluntary' does not encompass programs which take referrals from the criminal justice system, but which only accept men who choose to participate following their referral and participation in an assessment process (e.g. Central Violence Intervention Program, 2002).

The key message from the international research on program effectiveness is that, as Gondolf states so clearly, 'the system matters'. Programs for perpetrators are but one component of the co-ordinated

response which is required to hold men accountable and to enhance the safety of women and children. This presents challenges for programs which operate outside of the criminal justice context to build alternative systems of accountability and to develop links with women's and other services. While debates have focused on the relative value of interventions based on socio-political and psychological approaches, as outlined earlier in this paper, Gondolf (2002) suggests that the major focus of efforts to intervene with men who use violence must be on building strong systems within which these programs are located.

At the start of this paper, debate about the levels of intervention was discussed. In their recent book, Dobash et al. (2000, p. 5) address the controversy about levels of intervention by framing efforts to end men's violence towards women as a 'transformative project', which is, they argue, 'of necessity, both broad and narrow in focus and both general and specific in nature'. They go on to outline this project:

The transformative project contains at least three general arenas that must be effectively addressed in seeking a solution. It is simultaneously a project of personal transformation for those who use violence and for those who are its victims; it is a project of institutional transformation for organizations that provide assistance to victims of violence or intervene with respect to those who use violence; it is a project of social and cultural transformation of public orientations to this violence and the tolerance of it…While this three-part vision may not be embodied in every specific intervention or response, all three parts must be present in the overall complement of responses that make up the wider transformative project the goal of which is to end this form of violence… (Dobash et al, 2000, pp. 5-6)

Feminists, who, through the refuge movement, began the modern movement against domestic violence, provided the template for such a transformative process. While they responded to the needs of individual women for safety and support, they linked this work with individual women to the need for change at the broader societal level. They focused on gender inequity, the attitudes which support it and at the legal and institutional changes necessary to name domestic violence as a crime and to hold men accountable and to make services responsive to women's needs for safety. It might well be asked of any program that works with individual men to assist them to take responsibility for their violence, how well it articulates the connections of this work at the individual level with efforts at the institutional and social levels.

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Endnotes

1   This paper deals with men who are violent in their intimate relationships since this is the most common form of domestic violence (Taft, Hegarty, & Flood, 2001). An emerging body of literature explores the differences between male and female perpetrators of domestic violence and interested readers are referred, for example, to Hamberger et al. (1997). For initial research on differences between women identified by the legal system as 'batterers' and 'victims', see Abel (2001).

2   There is considerable debate about the terminology used to describe 'domestic violence', including use of the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. For a discussion of these debates and issues see Office of Women's Policy Victoria (2001) and the introduction in Laing (2000). In summary, the strength of the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator' is that they make clear the power relationship in which abuse occurs. However, they have the disadvantage of portraying women as passive victims and men as abusers, thereby narrowing the perception of possibilities for change. The term 'perpetrator' is the most commonly used one in Australia (Keys Young, 1999), while in the USA, 'batterers' is commonly used. This paper will use several terms interchangeably as used in the references cited.

3   Generally the term 'mandated' refers to attendance at a program as part of an order issued by a court, while 'voluntary' refers to attendance without legal requirement. In Victoria, the term 'directed participant' is preferred to 'mandated' (Office of Women's Policy Victoria, 2001).

4   However, Mankowski, Haaken and Silvergleid (2002, p. 173) argue that the Duluth model is, in fact, both therapeutic and skill building, rather than purely educational.

5   See Holder, R. 2001 'Domestic and Family Violence: Criminal justice Interventions', Issues Paper 3, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, UNSW for a detailed discussion of co-ordinated community responses.

6   John Duncan, Central Violence Intervention Program, personal communication.

7   Dissociation is a coping mechanism which is functional in situations of extreme trauma because it enables detachment from feelings which would otherwise be overwhelming. However, what in childhood is a protective response in the face of traumatic events, becomes an unhelpful pattern of responding in adulthood.

8   See page 13

9   Response rates for men were low: 50% for the control group and 61% for controls; and lower for

women: 30% of partners of men in the treatment group and 11% of partners of controls.

10 There is contention about the use of this model. Participation rates by the women were very low.

11 Response rates at each of the four interview times were: 86%; 82%; 78%; 75% (percentages for spouse or perpetrator were not supplied separately).

12 However, the study included only cases in which the prosecutor, defendant and judge agreed that treatment was appropriate. Men entering treatment were not volunteers, as they were offered a plea agreement to enter treatment. The authors acknowledge that their recruitment process probably filtered out men who were unmotivated to attend a program. Feder and Dugan (2002) point out that during the one year period in which men were entered into this study, more than 11,000 domestic violence cases were dealt with in this jurisdiction, highlighting the impact of this filtering on the sampling.

13 Men were referred to one of five batterer programs, each of which was county certified to provide batterer treatment, and each of which was conducted in line with the Duluth model.

14 Survey completion rates for victims were 50% at adjudication; 30% for the first interview (six months post adjudication); and 22% at 12 months.

15 At intake, the 'Men's Program' group comprised 98 (51 men and 47 women) and the 'Other CJ' group comprised 168 (71 men and 97 women).

16 See Holder, R. 2001 'Domestic and Family Violence: Criminal justice Interventions', Issues Paper 3, *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse*, UNSW for a detailed discussion of this body of research.

17 Summaries are available on the Internet, at the web site of the Mid-Atlantic Addiction Training Institute, Indiana University of Pennsylvania: www.iup.edu/maati/publications, and in a book (Gondolf, 2002a).

18 The study achieved a 68% response rate from the women at the 15-month mark, and a female partner of a man in the program was interviewed at least once during the 15-month follow-up in 79% of cases. The extended follow-up (from 15-48 months) included only the 618 court mandated participants. The response rate for women partners of this group was 67% at 30 months and 58% at 48 months.

19 The Duluth program has been critiqued for failing to hold men accountable for sexual violence, in the same way that physical violence is addressed (Yllo, 1999).

20 For example, does safety refer to an absence of danger or do they look at the impact on women's lives and seek information on all aspects of the woman's safety including being able to have opinions and being able to speak her mind? (Dallas Colley, personal communication).

21 Rates for reassault at 15 months post intake were: African-American 32%, Anglo 31%, Latino, 18%. Proportion of partners feeling 'very safe' were Anglo, 74%; African American, 73% and Latino, 81%. The researchers noted that it was difficult to compare arrest rates because of policing practices with African-American men at the Pittsburgh site (Gondolf, 2002a, p. 120-121).

22 Restorative justice is known by a number of other names including communitarian justice intervention, conferencing and family group conferencing.

23 The following definition is taken from the web site of Centre for Effective Collaboration and Practice: 'Cultural competence is defined as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Cross et al., 1989; Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991)…There are five essential elements that contribute to a system's ability to become more culturally competent. The system should (1) value diversity, (2) have the capacity for cultural self-assessment, (3) be conscious of the 'dynamics' inherent when cultures interact, (4) institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) develop adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of diversity between and within cultures. Further, these five elements must be manifested in every level of the service delivery system. They should be reflected in attitudes, structures, policies, and services.' http://cecp.air.org/cultural/ accessed 28/08/02).

24 The different views of abused women are explored in Clearinghouse issues paper 4: 'Working with women: exploring individual and group work approaches'.

Acknowledgments

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