

1-1-2010

Gendered Perceptions of Batterer Intervention Co-Facilitation

Dorothy Lynne Boston

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Gendered Perceptions of Batterer Intervention Co-Facilitation

Dissertation submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University

In Partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the
degree of Doctor of Psychology

By

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May 2010

Abstract

Gendered Perceptions of Batterer Intervention Co-Facilitation

By Dorothy Boston

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the experience of co-facilitating male batterer intervention groups as reported by male and female facilitators and to identify how that experience differs along gender lines, given that dual-gender facilitation is an expectation of licensing standards that has not been researched. The following research questions were asked: 1) are there notable differences in how co-facilitation of male batterer intervention groups is experienced by males and females, 2) are females more sensitive to and affected by issues of power and control within the facilitation process than their male peers, and 3) is it more challenging for females to maintain a position of authority within the group process than it is for their male peers? Semi-structured interviews were completed with eleven co-facilitators of licensed batterer intervention groups, and data was compiled regarding their reported experiences. Results indicate that male and female facilitators identify success in similar ways and maintain motivation for this line of work in similar ways. Males and females both reported heightened awareness of power and control issues in relationships and interactions, but for female facilitators this reflected an increased awareness of female power and control strategies. Males and females both value dual-gender co-facilitation, and both are targets of attempts at collusion, but males are more likely to be approached with camaraderie by group members whereas females are more likely to be approached with compliments or attempts at flirtation. Contrary to expectations, power and control issues between male and female co-facilitators did not arise as an issue. Female facilitators were found to maintain authority within the group

process. The main finding of this study is that dual-gender facilitation represents a best practice in batterer intervention from the perspective of facilitators.

Acknowledgments

The best part about writing this dissertation was the opportunity to meet and talk with the folks who gave their time to be interviewed. Their willingness to share their insights and experiences has resulted in a piece of work that I hope will be useful to others who choose to work or do research in the field of batterer intervention. Thanks to each and every one of you, and thank you for the work that you do. Your commitment and dedication are inspiring.

Dr. Wendy Williams, my committee chair, has been of invaluable assistance in conceptualizing and completing this study through the course of multiple revisions. For your encouragement, support, and ever-tactful feedback, I thank you. Dr. Pamela Mulder and Dr. Chris LeGrow have also served on my committee. Thank you both for your patience and willingness to participate in this very long process.

Thanks also go to my family – my husband Steve and my children, Ruthie, Kris, and Misty. Thank you all for your patience and understanding. For all the days that I spent off interviewing people, reading, writing, researching, and generally being totally distracted, thank you for being accepting and tolerant. Steve, I appreciate your willingness to listen, and your patience and support. Finally, a special thanks to Ruthie. Without your assistance I would not have been able to complete this study.

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Gendered Perceptions of Batterer Intervention Co-Facilitation

In the United States nearly 5.3 million incidents of intimate partner violence occur each year involving women ages 18 and older (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The statistics on loss of life are dramatic. According to Berry and Bradley (2000), the Federal Bureau of Investigation reports that four women a day are murdered by their male partners, and the second leading cause of death for women between the ages of 15 and 24 is homicide. Aside from the personal costs of injury and loss of life, domestic violence occurs at a high cost to society; related healthcare costs alone are more than \$4 billion each year (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, September 25, 2007, Economics section, para. 1). When confronted with figures detailing the high cost of domestic violence, both in terms of dollars and human suffering, the need for effective strategies to intervene in domestic violence is compelling.

Domestic violence intervention approaches are shaped by research and activism focused on eliminating male power and control over women, and delivered through an approach that combines feminist and cognitive-behavioral theories of the causes of domestic violence (Healey, Smith, & O'Sullivan, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993). In this approach domestic abuse is seen as a crime inflicted on victims – usually female – with the intent of controlling, dominating, and intimidating them. Thus, gender relationships and issues of power and control within them are the primary focus of batterer intervention groups. The most widely adopted model of domestic violence and batterer intervention, the Duluth model, uses a cognitive psycho-educational approach to challenge male authority in relationships and teach group participants skills that support egalitarian, healthy relationships (Healey, Smith, & O'Sullivan, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

It is a central assumption of most batterer intervention programs that co-facilitation by male and female facilitators is good practice because it is assumed to provide a model for egalitarian relationships, yet a search of the literature does not reveal any investigation of the impact or role of gender relationship modeling by facilitators in batterer intervention. Batterer interventions are a relatively new development, however, and the most effective means of addressing domestic violence as a public health issue are still being investigated. Unfortunately, though numerous studies have investigated the effectiveness of some components of coordinated community responses to batterer intervention, no curriculum or standard program approach has been demonstrated to be more effective in reducing the likelihood of continued battering than any other (National Institute of Justice, 1998). Thus, the current study is designed to examine co-facilitator perceptions of gender relationship modeling in the process of group intervention by seeking to provide details regarding the way in which critical issues of gender, power, and control are experienced within the co-facilitation process.

What Is Domestic Violence?

Some women are brutalized by their partners, whereas some couples are mutually violent. A ground-breaking analysis by Johnson (1995) compared and contrasted community and clinical samples selected for the presence of male violence. His findings suggest that the differences in gender patterns reflect two different types of violence, rather than one single phenomenon called domestic violence.

Johnson (1995) named the two primary patterns he observed *patriarchal terrorism* and *common couple violence*. Patriarchal terrorism is the systematic use of assorted techniques, both violent and nonviolent, to gain control over an intimate partner. The violence associated with patriarchal terrorism is more likely to escalate over time, occur more frequently, and result

in serious injury. Patriarchal terrorism involves the unilateral use of violence by one partner, predominantly men (Swan & Snow, 2002). Rates of this type of violence are estimated to range from 0.2% to 1.1% annually in the United States population (Straus, 1990).

Common couple violence, on the other hand, usually represents an intermittent response to a specific disagreement or conflict; these are brief, reactive incidents. There is no pattern of pervasive efforts to gain control over a partner. The violence is less severe, less frequent, and more likely to be mutually inflicted. Compared to patriarchal terrorism, common couple violence is less likely to escalate over time and these incidents are less likely to result in the involvement of legal authorities. The majority of intimate partner violence incidents would be considered common couple violence (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000).

This is not to say that women are as violent toward their partners as men. Johnson and Ferraro also identified two additional patterns of domestic violence: *violent resistance* and *mutual violent control*. Violent resistance is aggression by a person who is not controlling toward one who is controlling. This is committed almost exclusively by women who are partners of men who are patriarchal or intimate terrorists. Finally, mutual violent control is a pattern of domestic violence in which both partners are violent and controlling; this is the least common type in his sample (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000).

Domestic violence is a broad category, but Johnson and Ferraro's (2000) work reveals that abusive relationships may vary along lines of coercive control and emotional abuse, as well as physical violence. Patriarchal terrorism is a pattern of behavior that includes the elements of domination, power, and control that distinguish it from common couple violence. Most female perpetuated domestic violence does not contain these elements. Women are more likely to use

violence in response to ongoing abuse by their partner, rather than as an attempt to intimidate and control their partner (Kernsmith, 2005; Hamberger & Guse, 2002; Smith, 2003). These distinctions are important, because interventions are designed and delivered with the stated intent of addressing issues of power and control in relationships, reflecting a specific focus on domestic abuse rather than the more broadly defined domestic violence. It is an implicit assumption of standard interventions that domestic abuse reflects a pattern of male domination and control. This assumption is supported by the finding that 97% of patriarchal terrorists are men (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000).

Interventions

Feminists have been and continue to be the driving force behind domestic violence intervention, and so the dominant model of intervention for domestic violence used in the United States has been shaped by a feminist perspective. The feminist model sees domestic abuse as an outgrowth of the manner in which both genders are socialized. Batterers are thought to have the intent of controlling, dominating, and intimidating female victims. Feminists explicitly label domestic abuse as a crime (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Efforts to address domestic violence currently focus on the development of coordinated interagency and criminal justice efforts. Batterer intervention programs operate within the broader context of systemic responses to domestic violence. Intervention may actually begin with an arrest or the issuance of a restraining order, rather than enrollment in a program. Batterers may also be ordered into concurrent substance abuse intervention programs when they are ordered to attend batterers groups, and may be placed on probation. Victims may also be referred to support and advocacy services. Such system-wide, integrated criminal justice responses to domestic violence

are considered key supports to the effective delivery of batterer intervention programs (National Institute of Justice, 1998).

Program format. The Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project was the first multi-disciplinary program developed to directly address domestic violence (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Founded in Duluth, Minnesota in 1981 by community activists working through a collaborative project known as the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, it is often referred to simply as the "Duluth project," or the "Duluth method." The Duluth method has become synonymous with interventions for abusive men. Interventions through this approach are based on the idea that in our society men are socialized into assuming that they are entitled to power over women. Pence and Paymar (1993) state that "batterers, like those who intervene to help them, have been immersed in a culture that supports relationships of dominance" (p. 3). The model calls for the coordination of agencies addressing domestic violence situations by pulling together community resources including law enforcement, shelters for battered women, the judicial system, and corrections, thus constituting a systemic approach to intervention. As such, the Duluth method has become a model for other jurisdictions trying to address domestic violence issues.

Power and control. Questions of power and control are integral to batterer programs, and the use of strategies to address these issues is likely to be mandated by state standards regulating the licensure of batterer intervention programs. The Duluth project developed the "Power and Control Wheel" for use in groups. This widely used graphic is shaped like a wheel, with power and control at the center, surrounded by spokes representing techniques used by abusive males to maintain power and control (see Figure 1). It is an informational tool intended to help develop an understanding of the dynamics of power and gender in abusive relationships and to encourage identification of methods of coercion underlying abuse. The "Equality Wheel" is also used in

batterer intervention groups to illustrate concepts of equality in relationships. Its spokes represent non-violent, egalitarian behaviors and interactions (see Figure 2).

Group Structure. Batterer intervention programs typically use a group structure. Programs may run for as little as eight weeks or as long as 32 weeks, as required in West Virginia (West Virginia Code 191CSR2 7.9a, 2000). The popular manualized Duluth Method used by most programs is designed to last 26 weeks. Groups take an educational approach that relies on dialogue and the development of critical thinking skills rather than the banking of knowledge. Group participants are expected to share and examine their own behavior and to participate in educative exercises that encourage the identification and examination of power and control tactics.

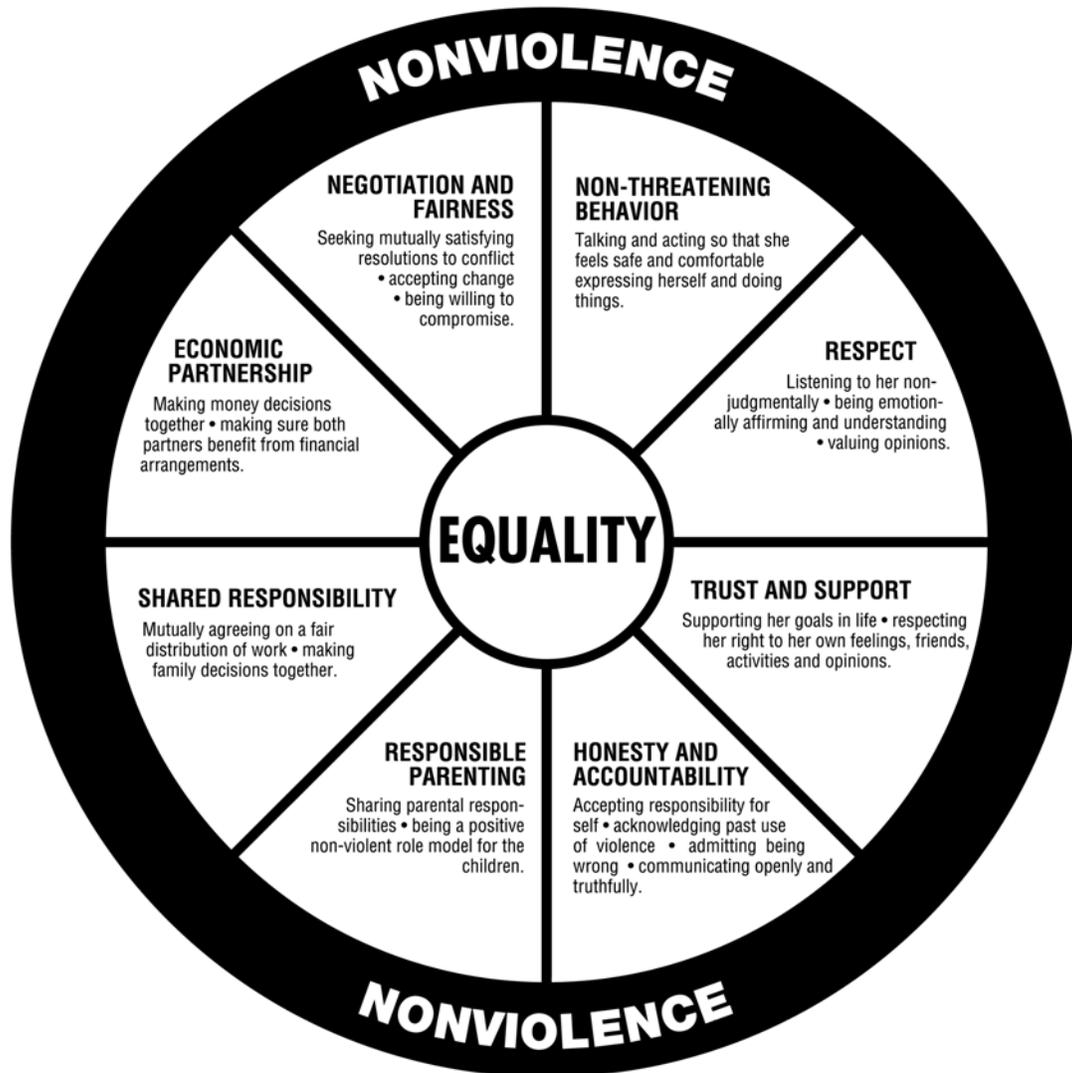
Co-facilitators. Intervention programs become licensed when they conform to state licensing standards. These standards reflect their origin in the battered women's movement and are relatively uniform in how domestic violence is viewed and the type of batterer intervention programs considered appropriate (Bennett & Piet, 1999). Many licensing standards for batterer intervention services prefer that facilitation of batterers groups should be performed by co-facilitators, including both a male and a female service provider (this is true in West Virginia, and a number of other states as well). The intent of including male and female co-facilitators is to model egalitarian relationships and to provide female monitoring of the group process. Mixed gender groups of offenders, however, are expressly ruled out by licensing standards. These kinds of groups are perceived as potentially dangerous for women participants because it may place them at a disadvantage since they are likely to be dealing with issues of victimization by male partners.



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781
www.duluth-model.org

Figure 1. The power and control wheel describes strategies used by batterers to gain and keep power and control over victims of domestic abuse.



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

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Figure 2: The equality wheel describes the non-violent behaviors and interactions characteristic of an egalitarian relationship.

Operational procedures. Licensing standards generally require policies that specify the means through which programs will accomplish intake of batterers, ongoing assessment of batterer risk, victim contact, orientation of group participants, group treatment, termination, and follow-up phases. Some professionals working in the field speculate that weekly contact and close monitoring of the batterer are the key components of intervention (Gondolf, 2001). From this perspective, the philosophy and curriculum matter less than the basic structure of the program. Although this remains unproven, the interests of criminal justice are served by licensing standards that require programs to formalize their operations. Through these basic operational procedures batterer behavior is monitored, violations of probation are reported, and any imminent threat to victims is reported to authorities and the victim (National Institute of Justice, 1998).

The Duluth method is by far the most widely used approach. Batterer intervention groups vary by location, size, composition, length of intervention, and the specific curriculum used, but certain commonalities exist in most states. These commonalities include a focus on power and control issues, a preference for co-facilitation by a male and a female, and a generally similar operational procedure, including intake, assessment of risk, victim contact, orientation, group treatment, termination, and follow-up phases (National Institute of Justice, 1998). Recognizing and accepting responsibility for abusive behavior by batterers is a central focus (Berry & Bradley, 2000). Besides the Duluth method, two other well known but less widely-used models are EMERGE and AMEND; they too incorporate strong feminist viewpoints with intensive group work.

Challenges in Evaluating Effectiveness

Batterer intervention programs are difficult to evaluate for effectiveness for two primary reasons. First, single sites may not be representative of other communities, given the range of components and services that may or may not be available. According to Gondolf (1999), a leading researcher in batterer intervention "...each system may be a unique adaptation to a peculiar set of resources, leadership and staffing, court procedures, and community expectations," (p.58). Batterer intervention programs may, for example, have access to concurrent victim treatment programs, substance abuse treatment for group participants, or mandatory status reporting procedures for convicted batterers in the community. Even if programs use an identical curriculum to conduct groups, significant aspects of intervention, like those listed above, may vary widely.

Because each community is different and thus offer varying services, outcome evaluations may overlook aspects of community response that are part of the intervention system, and attribute effects or lack of effects to programs incorrectly. For example, a widely cited report from the National Institute of Justice (2003) reviewing batterer intervention programs suggested that batterer intervention groups do not work. This conclusion was reached by examining recidivism rates and behavioral changes of batterers in programs that were ostensibly using the Duluth Model. This study examined only the batterer group component of treatment, but failed to indicate whether, or to what extent, the two treatment sites examined in the study were part of a coordinated community response. In contrast, Gondolf (2004) has stated that "Program effectiveness depends substantially on the intervention system of which the program is part" (p. 605). Gondolf's (2004) study included examination of community response issues as well as program design, implementation, and the context of re-offense. He found that

the Duluth-style, cognitive-behavioral approach is appropriate for most group participants, but timely and consistent court response for violations, more intense intervention for high-risk men, and ongoing monitoring of risk are warranted. Outcome evaluations thus require close review of processes within heterogeneous community response systems.

Second, methodological problems plague evaluation of batterer programs as well (Gondolf, 2001; Gondolf, 2004). Such problems include low response rates, short-term follow-ups, use of self-report measures, intervening variables, and lack of control groups. Even defining outcome measures is difficult. A reduction or cessation of physical violence is generally considered the optimal outcome, but this ignores the broader issue of non-physical means of exerting power and control abusively. Outcome measures may include self-report by batterers or their victims, arrest records, or complaints to law enforcement. These measures tend to underreport repeated violence, however, and they are ineffective if batterers relocate.

Research Findings

Despite difficulties in researching the effectiveness of batterer interventions, some research has been done on general effectiveness of these interventions. Gondolf (2004) completed a multi-site evaluation of programs conforming to Duluth model expectations with regard to curriculum and justice system involvement. He found that re-assault and abuse were decreased a year later and that the majority of men reached sustained nonviolence, with only about 20% continuing to re-assault.

Based on this limited data, it appears that batterer programs within a coordinated community response system contribute to a cessation of violence, at least in the short-term, but how and why this effect occurs is unclear. Moreover, the research does not indicate that one intervention system is better than any other, though the importance of the justice system response

has been established. Babcock, Green, and Robie (2004) completed a meta-analysis of 22 programs, evaluating treatment efficacy for participants in batterer intervention that incorporated both group treatment and a justice system response. The outcomes of controlled quasi-experimental and experimental studies was reviewed to test the relative impact of Duluth model, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and other types of treatment on subsequent recidivism. It was found that partner reports indicated a five percent increase in maintaining nonviolence for those batterers receiving treatment compared to those batterers who did not receive treatment; rates of nonviolence were 40% and 35% respectively. This five percent decrease in violence may appear to be an insignificant change, yet, as Babcock, Green, and Robie, note, “this would equate to approximately 42,000 women per year no longer being battered” (2004, p. 1044). In this study, the justice system response was reported to have the most significant impact, with group intervention increasing cessation of violence by five percent. Yet, no statistically significant difference was found between treatment approaches.

In the absence of conclusive research findings regarding effective treatment strategies and intervention mechanisms for dealing with batterers, the appropriate content of batterer interventions is left to debate. Standards typically require both a male and female co-facilitator and specify that the program must be designed to focus on the perpetrator’s behavior and the attitudes and values that contribute to the use of violence as a means of power and control. How these common elements relate to the cessation of violence is not clear. Meanwhile, states continue to write or maintain standards of licensing for batterer programs with standards that are not drawn from evidence-based practice. The standard calling for male and female co-facilitation is among these. Gender relations are the primary focus of the major intervention approaches, and co-facilitation by a male and female is considered good practice, despite the lack

of research on the impact of gender relationship modeling by facilitators during batterer intervention.

This study will examine the co-facilitation of batterer groups by males and females, to investigate how intervention with batterers is experienced by male and female co-facilitators. Although some research has been conducted investigating the use of psycho-educational approaches, cognitive-behavioral men's groups, anger management, and couples' therapy, a review of the literature does not reveal any research that has been done on the use of male and female co-facilitators. Given that domestic violence is defined as inherently a gender issue and that interventions focus specifically on attitudes and values related to gender perceptions, it is reasonable to question whether perceptions of the process vary by gender, and how these are experienced by male and female facilitators.

Preliminary Investigation

In 2006 a brief qualitative study investigating the service delivery system for batterer intervention in West Virginia was conducted by the author, with the intent of determining how batterer intervention is typically implemented in the state, whether services are provided within a context that is consistent with feminist theory, and whether there is any system for evaluating the effectiveness of batterer intervention programs. Data were collected through observation of a batterers group on four occasions, one ethnographic interview with the director of the state-wide batterer intervention system, and one ethnographic interview with a male facilitator from a batterers group. The author reviewed and analyzed the data using an inductive method, and major themes were identified.

The programs on which data were collected incorporated a educative components into a

group format. Group participants were taught feminist perspectives on abuse, and taught to use cognitive-behavioral techniques to improve interpersonal functioning. Facilitators used didactics and discussion to explore issues related to participants' significant relationships and issues of power and control. The curriculum was based on the Duluth method. Themes emerged within the group through review of personal events by group members, group discussion of events, and group exercises in which both real and hypothetical situations, as well as fictionalized depictions of domestic violence, were analyzed by the group. Egalitarian relationships were referenced as desirable goals by the facilitators, and frequent reference was made to issues of power and control in the personal relationships of the group participants. Groups were facilitated by male and female co-facilitators. In short, the program appeared to meet the intent of licensing standards.

During this pilot study, the author observed interactions between facilitators that raised questions about gender relationship modeling by the facilitators. For example, on at least two occasions during limited observations of the group process, the male facilitator made statements undermining the female facilitator's role in the group process. On one occasion in particular, after the male facilitator had made some rather lengthy remarks on power and control in a vignette being reviewed, the female facilitator made a single statement noting some aspect of control not noted by the male facilitator. The male facilitator then said to her "We know that *you* know this stuff, let's see what someone else has to say." In this way, he effectively shut the female facilitator out of the discussion. If such occurrences are common, they may impact how group participants perceive female facilitators and the intervention process, and affect how the female facilitator experiences facilitation, work with a male co-facilitator, and work with batterers in general.

The Problem

Across the United States batterer intervention programs are developed and funded in a variety of ways, but some basic elements of their structure and intent are common across programs. These common elements include a focus on issues of power and control and the use of male and female co-facilitators. Licensing standards usually rule out the development of mixed gender intervention groups, but express preference for the use of mixed gender facilitation. Females are not group members because they might be at a disadvantage since they may be dealing with issues of victimization, and there is an implicit assumption in the standards requiring male and female co-facilitators that female co-facilitators are not placed at a disadvantage with regard to male facilitators or male group participants. A search of the literature yields no research in this area, and the pilot study cited above suggests that the authority of female facilitators could possibly be undermined by male facilitators at times, thus providing a model of interaction contrary to that expected by licensing standards.

Licensing standards also usually require some level of qualification for facilitators, such as a bachelor's degree, and training in an accepted intervention system, such as the Duluth method, or EMERGE, or AMEND models. Yearly continuing education training is also typically required. Thus, facilitators continue to be trained to recognize and address issues of power and control, but a literature search yields no research on the effectiveness of training for facilitators, or what constitutes effective facilitation of batterer interventions.

The central concern raised by these observations is that female facilitators may be placed in a problematic role given that they are expected to function as leaders within groups of males who are grappling with issues of entitlement and dominance. Licensing

standards prefer that programs have women in place as facilitators. How are they able to maintain authority in this setting? Are they able, along with their male co-facilitators, to effectively model the egalitarian relationships expected by the standards requiring co-facilitation? How does male and female co-facilitation affect the process and experience of intervening with batterers? The current literature does not yield any answers to these questions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to explore the how the perceptions of and experiences with co-facilitation of batterers' intervention services differ by gender. This research allowed a close examination of the practice of male/female co-facilitation in batterer intervention, widely considered a best practice despite a lack of research.

Specific hypotheses were:

1. There will be notable differences in how co-facilitation is experienced by males and females.
2. Females will be more sensitive to and affected by issues of power and control within the facilitation process than their male peers.
3. It will be more challenging for females to maintain a position of authority within the group process than it is for their male peers.

This section reviews the method of analysis, subject selection, and the data collection process that was used in this study.

Method of Analysis

A qualitative method was used in this study because there was need for rich description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation, which are aspects noted as strengths of a qualitative approach (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In particular, rich description was the goal rather than analysis using predetermined categories in this study (Patton, 2002). Qualitative methods provided depth and detail that would not have been obtained in a quantitative study by allowing for a deeper understanding of the experience of co-facilitation of batterers' intervention.

Moreover, this study was designed using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology refers to a person's perception of the meaning of events (Leedy, Ormrod, & Wergin, 2005). This type of approach seeks to create an understanding of an individual's perceptions, perspectives, and personal understanding of an experience. As such, it was a good method for examining group facilitation from the view point of the co-facilitator.

Patton (2001) states that phenomenology examines how a person or group of people translate the meaning, structure and essence of a lived experience into consciousness. Phenomenological research begins with a description of the experience to be understood, usually obtained through an interview. The purpose of the interview is to obtain as faithful and detailed a description of the experience as possible (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003). The interview transcript is the raw data of research.

The researcher then suspends judgment or suppositions about the area of research (Moustakas, 1994). This requires the researcher to look at data without preexisting ideas, setting biases aside, and participating in epoche, or the suspension of judgment. In this study, the researcher had to set aside her own previous experiences with batterers' group facilitation in order to allow meaning to arise from the reported experiences of study participants. The

phenomenological method of research provided a logical and understandable way to develop essential descriptions of these experiences based on the experiences of a group of active facilitators of both genders.

Subjects of the Research

Participants were located through a combination of convenience sampling and snowball sampling. First, the author contacted a facilitator who is on the Family Protection Services Board. The author had previously met her while working as a facilitator herself. She was able to provide the author with a list of licensed programs in West Virginia. The author then called each program soliciting participants. Once individuals agreed to participate, they were asked if they knew of any other facilitators with licensed programs who might be willing to participate.

Participants were from four licensed programs around West Virginia. Three of these programs offer a variety of interventions that include some combination of domestic abuse shelters, community education and awareness programming, and batterer intervention groups, and one is a community day report center. From these programs, interviews were completed with five female facilitators and six male facilitators, for a total of eleven participants. Participants were all actively engaged as co-facilitators in licensed batterers' intervention programs at the time the interviews were conducted.

Of the eleven facilitators interviewed, ten consider themselves to be of White, European or Caucasian background, and one considers himself to be of a Hispanic background. Six facilitators reported that they are married, four are single, divorced, or separated, and one lives with a partner. Only one facilitator was below the age of 30 years. Four were between 30 and 40 years of age, two were between 40 and 50 years of age, and four were above 60 years of age. Educational information was not available on all participants, but it is known that at least five

have either attained graduate degrees or taken graduate level classes. Several participants did not respond to this question, but of those who did, the lowest level of education attained was an Associate Degree. Years of experience in facilitating batterer groups ranged from 1.5 years to 13 years, with an average of 5.8 years experience. Five years was the median. The number of groups facilitated ranged up to four per week. Facilitation of batterer groups is part of a primary job for eight of the eleven participants, and part of a secondary job for three. Seven facilitators are working full-time, and four are working part-time though possibly at more than one job. A brief biographical sketch of each participant was completed at the time of data analysis (see Appendix A).

Risk Protection and Confidentiality

There were no known risks associated with this study. It was assumed that subjects might not want to be identified due to their ongoing relationships with their employers, which were agencies and programs providing the batterers' intervention groups being discussed. Participants were all offered the opportunity to use pseudonyms, but all participants declined. A consent form was used to obtain agreement from subjects to participate in the study (see Appendix B).

Throughout this study, the confidentiality of participants was maintained by keeping all digital recordings, external media storage devices, and interview transcripts in a secure, locked location. Confidentiality was maintained by carefully storing the audiotapes in a secure, locked location.

Data Collection Procedures

In-depth, open-ended interviewing was used in this study to explore the experience of facilitating batterers' intervention groups in detail. This research was exploratory in that little is

known about how gender affects perceptions of the co-facilitation experience, how issues of power and control are perceived from within the facilitator's role, and how females maintain authority within the context of a batterers' group. For this study, general questions were framed regarding the experience of becoming and being a co-facilitator of batterers' groups.

Initial contacts were made via telephone, and interview scheduling was completed at that time, or during a later call-back. Interviews were scheduled at the participants' convenience and in areas convenient for them. Additional contacts were sometimes made to obtain additional logistical information and demographic information. All participants were informed of the potential for additional contact at the time of their interview. All agreed to be contacted later if necessary.

Interviews were conducted in person with each participant. Interviews ranged from approximately one hour to one and a half hours. Interviewees were asked the same set of general questions, with additional questions asked for elaboration as needed. This approach allowed for open conversation within the topic area, while ensuring that general topic areas were covered. The interview outline is included as Appendix C.

Social conversation is useful in creating a relaxed atmosphere for interviewing (Moustakas, 1994). The interviewer should create a situation in which the interviewee feels comfortable and willing to respond honestly and completely to interview questions. For this study, the researcher worked with participants to identify locations that were convenient and comfortable for them. Interviews were held variously in agency offices, police station offices, a restaurant, and a domestic shelter office. Distractions and interruptions sometimes occurred, but all interviews were successfully completed as scheduled, without undue disruption of the process.

Interviews were digitally recorded, transferred to a computer, and then transcribed for analysis. All participants were made aware of this process, and gave permission for digital recording at the time they gave consent to participate. Transcription was completed by the researcher with the assistance of a transcriptionist. Transcripts contained each interviewee's first name only, with no other identifying information.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the raw data of this study, the researcher followed a process of reduction. Participants' responses to interview questions were analyzed, with identification of major themes and sub-themes. The researcher's own experiences in co-facilitation were bracketed and set to the side, allowing participation in epoche, or unbiased participation in the process of listening to and understanding the experiences of the co-facilitators interviewed for this study. The researcher then listened to every tape and read each transcript multiple times, including those transcribed by the transcriptionist, in order to become totally immersed in the data.

The reduction phase of analysis for this study was completed through the repeated review of interview transcripts, the identification of key phrases, and interpretation of these phrases. Interviews were reexamined for textual portrayals of the identified themes. Themes and sub-themes were described structurally to relate the meanings of experiences shared by facilitators. Finally, the composite structural description and textual portrayals were integrated to achieve a synthesis of meanings and experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This process of analysis started with a close reading of each transcript, with preliminary notes made regarding prominent themes. The data was then reviewed again, with coding based on key ideas. This was done by looking for specific phrases or words in the text of each interview. In the final analysis, the text was

reviewed again to pick up nuanced references to relevant experiences and to select representative textual portrayals of the experience of being a co-facilitator of a batterers' intervention group.

RESULTS

The interviews conducted for this study were reviewed to obtain answers to three questions regarding the experience of facilitating batterers' intervention groups for these facilitators. These questions were: (1) are there notable differences in how co-facilitation is experienced by males and females, (2) are females more sensitive to and affected by issues of power and control within the facilitation process than their male peers, and (3) is it more challenging for females to maintain a position of authority within the group process than it is for their male peers? Each of these questions will be presented individually with specific responses highlighted to illustrate broader themes.

Question 1

Are there notable differences in how co-facilitation is experienced by males and females? To answer this question, three interview questions were reviewed. First, personal experiences and perceptions of co-facilitation were examined by looking at participants' reports on how they see and understand success with batterers. Second, participants were asked how they maintain motivation for their work, and third, they were asked about personal effects resulting from working as a co-facilitator. Although contrary to the author's hypotheses, review of interview responses suggests that, for the most part, male and female co-facilitators perceive and experience success and motivation in co-facilitation of batterers' groups in similar ways. They do, however, experience a difference in personal effects, supporting the author's hypothesis.

Success

Success of batterer intervention programs at the most basic level is evidenced by reductions in either the intensity or frequency of aggressive and violent behavior and/or promotion of safety (Day, Chung, O’Leary, & Carson, 2009). Even under this basic definition, it is difficult for the facilitators in this study to identify success. The reports of batterers and victims alike on recurrence rates are unreliable and offender tracking across jurisdictions is impractical, so lack of legal involvement is not a valid measure of success, as three facilitators pointed out. Karen notes:

If I had to give you statistics on how many guys I see back in group because they’re referred, it would be quiet low, but I don’t think it’s because a lot of them don’t need to be back there. I think it’s just because they didn’t get caught.

Joanne questioned the long-term effects of the group as well:

Now, once they’re out of the group, and they’re on their own again, you know, how much of this do they retain and process? See, that is a very difficult piece to monitor.

Sometimes facilitators learn about a former participant’s encounters with legal authorities, but the situation is not always clear-cut. Michael described an example of a group participant who had been rearrested:

I run into the guys. One of our better – one of our successes, when he got locked up again, just recently – he’s been out of our program for a year and a half – he came and told me right away, and his girlfriend works right behind here on a construction job that they were doing, and I asked about him, and it had nothing to do with domestic violence at all. And I thought he had made a lot of progress.

Michael’s remarks here reflect the relative nature of success in working with batterers. Facilitators do not have a set criterion for success. During this study, none of the facilitators attempted to report a success rate, or a specific, operational definition of success. Male and

female facilitators alike reported on observed changes in batterers' group members' behavior during the process of the group as their best indicator of success.

With regard to behavioral changes during the group, Brian reported that at the point that the group participants start to change their thinking, they begin to talk less during the group. He sees participants becoming quiet as an important sign.

When they are so thoughtful that they can't think of words or they are so...humiliated might not be the fairest word, but when they get it, or at least they get a little inkling in the pit of their stomach, they shut up. They don't try to make something up, or talk so that they don't have to put their finger on the target. I think that's when they grow. I like it when the guys talk, I like it a lot, but when they stop talking, that gives me a clue that they're getting it.

Joanne noted quietness among participants as well, reporting that:

You always worry about the quiet ones, but the quiet ones a lot of the time, with less to say, were usually the ones that were successful. It's the ones that do the most amount of talking, you know, talking about their situation and going on and on and a lot of the time trying to keep rationalizing, they couldn't get out of that. They couldn't rationalize, or see their responsibility in the scenario. They would to the extent that they would want to own it, but some of them not completely. But when they did own it completely, you could see that. That forward movement.

Seven of the eleven facilitators noted that if they are going to see change in group participants, it usually is observable about half-way through the 32 week course, though with some individual variation. Carrie observed that:

You do see some change, and I don't know that there's any one particular one, but I can see - we call them the back-rowers, because they're in order by their seniority, so the guys who have been in class the most are in the front and the new ones are in the back, and you can see the difference when you watch from the back row and when they get to the middle row and they start to change the way they're thinking, and they really start thinking about what they're doing.

Mike also reported on his observation that progress is often seen about half-way through the group process, but with a note of caution:

That almost always happens, once guys have been in there for – well, it's different amounts of time, for different people – but if they're alive, once they're more than half way through, they'll start answering, even if they don't agree with everything. There are some parts they'll agree with, or they know what our answer will be, and they'll provide that.

Mike's skepticism about whether genuine change is occurring is shared by other facilitators, and reflects a general mistrust of the information reported by group participants.

Nine of the eleven facilitators interviewed indicated that their perceptions of success with group participants are based on the self-report of the participants during the group regarding how they are handling situations in their personal relationships. This is not to say, however, that facilitators simply believe what group participants are telling them. As Mike noted:

I listen to what everybody says, but I don't necessarily believe anything. I'm sorry, it sounds crass, but they lie so much about what's going on or not going on at home.

The positive behavioral changes that batterers group participants report usually involve increased self-control in situations in which they previously may have resorted to violence or control strategies, or when they display more egalitarian behavior than they have previously displayed. In general, facilitators cannot rely on those self-reports because they have no way of knowing whether participants are truthful, so they must look for further evidence of change in the behavior displayed during the group.

Personal changes reported by group participants are seen as being more likely to be real when group participants also begin challenging other group members on their behavior or answering the questions of other group members, as Mike reports, "When there are lots of questions, when guys start answering each other, that's when I know. You know, I love that."

Hernando noted that “a lot of times it’s input from the clients that have been there longer that has more impact than anything I would have to say.” Carrie also sees interaction between participants as important:

The change is in the things that they say as far as a lot of guys in the front row will challenge things the guys in the back row are saying. So, that to me says they’ve started to recognize – the biggest one is when they get to the point of understanding that emotional and verbal abuse is abuse. That’s probably the biggest change we see. When we go from, “Well, I didn’t hurt her,” to understanding, “Yeah, what I did was abusive.”

Most of the facilitators shared minimal expectations for success, and low expectations for their impact on the behavior of group participants after they leave the group. They all, like Brian, seem to find their satisfaction in “seeing some of those smaller moments, the *aha* moments, when they get it.” For male and female facilitators alike, those small incidents that suggest an increased understanding or awareness taking shape within the group participants are the most accessible success experiences. Expectations for success are also limited in that facilitators share an understanding that they may not see desired changes in all of their group participants, as Carrie notes: “I know that they’re not all going to change, if I can get one to behave better, then I feel that I’ve been effective.”

The facilitators interviewed for this study, regardless of gender, communicated an awareness of the limits of what they can do to effect change for the participants of batterer groups, while maintaining some degree of optimism about their own involvement in creating conditions conducive to personal change for them. This was stated clearly by Troy:

My goals can’t be to change them. It’s just to provide them an opportunity to learn the things that will help them change. And from that, as long as we’re putting out good and honest information in place where they can safely learn it if they want to, then we’re doing our part. From that stand point, I say we’re batting a thousand. We’re putting on a good class. We’re putting on stuff that if they want to take home and use, they can. Now, whether or not they’ll do it, there’s nothing we can do about that.

Perceptions of success and the changes that lead toward success, then, are similar for male and female facilitators. In general, their best indicators of success are behavioral changes reported by group participants when taken together with observation of behavior within the group reflecting an increased understanding of the material presented and application of the concepts taught. In the absence of any way to quantitatively measure success, male and female facilitators alike look for signs of progress in the responses of participants as evidence of success.

Maintaining Motivation

Perhaps because success experiences are so limited, the process of batterers' intervention can at times be frustrating for group facilitators. As Chad reports:

It just depends on how the class has been because every night is a different night. Some days you have people that just won't cooperate, won't say a word, won't...and it's just, it's just painful.

All of the facilitator reported on experiences with groups that are difficult to manage, or that have argumentative members. Sometimes the challenges of the work outweigh the rewards, and facilitators begin to lose motivation, as Brian describes:

I have no illusions that making any kind of impact or real difference is easy. There are nights where I show up, and I'm guilty of thinking, "Well, if nobody shows up, I get to go home." I don't have to be on, I get to go home early. And that never happens when I most want it.

Karen's frustration with recalcitrant group members reflects the experience of other facilitators as well, in questioning the value of batterers groups:

The longer I'm in them [referring to groups] the more frustrated I get with their bullshit. It's the same thing over and over from a different guy, and sometimes the same guys, and I find myself burning out a little on that. You know, it's like, where is the change ever going to be in this world?

Although being able to take breaks from group facilitation was mentioned as helpful by six of the eleven facilitators interviewed, not all of them have that option. Two facilitators, Hernando and Karen, were both working in programs that did not afford them the opportunity to routinely take time away from doing batterers groups. In discussing how they maintain motivation, both shared a similar approach based on keeping potential outcomes in mind.

Hernando reported that:

I focus on the ones that are able to progress...not just in here, but particularly in working with other people in the community, and anytime anyone seems to put some of these concepts together, I try to think of the broader impact that could have not just on them, but on other people that they know, that can't possibly be measured and that I may never know about. Not only that, but you know, if it can improve the quality of their life somehow, that's also going to improve quality of other people's lives in other ways that I may never know about.

Karen focuses on potential outcomes as well, likening batterers' group facilitation to planting seeds:

I can have two or three weeks in a row where it just feels like I'm doing nothing. I am helping nothing. I am, you know, wasting my time, but then once in a while I'll have a guy who will say something new and different, and I think, you know, again, where, what's the bottom line here? Am I trying to plant seeds, or am I hoping to have, you know, oak trees to cut for lumber by the time I'm done? You know, if my goal is to build a house, then I'm really going to be sorely disappointed, but if my goal is simply to, you know, to put ideas and thoughts into their head that will someday click, then I am getting that done, and unless they're just sitting there acting like they're not there, and I can't help that.

Maintaining a focus on potential outcomes was mentioned by all facilitators, male and female alike, in some context during the interviews, but they all voiced some degree of frustration in working with batterers as well. Interestingly, in spite of the frustrating nature of the work, all of the facilitators voiced an intention to maintain some degree of involvement in batterers' intervention in the future, even when practical or logistical reasons for reducing involvement existed, such as travel distance or other work commitments. This was the case for

Joanne, Karen, and Carrie, who all decided to continue despite such obstacles. For Mike, batterers' group work is an activity he undertook in retirement, and although he noted that he couldn't continue forever, he reported he planned to continue for the time being. For Chad and Troy, group facilitation is not a primary job function but an activity they chose to undertake in addition to their regular duties as police officers. For Brian and Joanne, group facilitation is an activity undertaken in addition to work in other fields.

Clearly, facilitating batterers' groups offers some reward that keeps facilitators motivated. Rob had left group facilitation and then returned months later, and reported that although he had returned to facilitation "it really wasn't convenient, and I wasn't in it for the money. There's not that much money involved. It was actually inconvenient." Similarly, in examining his own motivation, Mike said "I must get something out of it. You wouldn't do something for ten years if you weren't getting something out of it." It was not clear, however, exactly what he is getting out of it, though he did remark on the rewards of working closely with a co-facilitator, reporting on his enjoyment of that working relationship. This was something Joanne, Judy, and Troy also reported for themselves.

In general, however, facilitator motivation seems to be fueled by occasional progress seen in group participants, combined with a firm belief in the rightness of the material being presented to group participants. Carolyn, regarding her experience in seeing changes occur in participants, said:

They come back in and they talk about situations that have been handled differently than they were before, and I can't tell you, I can't tell you why they get it, except that what we're giving them is right and true. You know, there's no question about that.

For facilitators, this confidence in the rightness of the material given to group participants is an article of faith that helps keep them going.

For one male and two female facilitators, personal experiences with abuse have also shaped their beliefs that small changes in batterers' group participants are worth the facilitators' efforts. Karen said:

Yeah, I see bloomers of some hope, and that kind of keeps me going, but I have personal motivation besides. As a victim – and I'm still with my same husband, and so I can see, you know - that there's a lot hope for these relationships.

Carrie and Troy both mentioned past experiences of abuse in their families, and spoke with similar conviction about personal change in group participants. This belief in the possibility of change is not limited to those with past experiences of abuse however. Joanne, for example, remarked on her belief in the participants' ability to change, saying: "There's a piece of good in everybody, and there's an ability to intentionally do better, to do well for yourself." This general belief in the ability of people to change was shared by all of the facilitators.

To some extent, a sense of duty also seemed to motivate facilitators, as if they were saying "I have to do this because it needs to be done." Hernando, the most experienced of the facilitators, voiced this most succinctly:

I would say that it became obvious to me that this was a badly needed type of service that many, many other people were extremely uncomfortable with and not wanting to get involved with, and I can certainly understand a lot of that. I'm not sure I ever thought of it as a life's calling or what have you, but certainly a niche that wasn't – If I wasn't doing it, it would fall by the wayside in all likelihood.

Although facilitation of batterers' intervention groups is frustrating for male and female facilitators alike, they are able to maintain motivation for the work and share a commitment to providing a needed service based on the beliefs that change can occur, and that even a small impact in the lives of individual batterers and victims has value.

Personal Effects

All of the facilitators interviewed reported positive changes in their personal functioning in some manner, and the experience of facilitating groups was generally seen as a learning experience. Rob said that, “I’ve learned so much that I’ve got, I feel like I got paid a little bit for taking a college course in domestic abuse, rather than paying someone else.” Carolyn stated that the group participants “have taught me as much as I have them, or more.” Changes were reported in both interpersonal and intrapersonal domains.

Gender similarities. With regard to intrapersonal effects, all eleven facilitators remarked on increased awareness of their own thinking and behavior. As Joanne noted, “You have to, you know, really sort through stuff, you know, be very introspective about what you’re thinking.” Chad stated simply that “It makes me more aware of everything that I do and say, that I can say.” This heightened awareness of what can or should be said reflects male and female facilitators’ increasing sensitivity to issues of power and control in all of their interactions with others.

Batterers’ intervention focuses closely on power and control in the relationships batterers have with significant others. Facilitators also apply the concepts they teach to their own relationships, as Troy relates:

Anybody could benefit from this class. I benefit from this class. I’m sure my marriage has benefited from me being in this class for nine years. I grew up in an abusive household, so I knew that in my adulthood there was going to have to be some kind of intervention. Instead of paying for therapy, I’m getting paid to do this. I benefit greatly. I’ll be sitting in class going over this stuff, and I’ll see something and realize that just the other day I totally screwed it up, and I’ll know I got to do better the next time I do that.

Brian reports on a similar experience in becoming more aware of his own behavior, and the effects it has on personal relationships:

If nothing else, it’s increased my awareness and appreciation for how I treat others, and if I’m irritable and short with my roommate, why don’t I just say “I

just got home from work, I had a long day, I need a couple of minutes,” rather than getting snappy. I catch myself in behaviors that aren’t okay, and that I challenge the guys on, and sometimes that ticks me off, but it’s a good thing. Who want their flaws pointed out, you know?

Hernando stated that being a facilitator could not “fail to make a person more sensitive to the impact of what they say and what they do, not just in domestic relationships but any relationship.” This is the commonly shared experience of the facilitators interviewed.

For Mike the experience of facilitating batterers’ groups was a culminating experience in a lifetime of increasing awareness of gender politics. He states:

I lived through, I worked, at the time of the peak of the Women’s Rights Movement, we’ll call it, not to call it something else, and I worked with well-educated, strong women. That was a while ago. That was really back in the middle of the 70’s, that I learned to watch what I said. I mean, down into the corners, okay? Not just blatant stuff. The less conscious things. I got an education over a number of years.

Even with his background of familiarity with egalitarian concepts, Mike reports on the effect that working with batterers’ intervention groups had on him:

I was very... the first couple of years, I was not comfortable with this thing at all. I didn’t... I was really bothered in my sleep. It would dominate my conversations to the point of being obnoxious to anybody I was talking to.

For Mike, who already considered himself enlightened about the rights of women, the material presented in his batterers’ groups became a preoccupation affecting his routine interactions with others; his remarks on the experience sound as though he had become almost evangelical in wanting to share what he had learned. Karen remarked on her own experience with increased awareness, and observed that others in the field appear to have had a similar experience:

It makes me a lot more aware. I can’t go teaching the guys something a couple nights a week, and then behave that way during the week. So I have really changed a lot of the ways that I think and behave that have nothing to do with what people consider abusive even, but they’re simply about the way I think about

things. I've changed that a lot, and I also am hyper-vigilant probably, about people's behaviors. It's like, yeah, that looks good, but who knows what's really going on there, you know? Or something that we may think is really good is really not. It shows a deeper symptom of something that's going on, and so I think a lot of people in domestic violence work get that way.

Other facilitators also alluded to the way that heightened sensitivity to power and control issues permeated their interactions as Mike and Karen describe.

Gender differences. For all of the facilitators, working in batterers' intervention has led to an increased awareness of their own behavior, and positive effects in personal relationships. Female facilitators, however, reported on personal change in particularly strong terms. Carolyn, for example, stated unequivocally, "Oh, it changed my life personally." Carrie reported that "it gave me a whole lot more confidence to deal with," noting that she had been raised to be submissive and not to challenge males, but that she is now able to, as she put it, "challenge the line." Female facilitators not only became more aware of power and control issues, but of their own ability to challenge those issues.

Female facilitators also reported on personal effects in terms of recognizing their own issues with trying to gain power and control. Karen noted that:

It's definitely changed the way that I think in my personal relationships. I'm constantly telling myself, "You know, you can't control people. You can't change how they feel. You need to let that go, and worry about yourself."

Judy reported on her in-depth training with the Duluth curriculum and the experience of examining her own behavior for control issues. She talked about the importance of facilitators being able to recognize their own issues with power and control in order to work with batterers because:

If you can't take a look at your own life and see the ways that you use or misuse power and control, or ways that it affects you in your every day life, then what is your point? Who is going to help them see it?

Thus, facilitators are taught to examine their own behavior through the standard Duluth curriculum.

Both male and female facilitators are getting the same training, and implementing similar groups, but there are differences in the way that personal change is reported, with female facilitators more likely to be empowered by their increased awareness of and ability to address power and control issues, and an increased awareness of uniquely female power and control strategies. It was hypothesized that males and females would experience co-facilitation in different ways, and although there are similarities in how the process is experienced, these findings indicate that there are in fact notable differences in the long-term personal effects of co-facilitation.

Judy also noted that the process of personal change for female facilitators is different than it is for males. She observed that power and control are not usually thought of as female issues.

Well, you see, we try to be pure as the driven snow, and it's really easy to say, "Well that's not an issue for women because women are usually the victims." Well, I have never bought that women can't be into power and, you know, be controlling and all that. Because I recognized in myself that I was in some ways. I mean, I was the boss. And when you're the boss, you see that.

Facilitators of batterers' intervention groups undertake their work with the assumption that they are addressing issues of power and control displayed by men who batter; that is the purpose and focus of batterers' intervention groups. Through training to be facilitators and in the course of practicing the skills that they teach, however, female facilitators begin to examine power and control issues from a feminine perspective, discovering the strategies that they use themselves to assert power and control. Judy reported on her own strategies:

And so, obviously, in the beginning, for me to use too much sarcasm or whatever, that would be a little bit like using a little bit of power and control issue thing, you know, a little bit of bad stuff going on there. So I had to grow out of that. Yep, I'm still working on it.

In order to determine whether the experience of facilitating batterers' groups is the same for male and female facilitators, personal experiences and perceptions of co-facilitation were examined with regard to how facilitators see and understand success with batterers, how they maintain motivation for the work, and the personal effects they think result from working as a co-facilitator. In general, success and motivation are understood and experienced in similar ways by male and female facilitators. The personal effects of being a batterers' intervention facilitator are also similar for males and females in that all of the facilitators reported a heightened sensitivity to or awareness of how their behavior impacts others, but for female facilitators this effect is a more notable experience because although all facilitators enter the facilitation process with an expectation that male power and control issues will be the focus of intervention, female facilitators examine their own behavior and begin to recognize female strategies of power and control. In addition, female facilitators may experience empowerment in challenging males when issues of power and control arise.

Question 2

Are females more sensitive to and affected by issues of power and control within the facilitation process than their male peers? For the second broad question, responses to three other interview questions were examined. Responses were reviewed regarding facilitators' opinions on the standard requiring co-facilitation by a male and a female, experiences with collusion, and experiences with issues of power and control within groups. Examination of the facilitators' responses indicated that, contrary to the hypothesis, females were not necessarily more sensitive to and affected by issues of power and control than their male counterparts were, though the

manner in which collusion was attempted by group participants differed according to the gender of the facilitator. Despite this, the experiences reported by facilitators was similar.

Male and Female Co-facilitation

The facilitators interviewed for this study were unanimous in their support of the licensing standard preference for programs providing male and female co-facilitation. As a group, the facilitators were in agreement with Troy, who said, “Well, I like the male-female co-facilitator standard. I think that’s excellent.” He noted that in male and female co-facilitation, “you’re modeling what you’re expecting of them.” Three other facilitators specifically noted the importance of modeling as well. Brian stated that he hopes that he can to some extent be:

...a role-model for reactions and responses, though I’m not always perfect, but to not laugh at something that ought not be funny, and to say it’s not funny. And I think that when everyone else is laughing, and I’m not, that gets noticed. And when I say “that’s not funny,” and everybody else is laughing, that gets noticed. I’m doing the best I can to ameliorate those kinds of responses, behaviors, and actions, reactions. I guess if I had to put my finger on anyone thing that gets a response, I think that gets a response.

Rob remarked on the value of male and female co-facilitation as well, noting that in his first experience with batterer groups he felt that he and his co-facilitator “did the ideal, which was, we modeled respect.” In a similar vein, Joanne said, “It works very well, and that’s kind of the model you want to put out there, so they can see how interaction works, that model is the ideal.”

Although modeling was noted as important by four of the facilitators, seven of the eleven facilitators remarked on the value of having male and female co-facilitators in terms of presenting, as Carolyn put it, “a united front” to the batterers’ group. Group participants are often angry when mandated to attend group, and some of them will test the facilitators by pushing boundaries. Karen has had experience with co-facilitation as well as facilitation of groups alone, and noted that she has been “very challenged verbally and emotionally” in at times when she was

facilitating alone. She reported that she probably would have done a better job in some instances if she had had back-up from a co-facilitator. She said:

When you're talking on your own, you may be addressing one side of the problem, and somebody else could pick up, 'but, however, there is this...' and sometimes you don't get around to that until the end of the session. Sometimes I have to go back the next session and say, 'I want to clarify something.' When you have two minds, it's a lot better.

Karen's remarks on the value of having a co-facilitator did not appear concerned with the gender of the facilitators, though she stated a preference for male and female co-facilitators working together. For the other six facilitators who made remarks about this, however, gender was an important factor. Regarding the preference of standards for male and female co-facilitation, Judy said:

Well, I do think that that's a best practice. I'm not sure that it's a practical practice. I know that some programs can't do it, so there you go. I do think that it's really hard for men...it takes men a long time to understand the issue of collusion. I do think women would tend to see it sooner.

The main value of co-facilitation, regardless of facilitator gender, appears to be an increased level of awareness of the group process. Mike remarked:

You know, I'm trying to handle the material. I love working with a co-facilitator. One of us will do the material, and the other can watch out, you know, what's going on.

This relates back to Karen's remarks as well, that when she has facilitated a group alone, she might need to clarify issues during the next session, because she missed something. In general, there was a sense that two facilitators are better than one because two people are more observant than one person, and therefore better able to catch mistakes. Group participants might verbally maneuver facilitators into inadvertent agreement or support of ideas or remarks that they did not intend to agree with or support, but a co-facilitator helps prevent that. Female facilitation, however, is important to that process because, as Chad notes, "There's always something that the

female facilitator has been able to bring up that I probably wouldn't even think about. Because that's just a different experience." Hernando made similar remarks about the contribution of female co-facilitators:

All the co-facilitators I've had so far have been female, and adding their perspective to it, that has been invaluable to the group. Not always welcome, but invaluable. Not always welcome by the clients.

Male and female facilitators agree that the standard preferring male and female co-facilitation is beneficial. It provides facilitators the opportunity to role-model respectful and appropriate male-female interactions, and provides facilitators with support in dealing with group participants who may range from uninterested to hostile and verbally combative with facilitators. For male facilitators, input from the perspective of a female co-facilitator is beneficial for the group.

Experiences with collusion

In batterers intervention, collusion refers to attempts by the batterer to secure the appearance of agreement or support from others for their remarks, opinions, or behavior, or the appearance of influence over others. Effective collusion validates the batterer, undermines the intent of the material taught in batterers groups, and can change the course of a group session. Collusion can also take the form of trying to establish a relationship with a facilitator; if the batterer can present himself as a likeable individual with something in common with the facilitator, he may expect less confrontation regarding his behavior.

The unanimous preference of facilitators for having a co-facilitator is evidence of how important maintaining guard against collusion is to the group process and successful facilitation. When facilitators were asked about their experiences with collusion, four of the eleven cited specific instances in which they were involved in some way in a collusive incident, but all of

them talked about the experience of having to watch what they say or how they respond to group participants. Guarding against collusion within the group process is a learned skill. Carolyn notes:

We, really, in the training, we talk about collusion a lot, but it's not effective until they've actually gone through it, you know? They could hear talk about it all day, but unless they've actually went through it... (shrugs)

Facilitators develop skills in recognizing and addressing collusion over time. Rob described his experience as a new facilitator learning about collusion:

When I first started this, I didn't know what collusion meant, and when I asked at a training meeting what collusion meant, one of the facilitators sort of condescendingly said something as if I should know what collusion meant, and I said, "Well, I might ask a lot of questions, but the real reason I'm asking is because I want to be able to do this well." I had never heard of the word until I started doing this.

Even with experienced facilitators, however, issues of collusion arise. Carrie said, "There are times that you – they're just talking and you're just conversing, and you know, something in your head goes, 'Okay, you gotta stop right there.'"

Attempts at collusion may be directed at either male or female facilitators. Carolyn stated that she is constantly reminding other facilitators to be on guard against collusion. She noted one type of situation that is commonly presented to female facilitators:

I'm always reiterating that they cannot be too careful, and that even when you walk in, and they say, "Oh," – you know, and I've heard it three times when I've been here at the beginning of the groups, so I know it goes on every week – "I like that sweater," and I said (to another facilitator) "Your response to that is "Thank you," and move on, instead of saying, as I heard, "Oh yeah, Goodwill, two dollars." You know, just carrying on like that, and let's make the comment again next week and see what she says.

In a similar vein, Karen noted that women may become the object of inappropriate flirtation, stating that she was once asked by a group participant if she was married. When asked why he wanted to know, the group participant said that she was attractive, and he was interested

in going out with her. Karen was able to firmly redirect the man back to the group, but this incident is a good example of the type of situation that male facilitators do not experience.

Engaging in simple conversation or responding to compliments may not at first appear to be a tactic that could undermine a group, but is perceived by facilitators as problematic. Troy describes a situation that his co-facilitator, Judy, pointed out to him when she thought he appeared to be developing an alliance with a group participant:

I'm an avid motorcyclist, and some of the guys must have clued in on that. Some of them were asking me about my bike and stuff, and I kind of tried to put them off, but then we got to talking about something and she's like, you know, "Could you not talk to him about motorcycles? You start talking to them about this stuff, and it leaves me out." That sort of thing. I could see the problem.

Troy's experience illustrates a relatively subtle form of collusion. Mike reported on a specific instance in which he experienced more direct, though inadvertent, collusion:

It was humor. It was so easy. I don't remember what the joke was, no, but I was at least three steps into it, laughing at something that I should not have been laughing about, and all it took from her (his co-facilitator) was a look like, "What! Are you out of your mind?" I realized, "Oh, I'm way out here in the middle of the swamp!" I shut my mouth, and she explained what was wrong with where we were. And I was out there with them.

Sometimes attempts at collusion may be more deliberate. Brian reported on the experience of being "set up" by group participants:

I've been led down paths....yeah, set up, but not necessarily against the co-facilitator, but into just bad places to go. Talking about date rape. Something that you can't just argue, you don't want to argue, but that's almost the only place it could go. Especially, I do think there are moments where the guys know that it's not an easy direction to take, and they revel in that.

Brian describes a situation in which the group versus the facilitator, as participants collude together against facilitators to derail the group process. Karen noted this as well: "I see where guys are constantly supporting each other in their wrong thinking."

All of the facilitators reported some experience of group participants attempting to collude, either with other group participants or by attempting to establish a personal connection with a facilitator. In the information gathered through these interviews, some differences were noted in how collusive attempts were directed at male and female facilitators. Male facilitators reported on group participants' attempts to align themselves with male facilitators as men, whether along some line of interest such as motorcycles in Troy's case, or through humor, as happened to Mike. With female facilitators, the reported collusive attempts involved casually flirtatious remarks, in addition to attempts to garner agreement with or support for a group participant's remarks. Karen describes the frustration of having her comments interpreted as support for group participants, but notes that collusion is unavoidable:

I see where guys have taken things that I say and decided that I was on their side, and I don't think you can avoid that happening. They're going to twist whatever they want to hear, whatever they want. I think that when we use that word (collusion) as the most horrible, no good, very bad thing that could possibly happen, I think we need to keep in mind, that realistically, guys are going to think that we said what they want to hear, so the best we can do is simply to continue to give the same message week after week, and hope that eventually they start to realize, no, that's not really what we said.

Hernando remarked on vulnerability to collusion, saying that:

I think that anyone who has the capacity to feel any kind of sympathy and anyone who has the capacity to, you know, understand that nobody's perfect can be vulnerable to collusion.

Hernando also remarked on the common tendency of group participants to seek facilitator support as they try to blame their behavior on their partners. He noted the need to "put the focus back on their own behavior," rather than sympathizing with group participants:

What I've always seen is even if someone is difficult to live with, that doesn't mean it's okay to be abusive to them. What we usually say is if this person really is or has been that difficult, you have our sympathies, but what you don't have is our permission to respond to that in whatever way you see fit. I don't consider that collusion.

Thus, facilitators must walk a fine line in their work, between developing an effective level of rapport with group participants while holding them accountable for their behavior. All facilitators face attempts at collusion by group participants as they seek support for “wrong thinking” as Karen said, or as they attempt to establish a personal connection or position of favor with facilitators. Gender sometimes factors into collusive attempts of the latter type, as group participants may approach male facilitators with camaraderie and female facilitators with attempted flirtation.

Power and control

The third question reviewed in determining whether women facilitators are more sensitive to and influenced by issues of power and control within groups focused on how facilitators have seen power and control play out within their groups. This question was left open to interpretation by the facilitator, allowing them to make remarks on power and control issues between facilitators and participants or between the facilitators themselves. In general, facilitators responded to this question by describing how group participants try to control the group, apparently a common occurrence. Hernando described his experience:

...there will be somebody that will want to try to steer the conversation in any direction other than power and control and accountability. The most common way to do that, of course, is to blame everything and everyone else. “Well, she’s this. She does this, and she does that, and she’s a bad person,” or “The system is rotten and corrupt,” and all of that, and want to draw you into a dialogue about that, and if you take that bait, then you basically taught them that they get to decide what gets talked about and what doesn’t.

Carolyn reported on the behavior of one particular participant as an example:

...he’s extremely intelligent, and he will try to gain control of the group by talking about something very, very intelligent, using terms...and then all of a sudden he’ll lapse into sexual, things of a sexual nature, you know, to get a laugh out of everybody else.

Karen stated that, for her, addressing power and control issues depends on where issues occur:

I see guys who try to take over groups, and I've seen, I've seen guys who think that they are pulling one over on you by being really subversive about it, and covert, not openly rebellious, but you know, in a way of trying to suck up or something, type of way of doing it, and thinking that they're getting one over on you, and usually if I address it...usually I address it in the group if it was group-gear and oriented and begun. If it's happened in the group, and started in the group, then I'll address it in the group. If it was, you know, privately done because sometimes they come early or stay late, then I'll usually address it privately, and let them know that that's not okay. I don't know that I've ever said, "You're not going to get brownie points doing that," but it's pretty easy to let them know that without having to be direct with them.

In general, male and female facilitators did not differ in how they see issues of power and control play between themselves and participants. Participants try to usurp control of the group, and facilitators try to maintain control by redirecting participants back to accountability for their behavior.

Only two of the eleven facilitators remarked directly on experiences within the facilitation relationship when asked about how they have seen power and control issues play out within groups. Interestingly, these remarks came from Judy, one of the most experienced facilitators interviewed, and Rob, one of the least experienced. Judy described her experience with Troy, her co-facilitator, when their group was being observed as part of the review for program licensure:

Then there was a time when Troy thought - oh, I know - we were being evaluated. We were being reviewed and we didn't agree on something, and it was obvious. I mean, you know, I just said, "I don't agree," or he said it or something, and he thought, "Oh, we screwed up. We shouldn't have done that." And one of the things... one of the reviewers, and she said... he said something about it when we were talking to them afterwards, and she said, "Oh, no absolutely. I think that that was a very good demonstration of how you disagree with someone respectfully," and so then we were able to start feeling better about that. I could say, "Well, I'm not sure. What about this?" Or he could. Or, "Well, have you looked at it this way?"

This incident hints at how carefully facilitators must consider how they address disagreements or other issues that arise between them during a group. Although the situation could have left the group participants with the perception of a division between the facilitators, Judy and Troy were apparently able to model disagreement in a way that did not suggest a power struggle, and actually served as a positive model.

Rob had an experience with a co-facilitator that was also problematic. He reported that they both had a different approach toward presenting the material, and his co-facilitator was attempting a more therapeutic approach, rather than an educative approach. The difference in approaches led to a difficult situation:

I don't try to solve their problems as much as I try to... I try... I have a goal in mind, I'm going a certain direction. I'm asking them about an experience they had regarding the topic, like violence or nonviolence, and I'm going a certain direction, and if a co-facilitator interrupts that, that dialogue that I'm having with a participant, it's hard for me to get back on track, and I actually had to talk over her, and of course she was upset about it, understandably.

Rob was unable to address the rift in co-facilitation within the group, and later had to address the issue outside the group with his co-facilitator and supervisor, though he acknowledged that group members were aware of a problem between him and his co-facilitator.

I think they definitely recognize it. One man mentioned to me - I had to do this, I had to talk over her one time about eight weeks ago, and one participant said something to me about it after class. So, I know that they recognize it, and I just reached a point where, okay, I have to talk her, and to Carolyn.

Issues of power and control between males and females are a central theme within batterers groups, so such exchanges between male and female co-facilitators are likely to be closely scrutinized by group participants. Co-facilitation cannot be evenly balanced between co-facilitators, however, according to Troy:

You know, I hate to say it this way, being male and female, but it is a lot like a marriage. You know - some days - people say marriages are fifty/fifty, which is -

I think that's a freakin' lie. Some days it's seventy/thirty. Some days it's ninety/ten. I'm not sure we've ever had a fifty/fifty. So, you know, in that aspect, some days she's really controlling it and driving it. Some days she's really on and I'll be off or something like that. Sometimes I'm kind of in the zone and the focus will be on me.

Even though the process of co-facilitation cannot be evenly balanced between facilitators, facilitators have to be able to work together. Troy describes how he and Judy handle issues:

We work it out. We just, like I said, you have to be comfortable with the persons you're working with and with yourself. If I mess up or whatever, just let it go. It's no big deal. Even if we talk about, I know that she's not going to yell, kick, and scream. Neither of us will stop facilitating. We're just going to talk about it. That will be the end of it and we'll both try to do better.

In Rob's situation, he and his co-facilitator were not "clicking," as he put it. He attributed the problem to his co-facilitator's newness to batterers intervention and the philosophy underlying it, saying that she just was not "getting it," sometimes taking the group in the wrong direction. Addressing the situation during the group was not practical. Michael also noted he has had experiences in which a co-facilitator's remarks have to be addressed outside the group:

One of them, she's just not sophisticated enough. She actually will say things in group that we have to talk about afterwards. Some place in her deepest, darkest corners of her heart she thinks that men, when it really, really gets down to it, that the man is in charge.

Issues of power and control that arise between facilitators are evidently not as common as those that arise between participants and facilitators, but can make it difficult for facilitators to deliver an effective and cohesive intervention. The facilitators all reported on having had good co-facilitation experiences; in general, these experiences were characterized by feelings of friendship and willingness to give and accept feedback. Karen said "you want that ability to work together in that way where you're not offended by each other." The experiences reported by these facilitators suggests that disagreements between facilitators do not necessarily create

issues of power and control, but that difficulty in addressing and resolving disagreements can be problematic, straining the co-facilitation relationship and compromising the message given to group participants. Issues of power and control are more likely to play out, however, between facilitators and group participants; such situations are experienced in a similar manner by male and female facilitators.

Question 3

Is it more challenging for females to maintain a position of authority within the group process than it is for their male peers? It was hypothesized that female facilitators would have more difficulty than their male counterparts in maintaining authority within the group. To determine whether this hypothesis was supported, full interviews rather than questions were reviewed to gather information on how facilitators maintain a position of authority within the group. Thus, entire transcripts were analyzed to answer this hypothesis; it was not, however, supported. Female facilitators were found to effectively maintain a position of authority while working with batterer groups.

Maintaining control of the direction of the group process is an integral part of maintaining authority, but can be a real challenge. Carolyn noted the tendency of group participants to try to shift the course of the group by blaming others:

The main way they try to get control is by blaming their partner...sometimes it'll go to, and all these efforts are stopped, you know, they're nipped in the bud, you know, as quickly as possible.

Hernando described his method for keeping the group focused when participants try to blame others for their situation:

So that happens a lot, and I may make a very cursory response when those things come up, when a new person comes in and starts saying those things. "We're only going to focus on what we in this group can control, which is our own thoughts,

our own feelings and our own behavior. None of us can change the system. None of us can change other people's behavior. We could sit here and complain all day about your partners and the legal system and everything else. We could easily spend an hour and a half doing that, and I know that some of you would rather do that, but at the end of that hour and half nothing meaningful has been accomplished," and so, I will say that once or twice when a new person comes in and spouts that same kind of rhetoric, and then if somebody else tries to bring it up at some other point in time, I'll say, "Yeah, remember what I always say about that," and then we, I usually insist that we kind of move on.

Maintaining authority within the group means that facilitators have to be able to quickly recognize and address attempts to undermine the process.

When examining collusion, it was noted that female facilitators are sometimes the object of remarks that would not be directed toward a male facilitator. Karen's experience with a group participant who asked if she was married, mentioned previously in reference to collusion, is also relevant to the question of how she has seen issues of power and control play out in groups:

When I first started I had a male co-facilitator, and he had to leave the room one day to take a phone call, an emergency call, and I was in the room continuing group, and it was one of my first sessions, and a guy said, totally off subject, obviously, he said, "Are you married?" and I said, "I don't that has anything to do with the question I just asked," and he said, "Well, I was just wondering because I thought you were kind of hot, and I'd like to go out with you," and I said, "Well, you need to stop wondering because there are some places in life where you go to pick up chicks," and I said, "there are some places in life where you don't, and this isn't one of them." and I said, "So, don't let it happen again, and disrupt group like this again," and all the guys were like "Ooh, she got you," and kind of jeered him a little, and it never happened again, but I know he was testing me.

Karen was clearly able to maintain a position of authority within that group by responding quickly and firmly, but her experience illustrates a range of challenges that male facilitators do not experience.

Although women may face unique challenges in maintaining authority within a group of batterers, it is not difficult for Judy or Carolyn. Brian, who has co-facilitated with Carolyn, said of her:

She is exceptionally strong, and I take so much away from just sitting in the same room with her, and I can't think of any class probably that she and I have been in when I haven't thought "Of course, of course." I feel stronger in her presence because I feel backed up. She's confident and comfortable in her own skin, and just – it's like she drives it home, all the time.

Likewise, Judy establishes a strong presence within groups. Carrie described Judy's effect on group participants.

She's very strong and she's been in it so long, and she really doesn't put up with anything. She doesn't take crap from any of the guys. So, they know that and a lot of times the conversation won't become as open when she's there because they're afraid of what – I don't know what they're afraid of. What she'd say? You know, it's not like she ever yells at them or anything, but it's just like there's this apprehension.

Joanne is also experienced in dealing with a resistant group. She draws her strategies for managing batterers groups from her experience as a teacher:

You know, when you deal with special education you deal with these very reactive kids, and the minute they know that you're the least bit empathetic, but you're not going to let them get away with X,Y, Z. - so I use that same thing.

Thus, Joanne's professional experience in working with youths who are difficult to manage helps her maintain authority when dealing with resistant or angry group participants.

Carrie reported that she maintains firm boundaries with group members, saying that she makes it a point to "keep the line." She relates to group participants only as a facilitator, keeping all information about herself private; group members know her only by her first name. She does not engage in conversation about anything outside the focus of the group.

Maintaining authority within the group is not a problem for any of the five women interviewed, according to their own reports as well as those of their co-facilitators, when co-facilitators were available for interview. Their collective report indicates that female facilitators can in fact have a strong and authoritative role in the intervention process despite the challenges and frustrations of working with batterers.

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATONS

Domestic violence is inherently a gender issue, and the authors of licensing standards for batterer intervention groups typically express a preference for the use of dual gender facilitation of groups delivering batterer intervention. Licensing standards also typically require that programs focus on challenging the batterer's behavior and the attitudes and values that contribute to the use of violence as a means of power and control.

This study was designed to examine the concern that female facilitators may be placed in a problematic role in batterer intervention groups, given that they are functioning as leaders within groups of males who have legal and interpersonal issues resulting from their abuse of women, and given that facilitators are confronting batterers about their behavior.

The main finding of this research is that female co-facilitation is a valuable component of batterer intervention and does in fact represent a best practice from the perspective of the facilitators providing batterer intervention services. Dual gender co-facilitation is preferred by licensing standards, but this preference has not previously been supported by research. This study gives evidence to this best practice.

This qualitative study provided an initial examination of the impact of gender on co-facilitation of batterer groups. It was found that, in general, the experience of facilitating a batterers group is similar for male and female facilitators with regard to success experiences, motivation, views on the dual gender facilitation standard, and how power and control are experienced within the group process. In the area of collusion, male and female experiences differ in the type of approach used by group participants, but facilitators respond to group participants in similar ways by immediate and consistent redirection back to personal accountability.

A notable difference in male and female experience was found only in the area of the personal effects of batter facilitation. Facilitators in general experienced an increase in awareness of

their own behavior, and a heightened sensitivity to issues of power and control. For female facilitators, however, facilitation of batterer groups led to an increased understanding of not only the power and control issues used by men, but those that they use themselves. Facilitating batterer groups was thus a more profound experience for this group of women, and the personal impact was, in general, reported in stronger terms than those used by the male counterparts.

The results of this study suggests that the women interviewed are as capable as their male peers in maintaining authority in the facilitation of a batterer intervention group, and in some cases, may even be perceived as stronger and more authoritative than their male counterparts. The women who participated are all experienced facilitators, and two (Judy and Carolyn) are in positions of authority within their agencies. It is not clear to what extent the self-perceptions of these women and the perceptions of their co-facilitators were affected by positional power or conceptions of personal power, or to what extent their ability to maintain authority was affected by age or experience. Given that facilitators with less ability to maintain authority in batterer intervention groups, whether male or female, are probably less likely to continue as long-term facilitators, closer examination of those qualities possessed by successful facilitators along gender lines may be useful in identifying successful candidates for this line of work.

Summary

Question 1: Are there notable differences in how co-facilitation is experienced by males and females? Co-facilitation is perceived and experienced by these facilitators in similar ways with regard to success and motivation. They share an understanding that they may not see desired changes in all of their group participants, yet they maintain a focus on potential outcomes and some degree of optimism about their own involvement in creating conditions conducive to

personal change for batterers. Facilitators share the belief that change can occur, and that even a small impact in the lives of individual batterers and victims has value.

Although, contrary to expectations, the experience of facilitating batterer groups is similar for male and female facilitators with regard to success and motivation, an interesting difference was found in terms of personal effects. For females, the experience of facilitating a batterer group and the process of self-examination seemed to provide an unexpected personal revelation that females too, have issues with power and control.

Question 2: Are females more sensitive to and affected by issues of power and control within the facilitation process than their male peers? Overall, the facilitators place great value on co-facilitation because it allows them to identify and address problems, particularly collusion, more quickly. Female facilitators were not identified as more sensitive to or aware of power and control issues, but the group process is improved by having the contribution of the female perspective.

The challenge of collusion is experienced by all facilitators, but it may be presented in different ways depending on facilitator gender. Males may be more likely to be faced with group participants who try to identify with them as fellow males or “buddies,” as Carrie described them, while females are more likely to be faced with attempts at flirtation or flattery. All facilitators try to address attempts to collude with firm redirection.

Contrary to expectations based on the preliminary investigation, power and control issues between male and female facilitators did not emerge from the data as a significant issue. Where issues with disagreements were noted, facilitators remarked on the importance of addressing issues directly with their co-facilitator either during or after group.

Question 3: Is it more challenging for females to maintain a position of authority within the group process than it is for their male peers? The female facilitators in this study had no difficulty in maintaining a position of authority within their batterer groups. Two of them, Judy and Carolyn, were in fact perceived by their male and female co-facilitators as strong, authoritative facilitators. The reports of the other three female facilitators indicated that they each felt confident and comfortable in their ability to manage the group process. The overall impression was that the female facilitators interviewed for this study are a strong, capable group of women.

Limitations

This study was based on interviews with eleven batterer intervention co-facilitators in West Virginia. The participant pool represents only three out of eight community-based programs in the state and one day report center. Participants were drawn from a limited number of licensed programs. Thus, the ability to generalize from this sample is limited. A random sampling of all facilitators in the state, however, would not have been as useful as this small sample, given that the focus was on individuals with male/female co-facilitation experience. Purposeful sampling allowed for information-rich data collection.

This was a qualitative study using an interview approach to data collection. Attempts were made to stay true to a semi-structured format, but some variability in follow-up questions and probes was inevitable. This may have affected both the length and detail of responses.

In addition, the data collected during this study was drawn from self-report by the facilitators. All the information gathered regarding power and control issues arising during the group process would have been better informed by observation of the group processes experienced by the facilitators and reports by group participants on their perceptions of the

process. Unfortunately, direct observation and data collection during groups was not feasible for logistical reasons, and due to the need to protect the confidentiality of group participants; batterers constitute a protected class with regard to research.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study is best considered as a preliminary examination of the experience of batterer group facilitation, and the results obtained are tentative. Nevertheless, the findings do raise some interesting questions for future research. For example, is there any difference in outcome for those groups that do not have dual-gender co-facilitation versus those that do? Is there any difference in the perceived course of those groups? What facilitator characteristics are associated with effective, long-term involvement in this line of work? The answers to these questions could have significant implications for service delivery and facilitator recruitment.

The negative nature of the relationships between facilitators and group participants was a striking feature of the process described by male and female facilitators in this study. Given that the therapeutic alliance has been found to be a moderate but significant and consistent predictor of treatment outcome across a variety of modalities and group types (Bambling & King, 2001; Horvath & Symonds, 1991), it would also be interesting to examine the extent to which facilitators are able to express and convey to individual group members a sense of genuine concern for personal change in group participants, and how that relates to perceptions of change. It is unclear to what extent the lack of personal connection and trust affects intervention outcomes among batterer groups, but in the broader literature on violent offenders, it has been noted by Renwick, Black, Ramm, and Novaco (1997) that low motivation, treatment resistance and avoidance contribute to therapeutic pessimism felt by both clients and therapists. This pessimism certainly contributes to the frustrating nature of batterer intervention work. It is not

clear how or whether facilitators can develop a useful rapport with batterers while remaining cognizant of collusive attempts and the criminal nature of domestic abuse.

Suggestions for Practice

Although specific practice issues related to group management and delivery of batterer intervention services were not a direct focus of this study, some practical information shared by the facilitators could be of benefit for other facilitators. Maintaining motivation is a particular challenge for facilitators, because they face constant frustration and have limited success experiences. Because batterer intervention facilitators are uncommon, it would benefit the programs that employ them to find ways to help facilitators maintain motivation. For some, like Chad, it's helpful to "just take a break and don't go to class." For most of the facilitators, work scheduling that allows alternation with other facilitators is helpful, allowing a break from the work. Four facilitators were working in programs that were staffed adequately at the time of interviews to allow facilitators to take breaks if needed, and five others were working with a program that structures groups to alternate facilitators over a period of months. Two facilitators, Hernando and Karen, however, were working in programs that did not afford them the opportunity to routinely take time away from doing batterers' groups. Scheduled breaks could be helpful, but are not possible in all programs.

Other strategies to help maintain motivation could focus on reducing the frustration inherent in dealing with a client population that is often resistant and uncooperative. One useful strategy was described by Judy, Troy, and Carrie. In their groups, three rows of assigned seating are used, with the most senior group participants in the front near the facilitator. Other participants are seated through the rows according to decreasing seniority, with the least senior member near the door. This arrangement was originally tried out to address the tendency of two

specific participants to “feed off” one another, as Troy stated, and to help facilitators identify participants by name with a seating chart, but it soon proved useful in establishing a hierarchy among group participants. In this arrangement, new members who might tend to be more vocal and resistant to the group, the “back-rowers” as Carrie and Judy called them, are more likely to be challenged by other group members with more seniority in the group. Most of the facilitators noted that such challenges or remarks by other group participants have a positive effect, and can be taken as an indication that participants are “getting it.”

Implications

In the United States, one out of every three women murdered is killed by her legal husband or partner. Indeed, 4,000 women are beaten to death by their husbands or partners each year in this country (Paulozzi, Saltzman, Thompson, & Holmgreen, 2001). Domestic violence and the abuse of women is a global problem, affecting millions of families yearly (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). Intervention, however, is expensive. The latest renewal of the Violence Against Women Act in December of 2005, the primary funding source for domestic violence intervention, increased funding up to \$3.9 billion dollars over a five year period. (Tiefenthaler, Farmer & Sambira, 2005). The act is due for reauthorization in 2011, with funds to be used to support the advocacy programs and victim shelter programs for victims of domestic violence that have sprung up across the country since the 1970’s, as well as law enforcement and prosecution efforts to address domestic abuse.

Development of domestic violence interventions has occurred in an environment that acknowledges domestic abuse as a gendered issue in which most perpetrators of abuse are men. The purpose of intervention has been to reduce family violence by the most effective means possible. Thus, typical domestic abuse intervention services consist of shelter and safety

planning for women, and judicial system responses for men, including mandated batterer group treatment. Considerable debate exists regarding the quality and nature of the treatment that batterers receive (Dutton & Corvo, 2006), and the evidence for overall effectiveness of the current approach to batterer intervention is limited (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004).

This study focused on a small number of facilitators from one state, but the information they shared reflects the issues and problems faced by the field of domestic violence intervention at large. Group participants are uncooperative and resistant, success rates are low, and the work of batterer intervention is frustrating. Facilitators are carrying a message to people who do not want to hear it. The overall impression given by the facilitators in this study is that providing batterer intervention is an up-hill battle, though the cause is a worthy one.

Although some shifts have occurred in gender roles for women, society in general still supports and reinforces stereotypic representations of male and female roles in myriad ways. In addition, the current model of service delivery in batterer intervention places facilitators in the position of providing a service to individuals who are distrustful, resentful, and sometimes hostile. These two factors both contribute to the sense that facilitators are going into ideological combat in a battle that often seems futile. For female facilitators, it would appear that this battle is particularly challenging, yet their involvement on the front lines is an important component in batterer intervention.

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APPENDIX A

Biographical Summaries

Carolyn: Director of an agency working against family violence, Carolyn has been a facilitator for about four years. She previously worked in case management with at-risk youths, and prior to that she spent fifteen years in the corporate world.

Carrie: Carrie operates her own small business, and co-facilitates groups for an agency that addresses rape and family violence. She comes from a strong religious background, and was initially recruited by Troy. She has been co-facilitating for about five years.

Karla: A former victim of abuse within her marriage, Karla is a facilitator employed by a domestic violence shelter that also provides batterer groups, thus having contact with both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. Karla has been facilitating groups for over seven years. She currently facilitates groups alone due to the lack of a co-facilitator, but has experience with co-facilitation as well.

Joanne: Joanne previously worked in the insurance field for twenty-two years before she went into teaching as a second career about ten years ago. She moved from Virginia to West Virginia and has been co-facilitating batter groups for about two years. She works as a teacher in the public schools and co-facilitates for an agency working against family violence.

Judy: Director of a community agency working against rape and family violence for twenty-nine years, Judy is a well-known figure in the domestic violence intervention field in West Virginia. She started co-facilitating batterer groups about nine years ago.

Brian: Formerly having published a magazine, and having done some communication work for non-

profit agencies, Brian made a career change about two years ago and became involved in work with a hypothermia program for homeless people in Washington D.C. He has been co-facilitating batterer groups for an agency working against family violence for about a year and a half.

Chad: Chad is a member of a city police department. He was asked by Troy to become a facilitator, and has now been co-facilitating for about a year and a half for an agency working against rape and family violence.

Hernando: A facilitator at a day report center, Hernando typically facilitates batterer groups alone at present. He is a counselor licensed for independent practice, and has thirteen years of experience facilitating batterer groups in Ohio and West Virginia.

Michael: After a long career in corrections Michael started facilitating groups for an agency working against family violence, and does some volunteer activities. He has worked extensively with violent offenders and substance abusers, and has worked with groups for years. He has been facilitating batterer groups for about ten years.

Rob: Rob's priority is his work in the ministry, but he co-facilitates batterer groups for an agency working against family violence to earn additional income. Rob has facilitated groups for about two years, but took a four-month break at one point.

Troy: A city police officer, Troy is also a co-facilitator for an agency working against rape and family violence. The batterer intervention component of his work is grant-funded. Troy has co-facilitated batterer groups for about nine years, and like his primary co-facilitator Judy, he is a well-known figure in the domestic violence intervention field in West Virginia.

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Gendered Perceptions of Batterer Intervention Co-Facilitation

Wendy R. Williams, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

Introduction

You are invited to be in a research study. Research studies are designed to gain scientific knowledge that may help other people in the future. You may or may not receive any benefit from being part of the study. There may also be risks associated with being part of research studies. If there are any risks involved in this study then they will be described in this consent. Your participation is voluntary. Please take your time to make your decision, and ask your research investigator or research staff to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

Why Is This Study Being Done?

The purpose of this study is to examine the experience of being a batterer intervention facilitator. The study will focus on what male and female facilitators experience during group intervention, and how they perceive co-facilitation and work with batterers. The study will also focus on how facilitation affects batterers and how it creates changes in their attitudes.

How Many People Will Take Part In The Study?

About 16 facilitators will take part in this study. A total of 32 facilitators are the most that would be able to enter the study.

What Is Involved In This Research Study?

You will be interviewed for this study. The interview is comprised of a series of questions. The researcher will ask you to respond to questions that ask about how you feel about batterers intervention work, your challenges and successes, how you handle power and control issues, and how it affects you. After your interview is completed, it will be transcribed for analysis. After transcription, the recorded interviews will be either erased or otherwise destroyed.

How Long Will You Be In The Study?

You will be in the study for about 60 to 90 minutes.

You can decide to stop participating at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to talk to the study investigator or study staff as soon as possible.

The study investigator may stop you from taking part in this study at any time if he/she believes it is in your best interest; if you do not follow the study rules; or if the study is stopped.

What Are The Risks Of The Study?

There are no known risks to those who take part in this study.

Are There Benefits To Taking Part In The Study?

If you agree to take part in this study, there may or may not be direct benefit to you. We hope the information learned from this study will benefit other people in the future. The benefits of participating in this study may be: personal reflection on work in a challenging field, and you may take more pride in contributing toward efforts to reduce violence. Your contribution may help in understanding how facilitators can help batterers change.

What About Confidentiality?

We will do our best to make sure that your personal information is kept confidential. Although we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, it is highly unlikely that anyone other than the investigators would ever have to access your study records. Federal law says we must keep your study records private. The Marshall University IRB, Office of Research Integrity (ORI) and the federal Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP) will review our procedures to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety. If we publish the information we learn from this study, you will not be identified by name or in any other way.

What Are The Costs Of Taking Part In This Study?

There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

Will You Be Paid For Participating?

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

What Are Your Rights As A Research Study Participant?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time. Refusing to participate or leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to stop participating in the study we encourage you to let the investigators know.

Whom Do You Call If You Have Questions Or Problems?

For questions about the study or in the event of a research-related injury, contact the study investigators, Dorothy Boston, M.S. at (304) 593-4653, or Wendy R. William, Ph.D. at (304) 696-2779. You should also call the investigator if you have a concern or complaint about the research.

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the Marshall University IRB#2 Chairman Dr. Stephen Cooper or ORI at (304) 696-4303. You may also call this number if:

- You have concerns or complaints about the research.
- The research staff cannot be reached.
- You want to talk to someone other than the research staff.

You will be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

SIGNATURES

You agree to take part in this study and confirm that you are 18 years of age or older. You have had a chance to ask questions about being in this study and have had those questions answered. By signing this consent form you are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled.

Subject Name (Printed)

Subject Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Consent (Printed)

Person Obtaining Consent Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Facilitator Interview Questions

- 1) How long have you been facilitating batterer groups?
- 2) How did you get started?
- 3) What made you decide this work was right for you?
- 4) How do you feel about facilitating groups now?
- 5) Tell me about a typical batterers group, from starting out to finishing the group. How does the group evolve?
- 6) What is the most difficult part of facilitating batterers groups for you?
- 7) What have been your best successes? What do you think made the most difference to bring about that success?
- 8) What do you see as the biggest barriers to progress for the men in your groups?
- 9) How do you regenerate or keep your motivation up?
- 10) If you were going to design your ideal co-facilitator, what would that person be like to work with?
- 11) What do you think about the standard requiring co-facilitation by a male and a female?
- 12) How do you see issues of power and control play out within the groups you've done?
- 13) Tell me about your experience with collusion. Have you ever been pulled in? Have you seen your co-facilitator pulled in? Follow up: How did you handle that?
- 14) How could the batterer intervention process as you know it work better?
- 15) Can you tell me how doing this type of work has affected your personal life?