ILLUMINATING STRUGGLES FOR GENDERED RESPONSES

ILLUMINATING STRUGGLES FOR GENDERED RESPONSES: PRACTICE WITH
WOMEN OFFENDERS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

The Duluth Model of intervention for those charged with domestic violence offences has for the past thirty years been instrumental in conceptualizing violence, abuse, power and control, how to hold offenders accountable and keep victims safe, and is reflective of a collaborative, feminist approach to violence intervention. The model's design assumes that violence is perpetrated by men against their female partners as a mechanism to maintain/gain power and control. However, increasing numbers of women are now being charged with violence against their male partners and being referred for service. Problematically, there has been little development of policies or formal practices that recognize the different meanings of women's violence or the particularity of their programming needs so that service providers in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) treatment programs find themselves working with female offenders under a male model of violence.

The purpose of this project was to engage in a critical feminist analysis of the resulting tensions, specifically to ask how conceptualizations of gender and violence undergird policy development and how, in Duluth-dominated programming approaches, service providers understand and respond to women's needs. To explore these questions, I took a two-fold methodological approach: an analysis of the extensive literature on Partner Assault Response (PAR) programs and female offenders, using the concept of policy framing; and an online survey of service providers that explored dimensions of their work

and that included questions incorporating the policy frame distinctions that emerged from the literature analysis.

The policy frame analysis underscored the power of problem construction and shed conceptual light on the challenges of working under the Duluth model with women. Survey participants described those challenges in the, as yet, dimly lit front-lines of practice, as well as their engagements at times in creative, subversive program delivery to meet women's needs. Future research drawing forward the seldom heard voices of women charged with violence will be critical, as will continued endeavours to fashion gender-specific, need-driven policy.

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Throughout my life, I have had the privilege of being encircled by those who both support and challenge me, who surround me and give me space and who cherish my personal and professional goals almost as much as I do.

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This project would not be what it is without my colleagues and friends on the AVIP team at Catholic Family Services. Your commitment and dedication to your work, yourselves and each other is inspirational – I am grateful to have worked with such a high caliber of individuals who, through your own struggles, resistance and creativity in doing this work, very much inspired this project.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Stephanie Baker Collins, who provided unwavering support throughout my M.S.W. degree. Thank you for believing in my 'frames', for agreeing to be my second reader and for being a cheerleader of quantitative survey methods.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this body of work to Dr. Jane Aronson. I am forever

indebted to the time, commitment and dedication you invested in me and this project.

Much like the experience of service providers in this field, I too felt, at times, as though I

was "bumping around in the dark". Rather than simply offering a light to shine on the

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direction while allowing me to critically explore and delve deeper into the project and my

analysis. You have taught me so much throughout this process, lessons and learning that

will continue to serve as a compass I take with me throughout my academic journey.

You have my deepest respect and sincerest gratitude.

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

As with most feminist work, particular attention was placed on the use of language throughout this thesis project. The term "Intimate Partner Violence" (IPV) is used as a gender neutral term to describe women's violence and abuse against their male intimate partners. Although I struggle with the use of this term on some levels, mostly due to the fact that it is a gender neutral term and the majority of violence and abuse within intimate relationships is male perpetrated against female partners, because the focus of this project is on women who have been charged with violence against their partners, this presented as the most suitable term. Although "Intimate Partner Abuse" is often used to communicate that not all abuse is violent, because I am speaking about the criminalization of abuse, violence appeared to be a more accurate reflection of these offences and actions.

Further, while the term "Domestic Violence" is problematic in the way it regressively re-privatizes violence and abuse within intimate relationships, when it is used in this project it is done so from the position of the criminal justice system, that is offences which are considered IPV in nature are labeled "Domestic Violence Offences".

Finally, acronyms are frequently used throughout the project, as utilized in the field, however these are hopefully first clarified for the reader. Partner Assault Response (PAR) programs and Batterer Intervention programs (BIPs) are considered to be the

same, the latter term more frequently used when programs were first established and

currently used within the United States.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Engaging in practice and advocacy with offenders, as well as victims and

witnesses, is a highly contested area – the contestation a reflection of the hard-

won victories of the women's shelter movement that created gendered

understandings of the origins of violence against women, and of continued

academic and public debate of the issues and possible responses to them. It was in

this context that I was employed as the Team Leader of the Abuse and Violence

Intervention and Prevention (AVIP) team at Catholic Family Services in

Hamilton, Ontario. One of the programs I supervised was Partner Assault

Response (PAR), a program mandated by Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney

General and structured, as is common in Canada and North America, on a model

designed to increase offender accountability and victim safety and decrease rates

of recidivism. Working in and representing an agency mandated to respond to

victims and offenders, to men and to women, I was often made to feel

untrustworthy, anti-feminist and confused for being a colluder rather than a

counsellor by colleagues within the violence against women movement. Funding

that goes towards working with offenders is often questioned and considered a

fiscal and ethical diversion from programs and services aimed more deservingly at

victims and their children. The complexities of my positioning were further

compounded by the fact that the program I supervised was mandated to work not

only with male offenders, but also with the relatively small but growing number

of female offenders, a number growing as an artefact of mandatory charging

policies.

The tensions and complexities of working with women charged with 'domestic violence' offences became a major preoccupation for me and is the focus of my thesis research. My consciousness of the challenges and contradictions of the work grew over time, and was sharply crystallized during a supervision session I had with a seasoned staff person. This person was the most competent person I have ever worked with, and came to the position with a wealth of experience in challenging clinical settings. She had well deserved self confidence in her work, was a leader to new staff, and rarely allowed her emotions to reveal themselves during clinical work and supervision. She was extremely skilled at working with male offenders of violence, and had the ability to hold them accountable in a way that made them want to hold themselves accountable – truly a gifted clinician. During the supervision session, I saw her physically and emotionally break down, hold her head in her hands and state, in reference to her work with female offenders of intimate partner violence, "this is the hardest work I have ever done".

In my supervision of this program, up until this point, I had treated this program in the same way services to men were provided. Yes, some women were violent towards their intimate partners, and as a result, they needed to be held accountable, just as their male counterparts might. This was also the perspective that I took to many community collaboration meetings. We, as feminists, had to acknowledge that some women choose violence as well, and that a strong stance must be taken from those within the movement itself, that violence is unacceptable, no matter who is the perpetrator.

But following the emotional breakdown of my strongest staff, and opening my ears more to the underlying narratives of the dilemmas explored during clinical supervision and team debriefing, nagging seeds were planted about the true complexity of this work. I decided to ask facilitators and participants if I could join their groups for what I termed, "clinical observation" and when I stepped into these groups to gain a better understanding of what had challenged my strongest clinician, I found my perception deeply challenged and forever changed.

The Question and its Context

In my experience in supervising this program for almost four years, I found that the vast majority of women referred to this program had a completely different experience of perpetrating violence against their intimate partners than males referred. Through their stories, I learned that when women were violent, it was typical that they were also experiencing violence, either in the past or present, protecting their children from being injured or assaulted, and/or were protecting themselves from the serious threat of violence. And while I still believe that violence should never be the ideal option for escaping or minimizing any of the above-mentioned scenarios of violence, I believe the women in our groups had significantly fewer choices and options than their male counterparts.

Many women, and the counsellors working with them, also spoke of the impacts of criminalization in a way that differed from their male counterparts. Women often had concerns about how the charge affected their relationship with their child(ren), including, at times, no longer being able to be in a primary caregiver

role. Women presented as being impacted significantly from a financial perspective. If they did not work outside the home and were dependent on their partner's earnings, a 'no contact' order and possible termination of the relationship often left them without funds to adequately provide for themselves and/or their children. When women did find themselves with employment, this was often precarious or temporary, and many experienced the termination of their employment following their charge and conviction. Many others struggled to organize their personal and professional obligations around their appointments and weekly group sessions during the time the group was offered. Because the numbers of women coming through the program were significantly fewer than the number of men, the group for female offenders was offered only once a week, as opposed to the flexible offering of nine different weekly options for men engaging in the program. Finally, women often spoke more openly about the shame of their charge and criminalization. At times this reflected a sense of disappointment from family members and loved ones; others spoke of cultural and even immigration implications, especially if the victim and/or perpetrator was also their sponsor.

Further, and of critical concern here, once women had been charged and convicted and referred to the program, it delivered service based on a male model of violence that undergirded its design – that is, that their violence was characterized as a choice based on their need/desire for power and control. This is essentially where the rubber hit the road – where service users felt traumatized, triggered or guilty; and where they either internalized this message which, if they were still in

their relationship may have had implications for future violence, or were so angered and outraged by this message that they were unable to take anything from the group. This is also where seasoned, skilled clinicians felt unable to resolve the tensions arising from a mandate that required them to hold female offenders accountable in the same fashion and format as male offenders, when it was clear that the choice and impacts of violence came from a truly different place.

Informed by these practice observations and dilemmas, the purpose of my project was to engage in a critical feminist analysis of the current treatment modalities for female offenders of intimate partner violence (IPV) offences, modalities organized in response to men's violence. Informed by the tensions I experienced in this work as a leader and a feminist, I found myself asking: what are we doing when we engage women as perpetrators of violence? What is currently working in our practice? What is not working in the way we engage female offenders of IPV? Are there programs in operation that are reflecting the needs of women, that came from a critical feminist analysis and the women themselves, and if so, how they do that and how did they get there?

To explore these questions, I engaged in both a policy review and a practice review. For the latter, I undertook a small survey of service providers' experiences of working in mandated programs designed for offenders of intimate partner violence, such as Partner Assault Response (PAR) or Batterer Intervention (BIP) programs, and particularly their assessments of whether or not and to what degree the program model enables them to assist female offenders in understanding the abuse in their lives and of other non-violent ways of

behaving/managing in the future. The choice to engage with service providers as research participants, as opposed to women with lived experience, is elaborated in the methodology section. In the next section, I explore the literature I engaged, with the intent to conceptualize the totality of the current system of treatment programming for women who have been charged with intimate partner violence offences.

In order to do this, it became important to connect with the literature as though it was an unfolding story itself. To better increase my understanding of the entirety of this issue, it was necessary for me to examine the origins of IPV offender programming, various curriculum and policy lenses, as well as current trends regarding the criminalization of women for IPV offences. Additionally, in order to come to terms with my focus on service providers rather than users, attributes of feminist research methodologies and methods were explored and are also included in this literature review. This linear path of literature led me to my current understanding of the situation of women, violence, intervention and service delivery, and has provided the canvas against which the study data are set.

Runaway Needs as Perpetrator-Centred Response: The Emergence of the 'Duluth Model'

Although the issue of violence against women remains prevalent and pervasive within our society, it is necessary to acknowledge how far we have come regarding our understanding of and response to intimate partner violence (IPV).

An examination of unfolding professional responses to IPV reveals the shifts in

theoretical frameworks of intervention, and underlying analyses about the reasons,

causes and responsibilities of violence and abuse.

Mankowski, Haaken & Silvergleid (2002) note the first documented professional

intervention regarding IPV, then considered 'family conflict', emerged in the

early 1940s, and was preceded by a long silence in which the issue was

considered private, acceptable and not a matter for intervention (p. 169).

Emerging discussions about violence between husband and wife were typically

within couples (or marriage) counselling sessions, and therapeutic intervention

operated from mostly a family systems perspective, where both parties were

tasked to consider their role and responsibility for the presence of violence in the

relationship (Mankowski, Haaken & Silvergleid, 2002, p. 170). This is certainly

reflective of the dominant societal perspective on violence at the time, where law

officers, medical professionals and sometimes family members, would often

question a woman about what she might have done or said to provoke her

husband's rage and aggression. Many of these narratives are highlighted in the

ground breaking text by Schechter (1982) titled, *Women and male violence: the*

visions and struggles of the battered women's movement. Schechter (1982)

examines historical professional documentation spanning the 1940s to the 1970s

for therapeutic intervention involving violence and abuse, and exposes that not

only was violence not categorized as the primary issue for intervention

(alcoholism, lack of wife fulfilling marital obligations, including frigidity and

male weakness or lack of control are all cited instead), but that the responsibility

for change rested primarily with the woman (p. 22). Much of this supposed

change was to occur within the mental health system, where female survivors of

violence and abuse were often sent (p. 22). Schechter explores this past as a way

to draw importance to the necessity for the collaborative work of survivors and

advocates alike who generated the 'battered women's movement' which forced

the politicization of the issue of violence against women (p.24). Schechter's

documentation of the transition in conceptualization of woman abuse from a

private to a public issue resonates with Fraser's (1989, p.169) conceptualization of

a "runaway need": a need that has shattered the domesticated, privatized

boundaries and spilled into the public, political sphere. As woman abuse became

a politicized, runaway need, the way in which it was engaged in a professionally

therapeutic way also required re-negotiation.

Schechter documents that the first considerations and responsibilities about

engaging men were directed to those working within the battered women's

movement (or the women's shelter movement) as counsellors, advocates and

administrators alike were being asked, "what about men – what are you doing to

'change' men?" (p. 260). The intentions behind these questions had merit in

recognizing that in order to address this runaway need of woman abuse,

perpetrators have a primary role in ending violence against women and to start,

need to demonstrate accountability. In doing so, these questions marked the first

rumblings of a shift toward a perpetrator-centered societal response to woman

abuse. However, as the responsibility for holding offenders accountable was

moved from the survivors themselves to those representing survivors of domestic

violence, it can be considered a very unilateral movement as opposed to a

progressive one, that further replicates the pattern of women being responsible for

abuse perpetrated against them by men. Movement toward a perpetrator-centred

response to gendered violence was happening, although the responsibility of the

choice of violence was still not centred with the perpetrator, but rather with

survivors and the women's organizations that represent them. Although

reflectively disappointing, in furthering Fraser's discussion on "runaway need", it

is clear that responding to the newly politicized issue of woman abuse carried the

"stamp" of the domestic space it previously occupied – that this is a woman's

issue that women must tidy up (p. 169).

Schechter, as well as Barner & Carney (2011) suggest that there was an increased

recognition from within the women's shelter movement during the late 1980s and

early 1990s on the importance of collaboration with other professions and

organizations, such as law enforcement, health care and social service agencies, as

a way of providing greater, broader and more accountable service delivery to

those experiencing IPV (p. 261, 237), and perhaps stepping away from domestic

and feminized spaces. Barner & Carney (2011, p. 237) discuss how this resulted

in a shift towards a perpetrator-centred institutional response to IPV, and in the

process, shifted the responsibility for offender accountability away from

individual women, domestic spaces, survivors and those who represent them, for

the first time.

The original program aimed at working specifically with perpetrators of IPV was

Emerge, a psycho-educational counselling program founded in Boston,

Massachusetts in 1977. While Emerge remains in place today, it has been largely

overshadowed by the widespread adoption of the Duluth Domestic Abuse

Intervention Project (DAIP), often referred to as the 'Duluth Model'. Originating

from Duluth Minnesota in 1981, based on the work of Pence & Paymar (1993),

two aspects of this model separated it from Emerge and other subsequent batterer

intervention programs (BIPs), in that it 1) introduced the Power and Control

wheel, and 2) proposed a coordinated community response to IPV.

Although there is much literature on what the Duluth model is, how it is best

utilized, as well as a significant body of critiques and criticisms of the model,

there is little work dedicated to why Duluth came to be such a predominant tool

for IPV intervention. Based on my review of the literature surrounding the

history of response to domestic violence, the fact that the program is rooted in

feminist ideology and evolved through collaboration with the women's shelter

movement, may have created a sense of insider-based intervention for offenders,

as opposed to an outside, and possibly less trust-worthy source providing

therapeutic treatment to those who were been charged with domestic violence.

This may have been a way for feminists to remain tied to an issue that they had

taken responsibility for, for so long, both as a domestic issue and pressing for it to

become a public one. Barner & Carney (2011, p. 237) refer to the "unique

intersection" the Duluth model created between feminist activism and the criminal

justice system, thereby creating a sense of partnership in the response to violence

against women. The Duluth model is often considered a political approach to

therapeutic intervention, in that founders of the DAIP were successful in inserting

themselves into the political sphere and in doing so, were instrumental in lobbying

efforts aimed at increasing offender accountability, such as mandatory arrest laws

(Pence & Shepard, 1999, p. 4).

Pence & Paymar (1993, introduction) affirm that within ten years of its founding,

programs originating in the Duluth model were the primary interventions for IPV

throughout all of the United States, and many other Western countries providing

mandated offender treatment programming, including Canada. Barner & Carney

(2011, p. 237) maintain that either modified or standard versions of the Duluth

model are the current intervention of choice for court-mandated IPV perpetrator

intervention, and that the "multi-institutional design" characterized by the

coordinated community response remains the model design for services

interventions and systems for both victims and perpetrators.

A Flawed Policy? Criticisms and Critiques of the Duluth Model

While the literature on the impact and breadth of the Duluth Model is significant,

as referenced earlier, so too is the amount of literature critiquing and questioning

the widespread adoption and implementation of this model. Dutton & Corvo

(2006) present a very thorough critique of the Duluth Model in their article,

Transforming a flawed policy: A call to revive psychology and science in

domestic violence research and practice. The authors argue that the patriarchal

context in which the Duluth Model situates violence, creates a dynamic in which

male offenders feel powerless and their experiences denied, which consequently

results in very little desire to engage in services (p. 461). The authors claim that

the model was grossly understudied and under-researched when it was launched,

and state that there have been very few studies coming out of the DAIP that have

confirmed its usefulness or that have demonstrated a commitment to creating

evidence-based practice (p. 462). In fact, the authors go so far as to state:

> there is nothing in the evaluation research on domestic violence treatment
> outcomes that justifies mandatory Duluth-type programming. On the
> contrary, there is a distinct absence of evidence for their efficacy" (p. 463).

Dutton & Corvo (2006, p. 461-464) list an extensive amount of research that

challenges the effectiveness of the Duluth Model (Babcock et al., 2004; Feder &

Forde, 1999; Shepard, 1987, 1992; Straus, 1992): this literature claims to prove a

lack of effectiveness, a lack of reduced recidivism, high dropout rates and a lack

of engagement with programming. Some of these studies (Feld & Straus, 1990, p.

458) even go so far to challenge whether state intervention is actually warranted,

arguing that when left alone violence within the family actually de-escalates,

rather than escalates.

Dutton & Corvo (2006, p. 460) also argue against the feminist understanding that

women's violence, when perpetrated, is often in retaliation for the violence and

abuse they may be experiencing themselves. Citing the work of Stets & Straus

(1992), they claim that women are likely to engage in a comparable amount of

violence within their marital and intimate relationships and that they are "at least

as likely" to instigate violence in relationships (p. 460). Dutton & Corvo rely on

this study to demonstrate the inappropriateness of the Duluth Model and its

feminist analysis of the role of patriarchy in the role of violence and abuse in

intimate relationships, and in doing so, claim that the program is not an applicable

or useful intervention for either men or women (p. 461).

This critical review of the Duluth model sparks two intersecting areas of curiosity.

First, how can there be so many studies within the Violence Against Women

community that so severely contradict what is generally believed to be true

regarding women, men, violence and abuse? Dutton & Corvo, and the studies

they rely upon, present a picture so drastically different from what feminist

practitioners are experiencing and documenting in the field, it is fair to question

where this totally different perspective may come from. Secondly, while the

arguments and examinations used by Dutton & Corvo are widely contested, as

demonstrated below, and considered anti-feminist in their origins, the rationale of

the Duluth Model being an inappropriate fit for female offenders also raises

interesting questions. Should a program designed to hold men accountable for

their choice of violence against their intimate partners be applied to women who

have been charged with IPV related offences? Does a woman's choice of

violence come from a similar space, such as a desire to have power and control, or

is it about something else? Is the violence even a choice? What happens to a

feminist model of practice for domestic violence intervention when it is applied to

female instead of male offenders? These questions prompted a dually-focused

examination, which will be explored further, into the current feminist-rooted

literature pertaining to women who have been charged with IPV.

A Feminist Analysis of Female Offenders and Treatment Programming

Much of my review of Dutton & Corvo's article and the studies they draw upon

recognizes that the authors are not viewing the issue from a feminist lens, and as a

result, see and present a completely different picture and analysis of female

offenders and IPV. It is not surprising, then, that they articulate criticism of the

model, however as a result, I remained curious about literature commenting on the

Duluth Model from a feminist perspective. In an attempt to be reflective of the

women who are at the centre of this research project, and to better reflect my own

epistemological framework, I nurtured this curiosity and have chosen to review

literature stemming from a feminist methodological standpoint. I also aim to

review this feminist reflection of Duluth from my own critical feminist theoretical

framework. In doing so, the work of Guimaraes (2007)*,* is heavily utilized to

assist in articulating what is to be considered "feminist research" based on her

principle that the research must not simply be *about* women, but also must present

as being *for* women (p. 158). She maintains that this is achieved in research that

both demonstrates a contextual analysis and is action-oriented, resulting in a

project with integrity for its participants (p. 150-168).

A contextual analysis of women's violence is evident within much of the

literature selected. Miller (2001) in her article *The paradox of women arrested for*

domestic violence: Criminal justice professionals and service providers respond,

challenges family systems and family sociologist data asserting that gender does

not play a role in IPV. She argues that methods used by family sociologists, such

as Straus (1997) and Dutton & Corvo (2006), generate flawed arguments as they

fail to contextualize data on IPV in the circumstances, both personal and social, in which women are violent (p. 1344). When violence is explored contextually, Miller ascertains, different themes about the choice of violence emerge, resulting in a need for changes to how we hold female offenders accountable (p. 1350).

Gabora, Stewart, Lilley & Allegri (2007) further take up a contextual analysis and argue that what has been lacking in treatment programming for female offenders has been both an understanding of what makes their choice of violence different from male offenders' choices of violence, but also the ways in which violence is experienced and perpetrated differently amongst women themselves (intro, iii). For example, they found much higher levels of both historic and present victimization in female offenders versus male offenders, and subsequently advocated for addressing the therapeutic needs of offenders in treatment groups for women (p.11). Further, they noted that Aboriginal women among female offenders of domestic violence were disproportionately represented within the justice system and that treatment programming should be culturally specific when serving large population groups (p.14).

This contextual analysis is also evident within Muftic, Bouffard & Bouffard's (2007) article, *An evaluation of gender differences in the implementation and impact of a comprehensive approach to domestic violence*. Here the authors explore the compatibility between a coordinated community response (CCR) model, as utilized within the Duluth model, to domestic violence and female perpetrators of IPV. They argue that a CCR model of police, prosecutors, probation/parole officers, treatment service providers and victims' advocates

working collaboratively is necessary in reducing recidivism in male offenders. However, they also state that, based on a contextual understanding of the reasons why women are violent, this "one-size-fits-all approach…unduly criminalizes those [women] for whom such policies were intended for protection (p. 67).

This concept is further taken up in Miller, Gregory & Iovanni's (2005) paper, *One size fits all? A gender neutral approach to a gender-specific problem: Contrasting batterer treatment programs for male and female offenders,* who also challenge the inappropriateness of a CCR approach to female offenders (p. 354). Following their observation of groups for both male and female offenders, they suggest that there should be an increased understanding of the societal and cultural context of male violence within both groups (p. 355).   The authors conclude that if women are guilty of violence that is not rooted in power and control, they should not be sentenced to treatment programming that is rooted in this modality (p. 355).

The articles reviewed can further be considered to be operating from a feminist methodology in the manner in which they are action-oriented. A key theme that recurs within Guimaraes' presentation of feminist research is that it is not research for the simple purpose of curiosity or knowledge contribution, but rather it serves a purpose to change (p. 150). Bowen & Gilchrist (2004) in *Comprehensive evaluation: A holistic approach to evaluating domestic violence offender programs*, present an argument around the disconnect between the theoretical frameworks on which offender treatment programs are designed and the evaluation measures utilized. For example, the authors demonstrate that while treatment programming relies heavily on cognitive behavioural approaches to

participant intervention, programming success is not measured by these standards, but, rather, by recidivism rates (p. 228). Their argument lies in whether or not recidivism rates actually measure change in thinking and perception – are offenders actually changing their perception of violence and abuse, and employing new ways of thinking and behaving, or are they simply avoiding being re-arrested? The authors move on to ask whether, if women have fewer choices when met with violence, are recidivism measures even applicable to this population (p. 229)? Gilchrist & Bowen argue that the heterogeneity of offenders, as well as participants' perception, experience and response to treatment should also be included in any program evaluation structure (p. 231).

Chambers, Ward, Eccleston & Brown (2011) add to this body of literature in that they argue there is no longer a need to make a distinction between male and female perpetrated violence, indicating this is theoretical knowledge that has been proven factual (p. 928). The researchers instead argue that there is a need to move towards understanding violence within the female population, through using the Pathway Model of Assault (PMA) in understanding offender typology, which subsequently informs treatment modality (p. 932). At first glance, this argument can appear gender neutral regarding the issue of IPV. However on subsequent readings, it does not engage in the dialogue about whether or not female and male perpetrated violence is different but assumes that it is and, instead, challenges researchers and policy makers to move past this debate and into the area of actually considering and implementing effective treatment. Treatment programming based on a thorough assessment of offender typology is an

emerging area of study in North America (Johnson, M.P., 2008); however the

model the authors present for gender-informed assessment has been utilized in

Australia for at least four years. Their research centres on how this assessment

and treatment model that considers offender typology is useful for female

offenders as well, in that it proposes their needs differ from male offenders and

demonstrates a gender-specific implementation of programming, which moves

beyond the one-size-fits-most approach currently used in North America.

This literature was reviewed with the simultaneous purpose of examining

alternative perspectives to Dutton & Corvo, and exploring how the Duluth Model

is applied to female offenders. Within it, there is a significant amount of critique

of the Duluth model suggesting that although rooted in feminist origins and

frameworks for understanding violence, when Duluth is applied to female

offenders, there is concern that it no longer considers the needs of women and in

failing to do so, no longer appears reflective of feminist principles – a concern

that is explored more fully in the course of the thesis.

Fraser's (1989, p. 150) concept of the "politics of need interpretation" becomes a

useful, albeit dense way of further exploring the complexities of this situation.

Fraser proposes that needs are often interpreted, framed and defined by the social

welfare state, and done so in a way that categorizes service recipients as "rights

bearers" versus "clients of public charity", the latter of which often carries

negative connotations such as "deviants" or "human failures" (p. 151-152). She

attaches a gender analysis to this, arguing that social assistance programs aimed at

meeting the interpreted needs of women and their children, are, not surprisingly,

categorized in the dependent, individualized and domestic policy frames (p. 154).

Assuming the therapeutic needs of women who have been charged with IPV are

the same as men is a demonstration of the socio-political *interpretation* of need on

behalf of women, rather than the *satisfaction* of what therapeutically, emotionally

and financially women need based on a participatory process (p. 156).

It is helpful at this juncture to link this analysis and literature review with my

experience and observation of what is happening in actual practice. This next

section examines the work with women who have been charged with IPV in an

Ontario context, and program statistics are drawn from treatment programming as

offered in Hamilton.

Same Needs? The Current Context of Women, Duluth Model and IPV Intervention
As evidenced in the historical review, the initial application and integration of the

Duluth Model of intervention for those who have been charged with IPV existed

in a context where offenders were newly becoming a part of the equation of how

to work towards ending violence and abuse. These offenders were assumed to be

entirely male offenders of violence and abuse against their heterosexual female

partners, as evidenced in its curriculum name, "Education groups for men who

batter: The Duluth Model". In other words, treatment programming revolved

around this static understanding of the gender of perpetrators and victims.

However, as the charging of women has increased, this fixed understanding has

been unsettled and the presence of female offenders has crept into the work of

offender accountability, and into the literature. For example, since its inception in

2007, the Women's Anti-Violence and Abuse program, the treatment program for

female offenders of domestic violence in which I worked in Hamilton, saw its

referral rates double every year (Gillespie Tozer, 2011). Evidence of this

phenomenon is also present in the literature, as noted by Hirschel & Buzawa

(2002) in their assertion that the number of women being arrested for IPV is on

the rise (p. 1450). These authors connect the increased rates of women being

charged to the unintended consequences of mandatory charging, an extensively

researched process by which women are increasingly arrested as the "primary

aggressor" in incidents of opposite-sex domestic violence; or both the woman and

man are construed as engaging in behaviours falling under domestic violence acts

with the result that both are charged, often referred to as a dual charge or dual

arrest (p. 1455).

As the Duluth model is the curriculum base in the province of Ontario, the Partner

Assault Response (PAR) program manual (2003) does state the following in its

justification for the gender neutral term 'domestic violence':

> In rare cases, heterosexual men, are also abused by their partners. Note,
> however, these standards refer primarily to male perpetrators and female
> victims to reflect the predominance of these situations as well as making
> the document easier to read (p. 3).

However, the manual makes no specific programming recommendations or

principles for working with female offenders of IPV. It is clear that this position

is at least in some part, problematic, as female offender referrals continue to

increase significantly and consistently every year. The Ontario Ministry of the

Attorney General asks service providers to report quarterly statistics on how many

women are being served through the PAR program but, in my experience, does

not provide any formal policy directive as to how to respond to them

programmatically.

No Evidence Necessary? Evidence Based Practice and Interventions for

Offenders

As initially raised as a concern by Dutton & Corvo, it remains curious, especially

when considering the current neoliberal context of social work practice, why there

is an absence of evidence based treatment programming for offenders. Although

evidence based practice has its origins within the medical movement, it has

certainly inserted itself into many areas of social work, including hospital social

work, mental health, education and child welfare (Gilgun, 2005, p. 52). And

surely when it is framed by McDonald (2006, p. 169) as having an intent to

"promote a more effective and accountable social work", it poses alluring

offerings to those of us working in sectors where research and evidence has not

been a priority in the creation and implementation of policy.

On an informal basis, service providers are advised to apply Duluth-based PAR to

work with female offenders. In the program in which I worked, 70 women and

858 men were provided service in the PAR program in 2011; women made up

7.5% of the overall client population. The lack of policy development, of

evidence based practice, to guide responses to female perpetrated intimate partner

violence sends a clear statement about a lack of distinction and difference in the

choice of violence between men and women. Although in their critique of the

Duluth Model, Dutton & Corvo (2006) argue that in taking this approach the

model denies that women are ever intentionally violent (p. 463), I would argue

that by not constructing policy or programming specifically targeted to the

population being served or addressed, we are making assumptions that distinction

does not exist. The need interpretation that is occurring here is that women as

offenders have the same needs as do men requiring treatment following domestic

violence charges. More concretely, by not creating programming for female

offenders of intimate partner violence and by simply applying male-based

curriculum to female offenders, we are comfortable with the concept that women

are violent for the same reasons as men. Within the context of McKenzie & Wharf

(2010) one may also conclude that this is not an accidental consequence, but

rather an example of the "privatization of conflict" or ignorance of a policy issue

within the current neo-liberal era in Canadian politics (pp. 56-58).

This is the context, as reflected upon in the Introduction, in which my research

question exists – a tension created for both service users and service providers

alike, who often feel they are navigating and negotiating this work alone and in

the dark.

I. METHODOLOGY

My methodological pathway into my thesis research was a turbulent one. I had

initially envisioned a qualitative study of women with lived experience of

domestic violence criminalization and the PAR program, amplifying their seldom

heard voices. A mix of factors led me, however, to focus my questions on service

providers working with these women. The practical limits of a master's thesis

made only a small qualitative study possible, and I knew I would be able to

pursue it more fully in my doctoral studies. Further, with the limits of a master's

program, I came to see value in exploring service providers' experiences of the

tensions of IPV programming and thus, carried out a conceptual analysis of the

literature and building upon it, an online survey of service providers. This change

in approach was, however, a challenging one for me as I had to rethink my

assumptions about what constitutes a critical feminist approach to my topic. In

describing this rather bumpy methodological pathway, I begin by setting out the

critical feminist theoretical frame that is the backdrop to my work, as a way of

resolving and making peace with some of the tensions perceived.

Gender at the Heart of Inquiry: The Critical Feminist Theoretical Framework

Crotty (1998) offers that the research process is composed of four basic elements:

epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods (p. 3). In an

attempt to present a structured framework for research design, Crotty defines

epistemology as "the theory of knowledge that defines what kind of knowledge is possible and legitimate", and theoretical framework as "the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria" (p. 5). When considering these definitions within the context of my research question, it is clear that I am operating from a constructionist epistemology and a critical feminist framework. Although there was transformation in my question and decision about how to explore it through methodology and methods, both the epistemology and theoretical perspective of this project have remained constant, which may be in keeping with the nature of Crotty's definition – it is unlikely that an understanding of where knowledge comes from and/or a philosophical stance will alter, in the way in which methodology or methods might. For the purposes of this chapter, I will be focusing on how my critical feminist theoretical framework has shaped my research question.

Kreuger & Neuman (2006) describe a critical theoretical framework of social science and research as one that "goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for themselves" (p. 83). The authors highlight that critical theory is both change and action-oriented, as is feminist theory (p. 83, 90), making the two compatible theoretical frameworks. Lather (1988) adds to these broad principles of feminist research in stating that in order to be engaged in feminist research, the researcher must place the "social construction of gender" at the centre of her inquiry (p. 571). Like Kreuger & Neuman, Lather believes in the

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change-oriented nature of feminist research, however she moves on to state that the ultimate goal of feminist research is to correct both the "invisibility and distortion" of female experience, in ways that are relevant to ending gender inequality (p. 571).

As explored in my Introduction, I came to my research question after being faced with a recurring issue amongst seasoned staff that I was supervising in a Partner Assault Response (PAR) program. Working with women who had been charged with a "domestic violence offence" was viewed as being challenging in a way that the same work with male offenders was not, and through my observation of these groups, I was able to see this issue through a critical feminist lens. Through the stories of both the service users and providers, I learned that the act of violence predominantly differed for women in terms of origin, intent, impacts and available options. In relying on curriculum based on a male model of violence - that is, their violence was a choice based on their need/desire for power and control- to increase accountability and reduce recidivism – we were doing an immense disservice to service users, service providers and the larger community.

During my group observation, and in conversation with staff who were actively working with this population, I began to align myself with the view that intimate partner violence (IPV) is gendered in nature, meaning that the choice, intent and impact of IPV is different for males and females, perpetrators and victims (Muftic, Bouffard & Bouffard, 2007, p. 756), thereby responding to Lather's (1988) call that feminist research should centre gender at the heart of the inquiry (p. 571). Although I have reviewed bodies of knowledge that operate from a

more gender-neutral perspective of violence in intimate relationships, as demonstrated in the literature review, these have been considered and utilized to create a more critically informed feminist perspective, rather than a perspective that does not focus on the social construction of gender.

Further, the reason for the research project is not simply for scientific observation and laws of events or to understand social life and how meaning is constructed, as positivist or interpretive reasoning may suggest (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006, p. 73, 78). Rather, it is my hope that this research, its findings and my analysis, has the potential to inform change in policy, curriculum development, program implementation and direct practice work. When considered from this angle, my reason for research aligns itself alongside critical reasons to critique and transform existing structures, as well as feminist research principles of being action-oriented and advancing feminist values (p. 83, 90). It is my intent that this theoretical framework will continue to shape my research project into feminist, socially just, social work research that is citizenship-oriented, action-focused and responsive and reflective of change.

Methodology and Methods

Transitioning back to Crotty's offering of a structured research project, methodologies and methods are next to be explored in the research process. Crotty (1998) defines methodologies as the "strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the

choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes"; and methods as the

"techniques or procedures used to gather and analyze data related to some

research question or hypothesis" (p. 5-6). Just as a critical feminist theoretical

framework for my thesis seemed self-evident, because of the analysis I bring to

my practice, my commitment to social change in women's interests, so had –

initially – a qualitative research approach. I had been very much influenced by

feminist methodological arguments of the 1970s and 1980s that connected

quantitative methods with positivism and saw qualitative methods as the way to

ensure that women's long unheard voices would be heard. As noted earlier, I

moved from this position over the course of the project – partly as my questions

shifted and partly through reading more recent analyses of the relation between

epistemology, theory and methodology that avoid opposition of quantitative and

qualitative methods.

I became increasingly interested in how gender is understood in the way

mandated programs are framed, and how this translates into the actual provision

of service to female offenders. As I have demonstrated in the first chapter, this

was greatly informed by my work and leadership in the field. In addition, my

attendance at the Canadian Domestic Violence Conference in February 2013

came at a pivotal time when I was conceptualizing the project. I became intrigued

about what others might be doing in the field regarding work with female

offenders. Were the struggles the same? Were the mandates in different

provinces the same? Was my experience reflective of wider trends within the

political system of responding to violence and abuse? This curiosity was initially

an intellectual and inward process; however, it also provided the opportunity to

engage in the feminist principle of action-oriented analysis and research. If other

communities and practitioners had found ways of creating and delivering

programming that satisfied the feminist and self-interpreted needs (Fraser, 1989,

p. 158) of female offenders, I wanted to know about it and consider its application

in my own community and scope of practice.

To pursue this line of questioning, I took a two-fold methodological approach.

First, I engaged in an analysis of the extensive literature (summarized above) on

PAR programs and female offenders, using Schon & Rein's concept of policy

framing, as described below. Secondly, I carried out an online survey of service

providers that explored dimensions of their work and that included questions

incorporating the policy frame distinctions that emerged from the literature

analysis. The methods employed in each of these portions of research are

elaborated below.

Interventions for Female Offenders: Policy Frame Analysis

As theorized by Fraser (1989), the way in which a problem or issue gets framed is

often reflective of the political system, or context in which it exists (p. 145). As I

worked through the review of literature it became apparent that the way in which

the issue of violence itself was framed largely impacted the data, findings and

recommendations about what treatment for female offenders should look like. As

revealed in the previous chapter, it can be difficult to wade through this body of

literature that is often conflicting and contradictory and attempt to draw some

conclusions about what type of intervention is needed and best suited for female

offenders of IPV. Add to that Fraser's concept of need satisfaction versus need

interpretation, and the terrain becomes increasingly difficult to navigate. While it

proved useful to engage in an analysis of practice through the perspectives of

service providers, it also appeared beneficial to utilize an analysis of policy, to

foster an understanding about how offender treatment programming came to be

and continues to be framed from a both a policy and political standpoint.

Schon & Rein (1994) present the concept of "policy frames" in their chapter

within *Frame reflection: toward the resolution of intractable policy controversies*.

The authors suggest that positions on policy definition, formation and

implementation are directly impacted by the beliefs, perceptions and appreciations

from which they flow (p. 23). Essentially, how we choose to frame a social

problem, will effectively (or ineffectively) impact the policy aimed at responding

to this issue (p. 23). The authors argue that the struggle of framing an issue,

engaged by opposing perspectives, are "symbolic contests" over the social

meaning of an issue domain, where "meaning implies not only what is at issue,

but what is to be done" (p. 29).

There is a complex and wide-ranging body of literature on women offenders and

treatment programming that varies by discipline, epistemological and theoretical

framing, and is considerably distanced from the proximity of practice and

women's lives. It is hard to discern any structure in its conceptualization of

gender. Schon & Rein's (1994) policy framing approach as a way of informing

practice illuminated an underlying tense contradiction between policy and

practice, which I then integrated into the design of an online questionnaire. The

"struggles of meaning" that they see at play in competing policy frames seemed

important to explore from the perspective of those actually engaged in the work of

policy implementation – how did service providers interpret their work, the needs

of the women with whom they work, and the value for women of their

interventions.

Survey of Offender Treatment Service Providers

I engaged in an online quantitative survey of service providers with much reserve,

for the reasons noted briefly in the beginning of this chapter. Some of this anxiety

was alleviated as I explored broader conceptualizations of the methods that are

associated with feminist research. Fonow & Cook (2005) consider the diversified

methods under a feminist theoretical framework to be an exciting trend, and

provide a list of over 35 methods that are either qualitative or quantitative in

methodological origin and have come to be associated with feminist research,

including survey methods and content analysis (p. 2214). Kelly, Regan & Burton

(1992) offer the perspective that what makes feminist research indeed feminist, is

less about the method used, and more about how it is used and what it is used for

(p. 150). This perspective brings me back to how the theoretical framework

becomes apparent in my research through the centering of the social construction

of gender and through the intent that it be used for structural change in how we

engage with women who have been charged with violence in their intimate relationships.

Additionally, the survey method made sense in its relationship to the first type of methodological approach used. Not only was the policy analysis a backdrop for the direction and focus of the questions presented, but the survey served to illuminate what was occurring at the direct service level. In doing so, it aimed to marry policy and practice insights on a larger scale than individual interviews might have provided.

The survey design described below received approval from the McMaster Research Ethics Board.

Sample

I was interested in locating a sample of service providers with experience of working in PAR, and to do so, recruited participants through a snowballing approach (Bryman, 2001, p. 85). In responding to feminist criticisms that quantitative surveying can be reflective of male values of control (Mies, 1983, p. 68), it is important to note that sampling was considered in this manner as a means to create a relevant and reflective population sample, rather than control who can and cannot participate.

Recruitment emails with information about the study and an invitation to participate were distributed through two channels. The first (Appendix A) was

directed to nine individuals in the Hamilton community and beyond who are

directly involved in this work. The second type of recruitment email (Appendix

B) was sent to a known total of 38 social service agencies providing PAR or BIP

programming to female offenders in Ontario and some other parts of Canada.

Supervisors or program managers were asked to forward the email to colleagues

and associates known to be engaged in providing treatment programming to

women charged with domestic violence in their communities. Both recruitment

sets contained a letter of information (Appendix C) fully outlining the purpose

and intent of the project. The distribution of the invitation to participate, the letter

of information and a link to the online survey, was through an interceding survey

administrator with the intent of minimizing any possibility that individuals would

feel pressured to respond and any perceived conflicts of interest that might arise

from my previous role of team leader of a PAR program.

One of the challenges faced in this project was assembling a sampling frame, a list

of service providers engaged in this work. Names for IPV programs differed

significantly within and between provinces and some programs appeared to be

offered during incarceration and/or through probation and parole services, so were

challenging to engage under the timeframe of this project.

A total of 22 people responded, constituting a non-probability sample (Bryman,

2001, p. 85). Because of the second style of recruitment and the request to all its

recipients that they forward it to colleagues or other programs known to them, a

response rate is difficult to calculate, as it is impossible to know how many

surveys were forwarded and distributed, and whether a lack of response is

reflective of respondent disinterest or ineffective survey distribution. However,

based on the number of recipients (9 using recruitment method #1 and 38 using

recruitment method #2), a maximum response rate of 46.8% may be tentatively

calculated.

Respondents were reminded that they were not obligated to respond to all of the

questions in order to complete the survey, an option exercised by some so that

some of the questions have less than 22 responses.

The detailed make-up of the sample is described in the next section. Although it

was somewhat smaller than initially hoped, the responses provided very useful

insight into how service delivery is being navigated, considered and developed in

the complex field of anti-violence work and female offenders. In addition, its size

and the pattern of non-response to some questions prompted thinking about the

questionnaire design which is taken up in the methodological reflections in the

Discussion.

Data Collection: Online Questionnaire

In keeping with Mason's (2002) caution to be practically minded in ways that are

intellectually sound to the research (p. 44), the use of a self-completed online

questionnaire was employed to solicit data from service providers. Many of the

advantages of this method were practical in nature, but some of them also respond

to feminist critiques of quantitative research design. Due to the time constraints

of this research project, a self-completed questionnaire offered me as a lone

researcher, the possibility of soliciting data from a wider population (Kreuger &

Neuman, 2006, p. 283).   Response rates are also reported as being high for a

target population with a strong interest, which I hoped would be applicable for my

non-probability sample of those involved in the work (p. 284). Bryman (2001)

further adds that self-completion questionnaires can reduce interviewer variability

as well as interviewer effects (p. 130). Canadian survey software FluidSurvey©

was purchased and utilized for the online creation of the survey and subsequent

data analysis.

The survey was divided into three sections (Appendix D). The first two included

questions on respondents' programs and on their own backgrounds and were,

thus, designed to elicit information about the contexts of their practice. The third

section included questions on the relation between gender and violence. The

questions in this section were developed from the results of policy frame analysis

in effort to explore succinctly how gender is understood, and integrated into

programming and practice. The use of both closed and open questions throughout

the survey was a further attempt to ensure quantitative methodology remains

reflective of feminist research principles. Kreuger & Neuman (2006) offer that

when used in conjunction with closed questions, open questions on a practical

level can engage respondents by changing the pace of the survey and developing

rapport (p. 272). Further, the authors argue that to learn how a respondent

inwardly thinks and feels about a topic may only be solicited through open

questions (p. 272). In addition to open questions, respondents were encouraged to

supply written comments at the end of each section of questions, as a further way

of capturing contextual responses, internal perspectives and missing pieces of

knowledge.

The resulting quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed thematically and are

presented in the following findings section.

II. FINDINGS

Results of Policy Frame Analysis: Struggles for Meaning

In my review of the literature on treatment responses to Intimate Partner Violence, I was able to identify three meanings of gender – meanings that, as Schon & Rein underscore in their conceptualization of policy frames, constitute the relationship between gender and violence differently, leading to different policy and program responses and recommendations.

Frame One: Gender Specific

The first frame of female perpetrated IPV is a gender-specific lens of violence and abuse. Operating under a radical feminist analysis, this frame proposes that when women use violence, they do so in a reactionary and retaliatory fashion toward violence that they themselves are experiencing, either currently or historically. In their research on women arrested for IPV, Muftic, Bouffard & Bouffard (2007) reference many studies that propose IPV is gendered in nature, meaning that the choice, intent and impact of IPV is different for males and females, perpetrators and victims (p. 756). The authors further move on to cite Barnett et al.'s (1997) study of rationales for male versus female perpetrated violence in that men choose to be violent to assert power and control, and women choose violence as a means of protecting themselves and/or their children (p. 757). These findings are certainly in line with the Duluth Model of IPV in its overall analysis of violence and abuse, and are shared by many in the field, including, Dobash & Dobash

(2004); Gabora et al. (2007); McMahon & Pence (2003) and Pollack, Green & Allspach (2005).

Loseke & Kurz (2005) explore impact in their analysis by asserting that women are more likely to experience fear as a result of violence perpetrated against them and that women experience far more injuries that are far more serious, than the injuries of men (p. 89). These authors conclude that a gendered analysis is critical when examining the issue of intimate partner violence, and that when we fail to do so, we often justify male perpetrated violence and reduce services and support to women (p. 93). They finish with a call that "through a gendered perspective…we can accurately identify the causes and consequences of violence and develop effective strategies for reducing unacceptably high rates of violence" (p. 93).

Miller (2001) argues that should women be made to attend domestic violence treatment programming for their choice of violence, these programs must recognize that although violence is a choice, women often have fewer choices than their male partners and will be more impacted by their criminalization (p. 1366-8). She proposes that in addition to a contextual gendered analysis of women's choice of violence, offender programming designed for women should be closely linked to victim services in offering legal, transitional and therapeutic support (p. 1366). When framed from a gender-specific perspective, this programming response and potential policy initiatives present as logical, warranted and necessary.

Frame Two: Gender Neutral

The second social problem framing that emerges in the literature, research and

through this exercise in policy analysis, is one that characterizes violence and

abuse within intimate relationships as gender neutral. In significant contrast to a

gender specific feminist perspective, some researchers from a family sociology

and postmodern framework offer us startlingly different analysis when identifying

and defining the issue. In working from a gender neutral perspective, much of the

work of Straus (2005) suggests that women are just as likely to resort to using

violence against their intimate partners as are men, and that the increasing rates of

women arrested for domestic violence are reflective of this phenomenon (p. 64-7).

Straus (2005) proposes that female perpetrated violence is increasing, remains

underrepresented and is not predominantly a form of resistance (p. 65). He takes

the position that the "single-problem" focus of female perpetrated violence, which

is prevalent in critical feminist frameworks, is lacking in social science evidence.

He discredits any discussion that there is a difference in female versus male

perpetrated violence against intimate partners, arguing that the only place where

evidence has demonstrated difference is in the extent of injury (p. 65).

This gender neutral framing also undergirds the work of Dutton & Corvo (2006),

as illustrated in their assertions below:

> male dominant couples constitute only 9.6% of all couples (Coleman &
> Straus,1985); women are at least as violent as men (Archer, 2000); women
> are more likely to use severe violence against nonviolent men than the
> converse (Stets & Straus, 1992a,b); powerlessness rather than power
> seems related to male violence; [and] there are data contradicting the idea

that men in North America find violence against their wives acceptable
(Dutton, 1994; Simon et al., 2001) (p. 464).

Not only do Dutton & Corvo challenge the notion that women engage in violence

that comes from a different rationale point, they further attack the Duluth Model

in its current application and approach to violence and abuse. The authors claim

that this is an outmoded and poorly-informed policy response to IPV, and that its

reliance on a patriarchal and feminist analysis results in censorship and a lack of

holistic intervention towards the issue (p. 458).   In the context of social policy

geared to offenders of IPV, the authors state:

> In the evolution of public policy response to social problems, the path
> often followed is an initial politicizing of the issue, followed by programs,
> followed by evaluations research, followed by a more detailed
> specification of etiology, risk and program response. This process has
> been impeded by the ideological structures inherent in the patriarchal
> view. The science has moved well beyond the policy. It is time for the
> policy to change (p. 478).

This desire for change in social policy responses to female offenders of IPV is

also articulated by Carney et al. (2006), who call for research that

reconceptualises partner abuse treatment for female offenders that will challenge

the "prevailing assumptions that men's abuse against their female partners is

grown directly out of patriarchy" (p. 114).

Frame Three: Gender Absent

The third framing perspective evident in the literature and research construes

violence and abuse as gender absent. This is most concretely articulated by

Felson (2002) in his text, *Violence & gender re-examined*, where, taking what he terms a "scientific approach", he argues that violence against women should be understood as violence, not sexism and its examination belongs under the study of violence, not gender (p. 4-5). Felson argues that violence perpetrated against women is not "special", in that it should be given no more or less attention than other forms of violence in our society (p. 203). Throughout the text he presents numerous oppositions and counter arguments to a feminist framing of violence and abuse, and in doing so, echoes much of the evidence used in a gender neutral framing perspective, including that women are often more violent than men and that women are more likely to be controlling of their male partners (p. 12, 14). He makes additional anti-feminist arguments that sexual abuse perpetrated by women is not about power and control, but rather a desire for sex and intimacy (p. 175); that traditional roles of men and women actually lead to a decrease in violence based on chivalrous attitudes that men should be protective of women (p. 67); and finally, that for the purposes of crime prevention, it is useful to recognize that crime victims sometimes make mistakes that play a role in their victimization and that it is generally more effective to try to change the behaviour of potential victims than that of potential offenders (p. 211).

Although some of these arguments are similar to gender neutral arguments, he also presents a perspective that challenges this approach as well. Rather than concern ourselves with who is perpetrating violence, Felson argues that we need to focus the attention to what is being perpetrated (p. 7). Felson aggressively

challenges both feminist-based and sociology-based social policy regarding IPV

for three reasons:

> 1) There is no evidence that the feminist approach has had any effect on reducing rates of violence against women, 2) bad research produces bad public policy and 3) social scientists lose credibility when they generate information on social problems that is later revealed to be false (p. 223).

Compared to the gender specific and gender neutral policy frames of women's

violence, Felson's call to focus on the violence itself presents a vastly different

perspective on framing this social political issue, he advocates a frame that is void

of any contextual analysis. Further still, while the other two frames do

incorporate contextual analysis, they do so from oppositional perspectives,

creating three distinct and separate lenses with which to examine the issue of

work with women. The struggles for meaning implicit in these three very

different frames were the focus of the online survey, and informed the

construction of the questions. While this was done with the intention to bridge the

two methods utilized, the findings of the analysis of practice from the

respondents' review of their work with women reveal a sense of these clashing

policy frames within the field.

Struggles for Meaning through the Analysis of Practice

Participants and their Programs: Context of Responses

Of the respondents who completed the online questionnaire, 14 identified as being

front line counsellors engaging in group facilitation, although half of these (N=7)

also reported providing individual counselling. Half of respondents (11) reported

being in these roles for two to four years, and the longest involvement in the field

of work with female offenders was five to seven years, as identified by 5

respondents. This relatively short experience in the field may be reflective of a

high percent of turnover in this work, or it could be attributed to work with

women charged with domestic violence as being a newly evolving field. For

example, most respondents (N=8) reported their agency offering Partner Assault

Response (PAR) or Batterer's Intervention (BIP) programs to men for the past ten

to fourteen years, and almost a quarter of respondents (N=4) reported agency

programs established for twenty years or more. Programming offered to women,

however, was presented as being much younger in its institution, as the majority

(N=11) of programs offering services to women had been in practice for less than

five years. What is interesting though, is that three respondents did report that

their *agencies* have been providing service to women for twenty years or more,

which is three quarters of the group that reported doing this work with men for

that period of time. This raises interesting questions about how new this

'phenomenon' of women being charged with violence in their intimate

relationships actually is, and whether this work has been happening in some

places for longer than I had initially imagined. I remain curious about whether

this work has its origins in the women's shelter movement and as such, may have feminist, grassroots foundations, rather than mandated ones – a curiosity that could not be pursued with the limited survey data.

Aspects of programming such as length of service and number of service users were explored to gauge how adequate participants considered their programs, adequacy of service being, of course, a concern across social service sectors as neoliberal reforms constrain service provision.

Most respondents (N=9) reported that their program was 16 weeks in length, which is the current mandated expectation from the Ministry of the Attorney General in Ontario, where I infer most of the respondents came from. In regards to what might be considered an ideal length of service delivery, the responses were relatively varied. Five stated that they would value a longer program, whether it was 20 or 24 weeks, whereas eight indicated a desire for shorter programming, ranging from 8-14 weeks in duration. An additional five respondents felt that programming was sufficiently offered at 16 weeks.

Table 1

Current and Ideal Program Lengths Compared
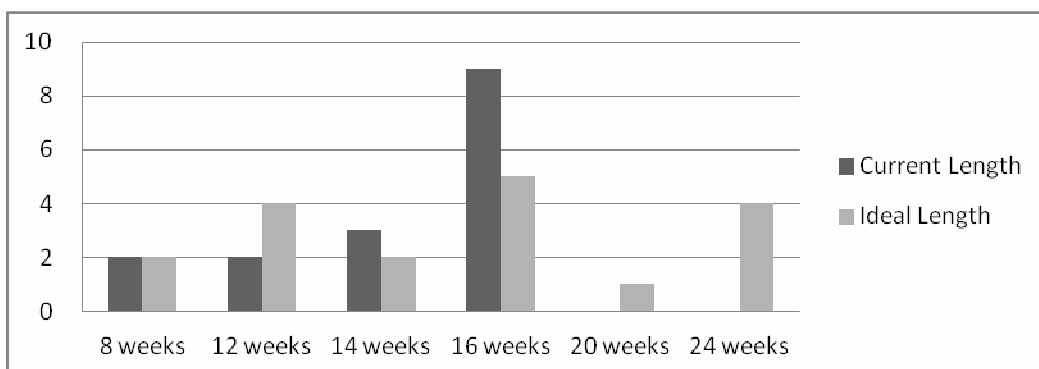
While it is difficult to draw conclusions about what information this offers us, especially when we are unable to compare individual responses here to their responses elsewhere, this result may reflect that a desire to implement programming aimed more specifically at the needs of women doesn't necessarily coincide with a requirement to lengthen programming.. There may be a sense of the call to do something differently and more effectively, rather than adding onto what already exists. Perhaps women don't need longer programming, but rather better programming.

Responses to questions about the frequency with which PAR programs were offered to women did, however, shed light onto concerns that women's needs may not be addressed in the same way that men's were. Twelve respondents reported that services to women within their agency were offered less than five times annually, and four respondents felt that the frequency of which the program was offered at their agency was not sufficiently frequent. Their narrative responses indicated that there were legal consequences for women in the lack of frequency in program delivery because, as a result, women could experience extended probation supervision or may be breached with a Failure to Comply with their probation order. Some also felt that less frequency resulted in longer wait times for service, which could result in a loss of contact with a service user and did not allow women to address more immediate emotional, physical and financial needs, which could – in turn – decrease their capacity to take as much from the group program as they could. Other respondents stated that groups are offered when they

have ten women to fill them up, and that in some more rural areas, programming

is alternated between two locations or sometimes not offered at all.

There was also a sense that a lack of frequency in service may increase barriers to

women regarding accessibility, and that there was a sense of gender bias in the

way in which programming to women is offered.

> [As] we only run ONE group program at a time, women do not have
> flexibility in regards to finding a day or time that is conducive to other
> commitments (i.e. school, parenting classes, employment, or any other
> commitments of this nature). This increases a woman's risk of poverty in
> various ways and may further victimize women into a larger legal system
> which could lead to child welfare involvement and other consequences for
> their children.

This narrative response simultaneously demonstrates that impacts may differ for

women than for men, and that these impacts may affect others, including children,

in different ways.

Program Models: Shifting Tensions

All but one of the respondents reported that their programs received funding,

either in full or in part, from government. In other words, 95% of programs

discussed in the survey were provincially-mandated to some degree. It is my

assumption, based on my own experience doing this work in Hamilton Ontario,

that with government funding come requirements and constraints regarding

program and curriculum implementation.

Table 2
Program Funding Sources

Response	Percentage	Count
Government funding	95%	18
Fee-for-service	84%	16
Donations/fundraising efforts	21%	4
	Total Responses	**19**

In response to literature reviewed indicating that the Duluth model of practice has

been and continues to be the dominant framework for practice with offenders of

domestic violence, origins and current frameworks were explored as a way of

determining whether or not this was reflected in the practice experience of

respondents.

Table 3
Program Foundational Frameworks

Response	Percentage	Count
Duluth (power & control)	84%	16
Psycho-Educational	74%	14
Cognitive Behavioural	42%	8
Narrative/Invitational	42%	8
Total Responses	**19**	

As Table 3 indicates, 16 respondents identified the Duluth model as being the

foundational model of practice in their programs, which is in keeping with much

of the literature reviewed. However, as respondents were invited to check as

many responses as were applicable, a significant portion (N=14) also identified

origins in Psycho-Educational frameworks. Participants were asked to identify, if

they chose more than one foundational framework, which they felt was the

primary framework and their understanding of why. Of the eleven that chose to

reflect on their choice of more than one option, eight indicated that Duluth was

the primary foundation. Several of their open-ended reflections into the

widespread institutionalization of the Duluth model honour the roots and footings

of this perspective of practice, as evident in the following narrative response:

> The model which our program primarily uses is the Duluth model, coupled
> with a narrative and invitational approach. The Duluth model is essential
> to our program, as it stresses accountability on the person responsible for
> the abuse, removing the blame from the victim. It also challenges
> men/women to explore the ways in which they have justified and
> rationalized their negative behaviour, thus putting the onus on them to
> take responsibility for their actions and choice.

Some of the open-ended responses acknowledged that Duluth provided the initial

and possibly only framework for engaging offenders therapeutically, which

begins to take a look at the seeming lack of options or program alternatives at the

time:

> Like many of the initial PAR program models Duluth was the primary and
> initial foundational frameworks as it outlined the dynamics of power and
> control. Given the restrictions of time, it was also the most structured at
> the onset of program delivery.

This thread of Duluth being solitary in its offerings of work with offenders is

further taken up by some of the respondents in ways that are similar to much of

the feminist and non-feminist critiques of the model, picking up themes that the

program may be under-examined in both its usefulness and effectiveness.

> I believe that the Duluth model was the primary approach due to it being the "only" available model for so long. No one questioned its effectiveness until recently and now we are looking at integrating other approaches that might be more appropriate. Recent research findings have indicated that there are different "types of abusers" suggesting that treatment approach cannot be "one size fits all". Therefore, we have conducted a literature review to summarize recent findings about the effectiveness of the different approaches and now are in the process of revamping our curriculum.

It remains interesting then as to how some of these diverse reflections that honour, question and challenge the Duluth model of practice may get taken up in the field in regards to current models of practice.

Besides interest in the foundations of respondents' programs, I was also attentive to know about their current operations.

Table 4

Current Program Service Modalities

Response	Percentage	Count
Psycho-Educational	69%	11
Narrative/Invitational	56%	9
Cognitive-Behavioural	44%	7
Duluth Model	44%	7
Other (not identified)	12%	2
Strengths-Based/Solution Focused	6%	1
Trauma-Informed	6%	1
Stages of Change (transtheoretical)	6%	1
Not sure	6%	1
	Total Responses	16

As Table 4 indicates, there has been a distinct shift *away* from Duluth as the

primary model of service. While sixteen reported that it was the model used

originally by their programs, only seven said that it continued to be so. When

asked to reflect on some of the reasons for a shift away from Duluth, many of the

participants reflected on an increased demand to turn towards programming that

more accurately and holistically reflected the needs of program participants, as

noted in the following two examples:

> The growing needs of the individuals within the program [accounted for a
> shift away from foundational model(s)]. There is an ever increasing
> disclosure of childhood/adolescent trauma by the participants in the group

that makes it of paramount importance to include trauma informed
frameworks in the program.

Learning what women need for this program has shifted our focus from
the power/control models.

As demonstrated in the last narrative example, there was also an emphasis to

place women at the centre of programming, which may reveal a sense that this

was not previously occurring in the foundational model of practice. These

narratives also hint that the foundational model of practice may not have been

reflective of the reasons women were charged with domestic violence in the first

place.

There was a shift while I was providing PAR [Partner Assault Response]
to women as the Duluth model did not fit the main reasons that were
bringing women to PAR. The majority of the women seen were there due
to using violent resistance as a direct result of their partner's violent and
controlling behaviour. As such, our service delivery shifted to provide
psycho-education to women.

Consideration for how many of the women have experienced abuse at the
hands of a man, whether a partner and/or caregiver in their childhood,
has definitely been taken into consideration in regards to service modality.
Also, the extensive nature of women who have experienced some form of
trauma is also considered in regards to creating a service modality which
invites women to understand and explore their use of violence and or
abusive behavior in a manner which also promotes self-healing and
growth.

In participants' responses to this question, there doesn't appear to be a clear

picture of what, if anything, has taken the place of Duluth. Participants were

invited to identify which was their primary practice model, if they indicated

working from more than one practice model. Of the eight who elaborated in the

open narrative section provided, 2 identified as Narrative/Invitational as being

dominant, 2 identified Duluth remaining dominant, 2 disclosed Psycho-

Educational as being their primary framework, 1 concluded Cognitive

Behavioural was predominant and one could not identify one singular model as

being primary.

These mixed responses may be related to a third theme identified in the narrative

section that shifts in program delivery have reflected the recognition that a

singular model is problematic:

> Our program has incorporated various aspects of CBT, Narrative and
> Invitational frameworks, based on the understanding that each piece
> contributes towards a more holistic approach.
>
> It is necessary to be multi-modal in order to be client-centred. Women
> enter the program with different experiences, different levels of
> acceptance, awareness, motivation and different coping strategies, with
> respect to both abusive behaviour experienced and engaged in.

Respondents utilized the open narrative section at the end of this line of

questioning to reflect upon what these shifts towards a more combined approach

looks and feels like in direct service to women with lived experience. It was clear

that the duality of women being both offenders and victims, present and/or

historical, was a tension that service providers felt was not fully resolved or

responded to in foundational practice models, such as Duluth. Some participants

articulated this broadened view of women who have been charged with domestic

violence as being essential to program analysis and delivery.

> From my experience facilitating groups and managing women's PAR
> program it is important to maintain awareness regarding the history of
> victimization that many of the women have experienced in their lives. If
> not acknowledged and addressed, it can become a barrier to the woman's
> ability to take control of her abusive behaviour. I believe that perpetrators
> of violence (both male and female) need to be heard before we can
> expect them to hear us. This work needs to be done delicately and with

empathy. The Duluth model makes it hard at times to do such work from a non-judgmental approach.

Our program focuses primarily on holding women accountable for their negative responses, however we approach the women's program from a lens which acknowledges that most women in the program, are survivors of intimate partner violence themselves.

Our program possesses a nice marriage, of accountability and empathy, while allowing facilitators to identify and validate client's experiences, without justifying their use of abuse or violence. Facilitators of the program understand the dynamics of power and control and are aware of the loss of power that many women experience in a relationship in which abuse is present, and the fact that a lot of them have not accessed VAW services, which impacts their healing.

While it is of the utmost importance to factor in accountability and ownership for violence and abuse the current curriculum for women who have been charged does not take into consideration that a great number of women in the program are survivors of IPV/VAW and/or sexual assault. That being said, the curriculum would benefit from significant modification to include more trauma specific materials. This may result in a longer program delivery; however, it would also result in more comprehensive services.

Perspectives on Women's Violence: Keeping Gender at the Centre

Although the policy frame analysis was used as a way to develop and guide the

questions throughout the survey, this was most concretely and purposefully done

in the third section which sought to explore respondents' and programs'

understandings of gender and violence. The three conceptual policy frames were

used to explore how service providers understood the gendered character of their

work with female offenders, from the perspective of their agency/mandating

body, their own work and finally their perceived understanding of women's own

experience of the root causes of their violence. Participants' responses to these

questions are summarized in Table 5. It should be noted that only 13 of the 22

participants responded to the questions in this section that in hindsight were very

densely constructed for an online survey. That said, the responses obtained were

intriguing and, in many cases, were amplified in the invited narratives.

Table 5

Perspectives on Women's Violence

	Gender Specific	Gender Neutral	Gender Absent	Combination	Total Responses
Agency and/or mandating body perspective:	9 (69%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	3 (23%)	13
Front Line counsellors perspective:	9 (69%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (31%)	13
Self-Reported experiences of women:	11 (85%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (15%)	13

Most respondents (N=9) located both their program mandates and their clinical

practice in a gender specific policy frame. The four respondents who described a

combination of frames identified these as being gender specific and gender

neutral. Some noted that this was based on different types of offenders – that

some women in programs are reactively violent and this is not based on power

and control, and that others present as acting aggressively in order to gain power

and control.

> Depending on the case we are working with at times it is Gender specific
> and other times it is Gender Neutral. Not every time the woman was in

> danger or is retaliating. Many of the women talk about being "triggered" by past abuse and acting aggressively accordingly.
>
> There is a combination of gender specific and gender neutral. My experience over past 18 -24 months is that more women are initiating/using violence for power over. The aggressive women tend to be younger in age.

Another respondent identified this combination as a need stemming from a

difference in policy framing between the mandating body and the agency.

> The agency would work from a gender specific framework. MAG [Ministry of the Attorney General] would be giving direction from a gender neutral framework. The two were melded to comply with MAG standards.

As this quote suggests, there appears to be both tension and compromise between

the two frames overlapping the work. Had the question been designed to

distinguish, the perspectives of mandating body and agency, this tension could

have been more fully explored.

For example, 13 people responded to the question of whether programming

corresponds and fits with root causes of women's violence, 10 of which agreed

that it did. Of these 19, many spoke that this was due to an increased reliance on

a gender specific frame, a recognition that women are also victims, a collaborative

approach with those working in the Violence Against Women field and a gender

analysis of the impacts of violence and abuse on men and women. These

responses are exciting and shed light on encouraging trends happening in direct

practice, but they are occurring outside and in spite of mandated curriculum.

Most of the respondents (N=11) speculated that regardless of agency, mandating

body or direct clinical practice perspective, women in the program understood

their act(s) of violence in a gender specific frame. In continuing this thread of women's experiences being at the centre of programming, survey participants indicated that they felt women in their groups might like to spend more time unpacking historical trauma, as it relates to their current self and situation, interact with more up-to-date teaching tools and learning applications, and have group environments that are more welcoming and informal.

Finally, participants were asked to reflect on what they would like to see differently in their work. Of the eleven participants who responded, six focused on pragmatic changes, such as longer sessions, smaller groups, no fees and more training opportunities. Two respondents indicated a desire to offer more therapeutic linkages in their work, either to broker to other social services or offer follow-up, therapeutic sessions aimed at long term health and healing. One expressed satisfaction with their work as it currently stands, and the final two respondents indicated a desire for policy change, including increased support and understanding from mandating bodies and harsher consequences for those who re-offend against their intimate partners.

In sum, the analysis of the literature suggests that important shifts and differences are occurring in the way that women charged with IPV are construed conceptually. Further, and encouragingly, the results of this small survey of service providers suggest that there are also shifts in approaches to practice with the women, that practitioners are striving to find ways to respond to their needs.

In the discussion that follows, themes and possibilities in these shifts are taken up

and, in conclusion, some methodological reflections for future research are

considered.

IV. DISCUSSION

It has been almost thirty years since the creation of the Duluth model, and 10 years since it was outlined in the Ontario Ministry of Attorney General's program standards regarding the implementation of Partner Assault Response (PAR) programs. This program was applied with the understanding that it came from within the feminist movement, and through a collaborative community approach, was reflective of the needs of women and men around the issue of violence and abuse. As such, it is often considered to be operating from a gender specific policy frame in its conceptualization of violence, abuse, power and control.

Since this time, significant shifts have occurred regarding the circumstances under which people are referred, the categorization of offenders and victims, and who is being referred to these programs. As identified in the literature review that set the stage for the exploration of this issue, women are increasingly being charged and convicted with domestic violence offences, and subsequently are being referred to IPV offender treatment programming (Hirschel & Buzawa, 2002, p. 1450). As the survey results suggest, certainly within the last five years this has become an increasing service delivery need of PAR programs, which are now also offering group treatment programming to women referred. And while the context of this front-line work has been shifting and changing, there has been a lack of acknowledgment of and response to these shifts from a policy and governing perspective.

The study results shed light on aspects of this disjuncture between front-line

practice and policy. The survey of service providers suggested that, in the absence

of development of policy and programming for women, workers draw on their

repertoires of practice theories and on practice-based evidence (i.e. on knowledge

of women's needs and on practice experience) to adapt and modify Duluth

modelled PAR programs. The tensions they experience in this improvisational

process were illuminated conceptually by the policy frame analysis which pointed

to the troubling consequences of misapplication of Duluth to women. The

significance of this misapplication is amplified below, followed by consideration

of issues that will be critical to future efforts to develop responsive services for

women.

The Misapplication of Duluth: Shift from Gender Specific to Absent Frames

When the application of the Duluth model to women who have been charged with

IPV is closely examined, problematic shifts begin to take shape in the way in

which the issue is viewed from a policy frame. Although Duluth is considered

gender specific when applied to the abuse of women by men, its application to the

abuse of men by women swings its frame and analysis away from being gender

specific toward a gender neutral or even gender absent political frame. With a

lack of development of policy and programming specific to the needs of female

offenders, we are given a gender absent approach to the framing of this issue. As

stated earlier in this paper, when we don't make a distinction, we imply that

gender differences in the acts of violence do not exist. The irony of this current

situation cannot go unnoted: the Duluth Model is firmly rooted in a feminist,

patriarchal, gender-specific framing of IPV, however, when we apply the Duluth

Model to female offenders of violence against their male intimate partners, we see

a gender neutral approach that proposes gender doesn't matter, that all violence is

the same and warrants the same service intervention. In doing so, the policy and

programming directive becomes contradictory to everything that through its

foundational framing of the issue, the Duluth Model had asserted as important.

The need to re-evaluate programming for women offenders is clear but, as the

literature reviewed revealed, is complex and contested. In the next segment of the

discussion, I take up two questions highlighted by this study's findings that will

be critical to developing ways forward: first, how to understand and weigh the

evidence that can be brought to bear in evaluating programming for women; and

secondly, how to work toward practice informed by women's knowledge and

needs.

Developing Gender-Specific Programming for Women: Contesting 'Evidence'

Critical literature on social work and public service work exposes the highly

politicized character of the contemporary evidence based practice (EBP) narrative

– a narrative in which 'evidence' is taken and prized as an unexamined, objective

given. For example, Gray and McDonald (2006) argue that the positivist,

modernist principles of EBP are not reflective of today's context of social systems

and human interactions, and that there is no space within EBP for constructivist

and critical framing of evidence (p. 13). This point is elaborated by McDonald

(2006) who, referencing Trinder (2000), suggests that the practice, accountability

and effectiveness of social work cannot be measured or captured by EBP, due to

the fact that it is too idiosyncratic and subjective (p. 164). Contributors to this

critical literature (Gray & McDonald, 2006, p. 7) situate the embrace of EBP in

the context of the neoliberal state and new public management. In the context of

the neoliberal state committed to the pursuit of austerity and small government,

effectiveness becomes defined as the highest level of services the government can

purchase for the least amount of money and investment (McDonald, 2006, p.

165). With that economic – rather than social – framing of public services, what

counts as 'evidence' in program evaluation and design is what can be quantified

to demonstrate cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Value and effectiveness is not

framed in the terms of the service user and their needs, and the knowledge of

service users and providers is not regarded as 'evidence'.

The literature on the Duluth model that suggests it had no basis in evidence

(Dutton & Corvo, 2006, p. 460) is steeped in the narrow EBP perspective that this

literature examines so critically. When the Duluth Model is criticized for a lack

of evidence, in effect, the tool of EBP is employed to discredit and discount

entirely the evidence provided by women coming to shelters in the 1970s and

1980s and by the textured practice-based knowledge of those, then and now, who

witness their struggles and seek to respond to them. EBP as conceptualized

within the neoliberal new public management regime, privileges certain types of

evidence over others - the evidence that is practice-informed, complex and often

qualitative, as opposed to measurable in numerical and standardized ways, is not

considered evidence. As a result, service providers and users alike may internalize

the notion that their learned knowledge is not useful, reflective or 'real' evidence.

Perhaps the emphasis should be placed less on the call to 'create' new evidence,

but rather rely on and give legitimacy to the evidence that is currently being relied

upon at the practice-level, that is informed by the work and experience of women

in the field.

The misapplication of feminist-informed models of practice coupled with the

hesitance to trust in evidence-based policies and the silencing of practice-

informed evidence, creates a messy space in which to do the work. While much

of this project set out to explore how treatment programming based on a male

model of violence was applied to women who had been charged, the real richness

of the thesis came from insights into how this messy space is sorted out in direct

practice. This informs the second part of the exploration in moving forward.

The Role of Service Providers in the Satisfaction of Need

The image of navigating in the dark was frequently referenced in this project, as

this had been my sense of the context of the work. When as a team we were

tasked to respond to the unique and often crisis-laden circumstances of the women

we were providing service to within the PAR program, I often felt as though we

were bumping about in the dark. This space felt dark based on our sense that

PAR programming founded on Duluth principles did not provide us the answers that we felt would be helpful or applicable in working with women; but it was also dark due to the fact that no parameters or directives were given to guide this work. It often felt that we were considering solutions that were creative at best, and reactive at worst. The navigational tool that repeatedly served as a beacon in these team debriefing and reflection meetings as a way of determining next best steps was often the women themselves, and most specifically, the self-articulated needs of these women. It was clear in the responses of the participants in this study that this creative, critical and 'counter-agency' approach to the work is happening at other agencies as well. It is important to acknowledge the subversive nature of this front line practice and how the work described by survey respondents resonates with Prior's (2009, p. 29) three forms of counter-agency: revision, resistance and refusal.

That the needs of women could and should inform service delivery designed for female offenders was a common thread woven throughout this project, and the starting ground for much of the counter-agency actions presented. Many of the survey respondents identified the needs of women as a priority that is lacking in current service delivery. Several spoke with the understanding that a "one size fits all" approach to anti-violence work is problematic, arguably within genders but most certainly across genders, where so many of the experiences self-reported by women identify how their acts of violence differ from men's in terms of intent, impacts and consequences. Those who participated in the survey and articulated a goodness-of-fit between the practice of work and the guiding policy frame under

which it operates, demonstrated a sense that this work was being considered from a gender specific frame. Often this meant that programming had been modified, built upon and implemented with the understanding that women were often carrying narratives of their own experiences of violence and abuse into group sessions, and that programming for women should be considered and delivered in a different way than male treatment models. In doing so, front-line service providers revise, resist and at times, refuse the prescribed model of practice of Duluth in its original state.

While such creativity and subversion at the front-line is certainly encouraging, there remains concern that this evolution of the work has not transcended into policy responsive to the gender specific needs of female offenders. In engaging in program conceptualization and implementation that often occurs in the dark and certainly without the support of good policy, we can be considered to be replicating the experience of many of the initial practitioners and advocates in the women's shelter and violence against women movements who recognized that the issue of woman abuse needed to be considered and responded to differently. Further, if we look at the definition of 'counter agency' as one that seeks to produce outcomes different that those intended by policy, we seemingly come up short. The tensions presented don't appear to come from a lack of consensus about program treatment goals – both policy makers and practitioners alike appear to want to reduce recidivism in female offenders. Where the tensions lie, however, is in understanding how best to accomplish that. While it is clear from the literature review, policy and practice methodologies and data analysis that

treatment programming for women should be gender specific and attuned to service user needs, by simply applying a male oriented model through policy, we are handed a gender absent policy frame to the issue of reducing recidivism in female offenders of IPV. And while there is revision, resistance and refusal towards aspects of this policy, front line providers end up doing the work of policy makers on a micro level and often in isolation. When positioned in our current context, this is extremely problematic. In the year 2013, women are deserving of gender specific policy that reflects and responds to their needs, first as women, then as offenders. If we really are to commend ourselves for the gains made in the anti-violence field over the last forty years, we should no longer need to rely on practice that demands creativity, subversion, resistance and navigation in the dark.

There are, however, grounds for optimism in this current, unacceptable situation, optimism that was clearly reflected in the responses of front line counsellors. While it is shameful that the system has been so lacking and left both service users and service providers without appropriate policy, the critical, gender-specific reflection of the service model, its delivery and subsequent modification towards something more responsive to of women's lived experiences, undertaken by those working in this field, is truly commendable and has the opportunity to generate practice-informed policy. Prior & Barnes (2006, p. 198) draw attention to the importance of front-line workers in ensuring needs are met and social justice is delivered. Although it is somewhat discouraging to think that we are in the same place with female offenders that we were forty years ago with women

escaping violence, the fact that change came from the ground up with the

women's shelter movement, offers encouragement that the same trend can follow

regarding offender treatment programming. The creative and political work that

front-line counsellors are currently engaged in has the potential to act as the

canvas for the mapping of good, feminist and practice-informed policy and in

doing so, would be consistent with how feminist practitioners and researchers

have based their practice on women's ways of knowing. Part of the process must

involve acknowledging the current adaptations to the Duluth Model based on the

learned knowledge of working with women as evidence that can inform policy.

This project has solidified for me that this change needs to continue to be gender-

specific with programming reflective of the needs of the service users, and that

service users themselves should be the ones to guide this process. Prior & Barnes

(2006, p. 201) reflect that policy process is an 'ongoing struggle to establish

settled meanings'. It is clear that this struggle has been occurring in the dimly-lit

front-lines long enough – the task now is to insert the issue of treatment

programming for women who have been charged with IPV at the policy level

through the negotiation of the creation of gender-specific, need-driven policy. As

a result, this study informs the backdrop and makes me all the more eager to

pursue my doctoral study focus: to explore alongside women the origins and

meanings of the violence and abuse in their lives, and what, from a programming

perspective, would best respond to their self-identified needs.

Methodological and Personal Reflections

In reflecting on this project as a whole, I am pleased with several choices that were made. Although the methods were approached with significant caution and trepidation, I am glad that I allowed myself to be challenged by them. I think the combination of policy and practice analysis was beneficial in gaining insight on the totality of the issue and in coming to a better understanding of where the challenges lie. The analysis that I developed based on the work of Schon & Rein (1994) was able to lend a conceptual clarity and underscore the power of problem construction. It helped get conceptual shape for the darkness and in doing so, shed light onto why this work feels so ethically and emotionally challenging at times: in choosing to work under the Duluth model with women, a part of you feels you are letting women down, and another part feels that you are being anti-feminist in challenging a feminist-rooted model of service delivery. It is only when we consider the misapplication of Duluth to work with women, does this complicated reaction become slightly less knotty.

Although the survey was small, it generated a valuable snapshot of current practices – where the policy frames provided conceptual clarity, the practice findings unearthed how messy these tensions are on the front-lines.

Important lessons were gained regarding approaches to data gathering, especially in the use of surveys. In retrospect, applying the policy frames so concretely in the survey, as demonstrated in Table 5, was problematic in that there may have been a simpler approach to this examination. There was a sense that this

conceptualization may have over-burdened respondents and people may have

disengaged from participation. I suspect if the question was worded differently,

there might have been more participation in this line of questioning. It was

beneficial, however, to employ open-ended questions throughout the survey – this

proved to be well-utilized by participants and gave rich and insightful

perspectives into the work and its tensions. Again, these demonstrate Prior &

Barnes' (2006, p. 198) ascertain that front-line counsellors are crucial in the

consideration of subversive, critical practice.

Conclusion

In closing reflections, it is helpful to bring the conversation back to Fraser's

analysis of need. While it is acknowledged that there has been considerable

success and achievement in the perception of violence and abuse being a runaway

need, breaking loose from the enclaves of the domestic and the private, there

remains worry that the issue may have ran away from us, as feminists, as well.

The creation of perpetrator-centered responses that view only men as perpetrators

of violence, has created a system that has very little consideration for the unique

and different needs of women who have been charged with IPV. The re-

developing and critical analyzing of mandated programs such as Duluth, that do

not reflect the needs of women then become ground level political acts that can

begin to serve as torches out of this darkness. The next steps in this journey

towards centering women at the heart of this issue is to engage in this work in a

way that supports women interpreting their own needs and to challenge structures

that either misinterpret or fail to acknowledge their needs as unique. It involves

honouring the work that is already being done in this manner and using it as a

starting point for creating evidence-informed policy. In striving towards this, will

we finally be able to truly respond to the satisfaction of the therapeutic, emotional

and judicial needs of women charged with IPV, rather than continuing along the

path of need interpretation.

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VI. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Professional Contacts Email Script

Title of Project: **Circling the Square: Service providers experiences working
with female offenders of intimate partner violence**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by **Dana Gillespie
Tozer**, under the supervision of **Dr. Jane Aronson, School of Social Work** of
the McMaster University, Canada. The study is for a Master of Social Work
thesis.

The study aims to explore service providers' experiences of working with women
in Partner Assault Response (PAR) or Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP) and
more specifically, their assessments of the degree to which their programs aid
female offenders in understanding the abuse in their lives and support them
toward change.

In order to participate, respondents must be either:

- current facilitators of female offender PAR/BIP programs
- former facilitators of female offender PAR/BIP programs or
- supervisors/administrators of female offender PAR/BIP programs.

If you know of colleagues who fit one of these criteria, I would be grateful if you
could forward this invitation to them.

If you are interested and fit the above-mentioned criteria, please refer to the
attached *Letter of Information*, which will further explain the survey in detail. If
you decide to participate, you may do so by clicking on the link below, which will
lead you to the consent to participate and survey itself.

Should you have any questions about the study, please contact either **Dana
Gillespie Tozer, gillesdc@mcmaster.ca** or **Dr. Jane Aronson,
aronsonj@mcmaster.ca**.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of participating in this study, and for
your commitment to better understanding our work with women and violence.

Kindest regards,
Dana Gillespie Tozer
Student Researcher, MSW candidate
McMaster University School of Social Work
gillesdc@mcmaster.ca

http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/dana-gt-z/circling-the-square/

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Appendix B: Professional Distribution Contacts Recruitment Email Script

Title of Project: **Circling the Square: Service providers experiences working with female offenders of intimate partner violence**

I am writing to request your assistance in reaching participants in a survey of service providers' experiences of working with women offenders in Partner Assault Response (PAR) or Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP). I am carrying out the research for my MSW thesis in the School of Social Work at McMaster University, under the supervision of **Dr. Jane Aronson.**

The study aims to explore service providers' experiences of working with women in PAR/BIPs and more specifically, their assessments of the degree to which their programs aid female offenders in understanding the abuse in their lives and support them toward change.

In order to participate, respondents must be either:

- current facilitators of female offender PAR/BIP programs
- former facilitators of female offender PAR/BIP programs or
- supervisors/administrators of female offender PAR/BIP programs.

It would be most appreciated if you could kindly forward this survey invitation along to those who you feel may meet the study criterion, through your professional networks and affiliations. As a student researcher, it is my hope to gain as broad and expansive data set as possible, and I am hopeful that you are able to provide assistance in this regard.

Details pertaining to the study can be found on the attached *Letter of Information*.

Should you have any questions about the study, please contact either **Dana Gillespie Tozer, gillesdc@mcmaster.ca** or **Dr. Jane Aronson, aronsonj@mcmaster.ca**.

Thank you for assistance in the distribution of this study and for your commitment to better understanding our work with women and violence.

Kindest regards,

Dana Gillespie Tozer
Student Researcher, MSW candidate
McMaster University School of Social Work
gillesdc@mcmaster.ca

http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/dana-gt-z/circling-the-square/

McMaster University

Inspiring Innovation and Discovery

Appendix C: LETTER OF INFORMATION

**Circling the Square: Service providers experiences working with female offenders
of intimate partner violence**

Investigators:

Faculty Supervisor:	**Student Investigator:**
Dr. Jane Aronson	Dana Gillespie Tozer
School of Social Work	School Social Work
McMaster University	McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada	Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
(905) 525-9140 ext. 24596	
E-mail: aronson@mcmaster.ca	E-mail: gillesdc@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study:
It is the purpose of this study to gain insight into the experiences of service providers
offering Partner Assault Response (PAR), or Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP) to
female offenders of Intimate Partner Violence. I hope to learn how the programs have
possibly evolved, what service providers consider to be working well and what needs
improvement, and finally, whether the perceived needs of women with lived experiences
are being represented and met within current program curriculum and goals.

Participation Requirements:
This study is aimed at service providers working with women who have been charged
with IPV and as such, those participating in the survey should be:
- *current facilitators of female offender PAR/BIP programs, or*
- *former facilitators of female offender PAR/BIP programs, and/or*
- *supervisors/administrators of female offender PAR/BIP programs.*

Procedures involved in the Research:
Should you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey
with 21 questions that should take about 20 minutes to complete. This survey is in an
online format, is confidential and anonymous, and offered through FluidSurvey™.
Further information about this application will be explained under the heading
Confidentiality.
The questions within the survey are both multiple choice and short answer. There is also
an opportunity for you to respond in your own words about aspects of your work that you
feel are important or relevant to the questions being asked, or something that I may have
missed. Survey questions focus on exploring:
- *Current program responses to women as offenders of IPV;*
- *Any perceived gaps in service delivery;*
- *How any perceived gaps are managed in practice, in terms of service and model
  development.*

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:
It is not likely that there will be any harms or discomforts associated with completing this survey that you wouldn't already encounter in your everyday work life. Should you find aspects or certain questions within the survey unsettling, I encourage you to access your network of support that you routinely employ as a member of the human service field. Further, you may stop and choose not to submit your answers at any time during the survey, prior to your final submitted answer.

Potential Benefits:
The research may not benefit you beyond encouraging critical reflection upon your work with female offenders. I am optimistic that the collective knowledge gained from this survey has the potential to inform practice in the future. I thank you for your part in this process.

Confidentiality:
It is important for you to know that any information that you choose to provide will be confidential and anonymous. No one, including me, will know that you have participated or what your responses might be.
This survey uses FluidSurvey™ which is a Canadian company. The data, with no personal identifiers, collected from this study will be maintained on a password-protected computer database which is only accessible to the student investigator. All of the data will be summarized and no individual can be identified from these summarized results. Furthermore, the web site is programmed to collect responses alone and will not collect any information that could potentially identify you (such as your email address or computer location).
Once the study is complete, an archive of the data, without identifying information, will be maintained for the duration of my research on this topic.

Participation and Withdrawal:
You may choose to withdraw from this process before your final answer on the survey is submitted. Once you have submitted your responses for this anonymous survey your data will be put into a database and will not be identifiable to you. This means that once you have submitted your survey, your responses cannot be withdrawn from the study because I will not be able to identify which data is yours.

Solicitation Methods:
I am hopeful for a large amount of responses, from various communities and agencies across North America, in order to develop a broad understanding of how this work is being done. You may have been contacted to participate in this survey because your agency is a known provider of PAR or BIP services. A fellow colleague may have forwarded this survey to you, knowing that you are doing this work. You may have attended a conference aimed at the topic of Intimate Partner Violence, or Domestic Violence and be part of a mailing list that offered to distribute the survey. Should you have any questions about how your contact information was obtained, pleased don't hesitate to connect with the student investigator.

Information about the Study Results:
I expect to have this study completed in September 2013. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.

Questions about the Study:

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:
gillesdc@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance.
If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

> McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
> Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
> c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support
> E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

Should you choose to participate in this study, you can open the FluidSurvey™ link at the bottom of the email. From here, you will be asked if you have read this document and whether or not you consent to participate. If you click "yes, I agree to participate", you will be redirected to the survey, with an understanding that you have consented to participate. If you do not wish to participate, simply close your browser.

I thank you for your consideration and commitment to this work.

http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/dana-gt-z/circling-the-square/

Appendix D: Survey Questionnaire

Title of Project: **Circling the Square: Service providers experiences working with female offenders of intimate partner violence**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study, *Squaring the Circle: Service providers' experiences working with female offenders of intimate partner violence*. It is the purpose of this study to gain insight into the experiences of service providers offering Partner Assault Response (PAR), or Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP) to female offenders of Intimate Partner Violence. I hope to learn how the programs have possibly evolved, what service providers consider to be working well and what needs improvement, and finally, whether the perceived needs of women with lived experiences are being addressed within current program curriculum and goals. I am optimistic that the knowledge gained from this survey has the potential to inform practice in the future. I thank you for your part in this process.

This survey is entirely anonymous and is being conducted as part of my Masters of Social Work thesis. It contains 28 questions and should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. Should you have any questions about your participation in the study, the study itself or the subsequent data from the study, please do not hesitate to contact:

Dana Gillespie Tozer
Student Researcher and MSW candidate
gillesdc@mcmaster.ca
905-902-9385

Many thanks and kindest regards,
Dana Gillespie Tozer

Section One: Program Background

Q1: How long has the Partner Assault Response (PAR) or Batterer's Intervention Program (BIP) where you currently work, or have worked in the past, been in existence?

a) Less than five years
b) Five to nine years
c) Ten to fourteen years
d) Fifteen to nineteen years
e) More than twenty years

Q2: How is your program funded? (please check all that apply)

    a) Government funding
    b) Fee-for-service
    c) Donations/fundraising efforts
    d) Other: _____

Q3: How long have you been providing service to *women* within this program?

    a) Less than five years
    b) Five to nine years
    c) Ten to fourteen years
    d) Fifteen to nineteen years
    e) More than twenty years

Q4: What model best describes the *origins* or initial foundations of this program?
(please circle all that apply)

    a) Duluth (power and control wheel)
    b) Narrative/Invitational
    c) Cognitive Behavioural
    d) Psycho-Educational
    e) Not sure
    f) Other:_____

Q5: If you have circled more than one foundational frameworks, could you
indicate which model was primary, or the most prominent and your understanding
of why?

_____

_____

Q6: What model best describes the *current* service modality of this program?
(please circle all that may apply)

    a) Duluth (power and control wheel)
    b) Narrative/Invitational
    c) Cognitive Behavioural
    d) Psycho-Educational
    e) Not sure
    f) Other:_____

Q7: If you have circled more than one current frameworks, could you indicate which model was primary, or the most prominent?

Q8: If there has been a shift in service modality, is there anything you feel has accounted or allowed for this change?

_____
_____

Q9: How many weeks is your PAR/BIP program for women?

   a) 8
   b) 12
   c) 16
   d) 24
   e) Other:

Q10: In your opinion, what do you think would be the ideal number of sessions offered to women in a PAR/BIP program? (this may be the same response to the question above, if you feel your program is currently offering an appropriate amount of sessions)

   a) 8
   b) 12
   c) 16
   d) 24
   e) Other:

Q11: On average, how many women are enrolled in *one group* at one time?

   a) Less than five
   b) Five to nine
   c) Ten to fourteen
   d) Fifteen to nineteen
   e) More than twenty

Q12: On average, how many times a year is the program offered for women who have been charged with IPV/DV?

   a) More than fifteen times
   b) Ten to fourteen times
   c) Five to nine times
   d) One to four times
   e) Less than once annually

Q13: Do you feel that your PAR/BIP for female offenders is offered an adequate amount of times annually?

    a) Yes, it is offered an adequate amount of times a year in order to provide effective service delivery
    b) No, it is not offered an adequate amount of times a year

Q14: If you answered no, can you please comment on what you feel some of the consequences for not offering the program an adequate amount of times a year might be?

_____
_____

Open Narrative Section: Please add any comments that you think may be important for my understanding of the PAR/BIP program from which you have experience.

_____
_____

Section Two: Your Role in the Program

Q15: What role do you have, or have you had, when working with women who have been charged with intimate partner violence/domestic violence? (please circle all that may apply)

    a) Group facilitator/counsellor
    b) Individual counsellor
    c) Couples counsellor
    d) Program Supervisor
    e) Other:

Q16: How long have you been/were you in this role?

    a) Less than two years
    b) Two to four years
    c) Five to seven years
    d) Eight to ten years
    e) More than eleven years

Q17: What theoretical framework do you *mostly* practice from in your work with women who have been charged?

    a) Feminist
    b) Narrative/Invitational
    c) Cognitive Behavioural
    d) Psycho-Educational
    e) Other:

Q18: Can you share the reason for this theoretical framework? (i.e. you find it the most effective, your agency encourages you to practice from this standpoint, it reflects your belief system, etc.)

_____
_____

Open Narrative Section: Please add any comments that you think would assist me in understanding your role in the program.

_____
_____

Section Three: Gender and Violence – Ways of Understanding and Responding

The literature, research and practitioners' perspectives on women charged with IPV reveals the complexities of the issues and the services aiming to support women in non-violent options and behaviours in the future. There is a range of perspectives on how gender shapes violence and specifically, on how women's violence can be best understood and responded to. The following questions explore which perspective of the three primary ones distilled form the literature, underlines your program and your practice.

	Gender Specific (men and women are violent for different reasons)	Gender Neutral (men and women are violent for the same reasons)	Gender Absent (gender is not a factor in violence)
Reasons Women are Violent	Protection or retaliation against violence they or their children are currently experiencing/being threatened with	Desire to have power and control over an intimate partner	Individualistic, based on the act of violence
Comparative Consequences/	Female offenders have less options in escaping	Female perpetrated violence has the same	The gender of the offender or the victim is

Impacts	violence than men and are impacted more severely when experiencing all forms of abuse	affects and impacts as male perpetrated violence in all areas other than physical harm	irrelevant, as the focus must remain on offense itself
Recommendations for Programming	Focus on support and healing, increasing non-violent options in a woman's life	Programming needs to respond to the increasing numbers of women who are violent, focus on personal accountability and ceasing violent behaviour/actions	Treat the violent act itself, without emphasis on who the victim was, gendered violence should not be given 'specialized' treatment

Please consider the above when responding to the following section of questions.

Q19:	Gender Specific	Gender Neutral	Gender Absent	Combination (please specify)	Other (please specify)
Which of the above-mentioned frames best describes your *agency's* (and/or mandating body's) perspective on the reasons women are violent, as reflected in the approach to programming?					

Q20:	Gender Specific	Gender Neutral	Gender Absent	Combination (please specify)	Other (please specify)
Which of the above-mentioned frames best describes your experience of what is *actually occurring within the direct practice of you and/or your colleagues* in your organization, in regards to working with women who have been charged with IPV?					

Q21:	Gender Specific	Gender Neutral	Gender Absent	Combination (please specify)	Other (please specify)
Which of the above-mentioned frames describes, in your assessment based on your work with this population group, the *majority of the self-reported experiences of the women* with whom you work?					

Q22: Does your understanding of the root causes of female perpetrated IPV correspond with the assumptions underlying service delivery practice?

   a) Yes, the program corresponds and fits with the root causes of women's violence
   b) No, there is a gap or disconnect between the program and the root causes of women's violence

Q23: If you answered no to Q22, is there anything you think has prevented a fit between program and root causes that has resulted in a gap or disconnect?

_____
_____

Q24: If you answered no to Q22, is there anything that you, and/or your colleagues are currently doing within your practice to bridge the gap between what you consider to be most helpful and the model requirements of your program?

_____
_____

Q25: If you answered yes to Q22, is there anything you think has been pivotal in ensuring that program model and service delivery reflects the root causes of female perpetrated violence?

_____
_____

Q26: If you could change one thing about your work, what would it be?

_____
_____

Q27: Have you had an opportunity to discuss or consider any of these issues with some of your colleagues in either an informal or formal way?

    a) Yes
    b) No

Q28: What do you think women who attend your PAR/BIP program might want to see done differently, if anything?

_____
_____

Open Narrative Section: Please add any comments that you feel might assist me in further understanding the connection between program model, root causes of violence, and service delivery.

_____
_____

Thanks again for your participation in this survey. It is most appreciated.