

Final Report

Attitudinal Change in Participants of Partner Assault Response (PAR) Programs: Phase II

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Violence between Intimate Partners in Ontario Families: Magnitude of the Problem
- 1.2 Steps towards Reducing Intimate Partner Violence against Women
- 1.3 Partner Assault Response Programs: In the Spotlight
 - 1.3.1 A fairly large proportion of men whose violence has been officially identified end, or significantly delay, subsequent violence
 - 1.3.2 A small proportion of men continue to be physically abusive. Repeat offenders tend to reassault quickly, frequently, and severely
 - 1.3.3 Intervention programs for perpetrators must be considered as one part of a larger system of community response to intimate partner violence
- 1.4 Current study in context
 - 1.4.1 Changing men's attitudes towards violence
 - 1.4.2 Providing support and referral to woman victims of men's abuse
 - 1.4.3 Participating as part of a larger system of promoting change in men's abusive behaviour

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Participants
 - 2.1.1 Demographic characteristics: age, ethnicity, income, employment, and relationship status
 - 2.1.2 Referral information
 - 2.1.3 Past assaults and level of risk to victim
- 2.2 Measures
 - 2.2.1 Abuse-related attitudes assessment
 - 2.2.2 Knowledge of abuse-supporting self-talk measure
 - 2.2.3 Counsellor judgement of men's attitudes
 - 2.2.4 Quality of life for abused women - modified
- 2.3 Research Procedures

3.0 RESULTS

- 3.1 Changing men's attitudes towards violence.
 - 3.1.1 Do participants in PAR programs show positive change in abuse supporting attitudes from pre-to-post intervention?
 - 3.1.2 Do participants in PAR programs show positive change in knowledge of abuse supporting self-talk from pre-to-post intervention?
 - 3.1.3 Predicting attitude and knowledge change from referral source
 - 3.1.4 Predicting attitude and knowledge change from client readiness
- 3.2 Providing support and referral to woman victims of men's abuse
 - 3.2.1 Rates of contact between PAR programs and women
 - 3.2.2 Needs identified by women at program intake
- 3.3 Participating as part of a larger system of promoting change in men's abusive behaviour
 - 3.3.1 Rates of program completion
 - 3.3.2 Consistency between men's self-reported attitudes and counsellors' judgements of men's attitudes at the end of intervention

4.0 DISCUSSION

4.1 Change in men's attitudes and knowledge

4.2 Support and referral to woman victims of men's abuse

4.3 Participating as part of a larger system of promoting change in men's abusive behaviour

4.4. Limitations and concerns

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

List of Figures

Figure 1: Change in abuse supporting attitudes from pre- to post-intervention

Figure 2: Change in knowledge of abuse supporting self-talk from pre- to post-intervention

Figure 3: Partner contact rates

Figure 4: Women's perceptions of safety at their first PAR program contact

Figure 5: Women's reports about the extent to which men have taken responsibility for their violence

Figure 6: Women's relationship satisfaction

1.0 Background

1.1 Violence between Intimate Partners in Ontario Families: Magnitude of the Problem

Violence between intimate partners is a significant problem in Canada. Spousal violence accounts for approximately one-quarter of all violent crimes reported to police services, with 85% of these cases involving a female victim (Statistics Canada, 2003). Homicide data collected from 1994 to 2003 reveals that approximately one in five solved homicides in Canada involved spouses. Approximately 80% of the victims of these homicides were women (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Cases of domestic violence also come to the attention of child protective services due to concerns about the negative impact on children of being within sight or sound of violence between their parents. According to the most recent Canadian incidence study of child abuse and neglect, a full 28% of substantiated cases of child maltreatment have exposure to domestic violence as a primary concern. This makes exposure to domestic violence the second most often substantiated form of child maltreatment in Canada at a rate of 6.17 substantiated cases per 1,000 Canadian children, just behind rates of substantiation for child neglect at 6.38 per 1,000 children (Trocme et al., 2005).

Finally, there is evidence that only a small proportion of instances of violence against women are represented in statistics from police and Children's Aid Societies. The General Social Survey of Canadians results suggest that 7% of women and 6% of men in a current or previous intimate relationship have experienced some type of intimate partner violence in the past five years (Statistics Canada, 2004), with women experiencing more frequent, severe and fear-provoking forms of violence.

There are clear costs of family violence at the individual, social, and community levels. Individual victims of violence pay a heavy price in terms of social, relational, and psychological well-being and quality of life. Experiencing intimate partner violence has been associated with all forms of mental illness and with long-term disruption of relationships with family and friends (Carlson, McNutt, Choi, Rose, 2002; Golding, 1999). Intimate partner violence also has substantial economic costs to society. It has been estimated that the health-related costs alone of woman abuse (e.g. immediate medical attention for women, lost time at work, use of transition homes and crisis centres) exceed \$1.5 billion per year (Day, 1995). A broader estimate of costs found that when social services, education, criminal justice, labour, employment costs are added, the cost of violence against women in intimate relationships rises to an estimated \$4.2 billion a year (Greaves & Hankivsky, 1995)

1.2 Steps towards Reducing Intimate Partner Violence against Women

The rise of the women's movement in the 1970's marked the beginning of a significant shift in the way that violence against women is perceived in Canada, United States and Europe. Lead by feminist calls for change, Canadian society has moved from viewing violence in the family as a private matter to which no societal response is appropriate to a society with a multi-faceted public response to family violence. Canada's response to intimate partner violence now includes public education around the nature of woman abuse, collection of annual statistics to monitor rates of intimate partner violence, and the provision of a variety of primary and secondary prevention

programs. Today, women who are being abused by their intimate partners can access emergency assistance through shelters and distress lines and longer-term support through advocacy services for victims. A system of accountability for perpetrators of violence is also in place. This system includes mandatory charging, linkages between women's advocates, men's services and the justice system and, in Ontario, specialized courts for processing cases of domestic violence. Ontario now has 49 Domestic Violence Courts aimed at more efficient processing of cases of violence in the family. Moreover, as of 2004 there were 205 programs in Canada specifically designed to provide intervention to help end men's abuse of their intimate partners (Minister of Health Canada, 2004), 68 of which have a formal connection to Ontario's Domestic Violence Court system.

Over the 30 year time span corresponding to the rise of the women's movement, Canada has seen a decline in violence between intimate partners. In 1974, when systematic data collection on intimate partner homicide began, rates of spousal homicide were 16.5 per million spouses for female victims and 4.4 per million for male victims. In 2003, numbers for female and male victims were 7.5 and 1.7, respectively, representing about a 50% decrease (Statistics Canada, 2005). There is also evidence for similar declines in rates of non-lethal intimate partner violence. For example, comparison of data from the 1993 Violence Against Women survey to the 1999 General Social Survey of Canadians documented significant declines in rates of non-lethal intimate partner violence reported by women. Data from the 1999 and 2004 General Social Survey of Canadians found declines in rates of violence that men reported experiencing, though rates of victimization for women were stable over this period (Statistics Canada, 2004). Although some researchers question whether these numbers represent a stable trend or a temporary fluctuation, most agree that apparently declining rates deserve attention from research and policy makers.

Researchers and policy makers have advanced many possible explanations for the apparent decline in rates of lethal and non-lethal forms of intimate partner violence in Canada. Some researchers have pointed out that changes have occurred during a period where all forms of crime have been declining. Others focus on changes in incarceration practices and gun control legislation. Still other researchers have linked declines in intimate partner violence to changes in societal response to intimate partner violence (see Dawson, 2001 for review of research in this area). Two theories in particular are compelling. The first links the availability of emergency resources, such as shelters and distress lines, to declines in rates of female-perpetrated spousal homicide. Whereas homicides by men are often precipitated by women attempting to leave a relationship, women are most likely to kill their partners after many years of violent victimization. Data from the US suggests that when resources are available to help women escape without resorting to homicide, rates of female-perpetrated spousal homicide decrease (see Browne & Williams, 1993; Browne, Williams & Dutton, 1999). Ironically, the same association between availability of resources and rates of male-perpetrated intimate partner homicide have not been found.

A second theory of the decline in intimate partner violence is that society is undergoing a second civilizing process. The civilizing thesis was originally proposed as an explanation of declines in violence in European societies over several decades (Elias, 1994). Modern application of this idea suggests that the women's movement, and all associated anti-violence initiatives, have contributed to a civilization process represented by a growing societal intolerance for interpersonal violence (Zimring & Hawkins, 1997; Rosenfeld, 2000). As such, resources such as shelters and hotlines, application of sanctions for perpetrators of violence, and public messages about the undesirability

of interpersonal violence may all have their most significant contribution in the promotion of social change. Growing social intolerance, in turn, is responsible for lower rates of spousal homicide and non-lethal violence.

Regardless of the explanation, it is clear that there has been significant progress in addressing violence against women. Still, many challenges remain for improving responses to intimate partner violence across North America. Some challenges are related to funding. For example, a “snapshot” study of shelter use in 2000 found over the course of one day, 89 shelters across Canada turned away 476 people (254 women and 222 children), most often (71% of the time) because the shelter was full. Other problems concern poor communication and coordination between systems. For example, studies done in the United States find that there are still a large number of men who are ordered to complete an intervention program who fail to attend, and do not face any consequences for their non-compliance (Gondolf & Foster, 1991; Daly & Pelowski, 2000). Still other challenges arise from differences in the fundamental assumptions and practices of professionals working within different systems. Improvements in practice and additional research are still needed to promote the safety and well-being of victims of intimate partner violence.

1.3 Partner Assault Response Programs: In the Spotlight

Research has played a relatively large role in informing societal efforts to reduce violence against women. The adoption of mandatory charge policies for perpetrators of assault against an intimate partner were, at least in part, driven by research suggesting that arrest (versus temporary separation and a warning) can lead to reductions in men’s rates of re-assaulting their partners (Maxwell, Garner & Fagan, 2001). The efficiency of Ontario’s specialized Domestic Violence court system has also been investigated and research has been done on the impact and effectiveness of providing support and advocacy to women who have been abused.

However, of all the parts of the system of intervention, the question that has received by far the most attention from research is whether intervention programs for men who have abused their partners are effective in reducing men’s physical assault of women. There have now been over 40 published studies, 5 meta-analyses and numerous commentaries on this field of research (e.g. Babcock, Green & Robbie, 2004; Gondolf, 2004; Scott, 2004). Unfortunately, results of this body of literature have not provided the unambiguous positive support for intervention programs that was hoped for. Rather, results have varied, with some studies suggesting that intervention is associated with significant and important reductions in rates of re-assault (Gondolf, 2002;) and others suggesting that intervention is no more effective than non-intervention at promoting change (Davis, Taylor & Maxwell, 2000; Dunford, 2000; Feder & Forde 2000). Researchers continue to debate appropriate methodology, instrumentation, analysis strategies, and interpretations of existing data and to design and implement increasingly sophisticated studies.

From a broad perspective, it is not all that surprising that research on the effectiveness of intervention programs for men who have been abusive towards their intimate partners has yielded conflicting results. Human behaviour is notoriously difficult to change. In the area of alcohol and drug abuse treatment, for example, relapse rates of 50 to 90% are routinely accepted (Brownell, Marlatt, Lichtenstein, & Wilson, 1986; Hubbard & Marsden, 1986). In addition, in many areas of intervention, including substance abuse, depression, and sexual deviance, the need for ongoing risk

management and relapse prevention is built into planning for change (Fein, Vossekuil & Holden, 1995; Monahan et al., 2001, NIDA, 1999). In the absence of such strategies, even limited support for the short-term, group-based intervention typically provided for perpetrators of abuse is notable.

Although studies on the efficacy of programs for abusive men have not equivocally supported or refuted the efficacy of intervention, this body of literature has yielded a number of useful findings that can direct policy and research. Three of these findings are discussed as follows:

1.3.1 A fairly large proportion of men whose violence has been officially identified end, or significantly delay, subsequent violence.

There is now considerable data available to examine rates of men's violence after having been identified by the system, either through an assault charge or through voluntary¹ presentation to an intervention program. Follow-up data suggests that approximately two-thirds of identified men either end, or significantly delay (i.e., avoid violence for over one year), subsequent use of physical violence against identified intimate partners. There are likely a number of reasons for men's change including: fear of additional criminal and social sanction (Sherman & Smith, 1992; Williams, 2005; Wooldredge & Thistlethwaite, 2002), intervention-related change in men's abuse-supporting cognitions (Scott & Stewart, in press) and skills for interrupting violence (Gondolf, 1988, 2000); empowerment of men's partners through reductions in isolation and involvement with women's advocates (Austin & Dankwort, 1999; Gregory & Erez, 2002); change in men's relationship status (Gondolf, 2004; Gondolf & Jones, 2001); and age-related changes in men's testosterone and general level of aggression (Archer, 2006; Book, Starzyk & Quinsey, 2001). Studies have also found that cessation of physical abuse is most often associated with reduction, rather than escalation, in verbal and emotional abuse (Gondolf, 2002).

1.3.2 A small proportion of men continue to be physically abusive. Repeat offenders tend to reassault quickly, frequently, and severely.

Although most men identified by the system manage to avoid engaging in subsequent physical abuse, approximately 25% of men repeatedly reassault their intimate partners. Reassaults are most likely to happen quickly – within six months of men being followed and within the time that men are engaged in intervention. Results from Gondolf's large follow-up study of batterers shows that repeat offenders engaged in an average of nearly five assaultive incidents against their partners in the 15-month period after beginning treatment. These men were also responsible for 80% of the injuries to women that were documented over the four year course of research (Gondolf, 2002).

To date, researchers have been relatively unsuccessful at reliably identifying those men who are at high-risk for reassaulting their partners from data available at the beginning of their involvement in intervention. Repeat reassaulters are more likely to have been severely violent in the past and to have been arrested or treated previously and more likely to be drunk during follow-up. In addition, women's perception of safety has been shown to be a significant predictor of men's re-assaults (Gondolf 2004; Weisz, Tolman, & Saunders, 2000). However, none of these variables have a

¹ Truly voluntary presentation in this population is rare. Often, men who are presenting to intervention programs without having been ordered by the court system are under considerable pressure from a partner, other family member, or community

strong enough relationship with reassault to be clinically useful in distinguishing men who are and are not going to be repeat reassaulters. Other variables, such risk profile, personality profiles, and characteristics of violence are similarly problematic. In response to these findings, Gondolf (2004) suggests that models of ongoing risk management be explored. These models involve periodic assessment of short-term risk, interventions in response to any immediate risk, and repeated risk reassessment over time (Fein et al., 1995).

1.3.3 Intervention programs for perpetrators must be considered as one part of a larger system of community response to intimate partner violence

A final lesson from past studies concerns the appropriateness of studying programs for abusive men independent of the broader system of intervention in which they are imbedded. Whether or not men show up at an intervention program, their level of motivation to change, their attendance, and the consequences of their success or failure to meet program objectives is all dependent upon the system in which PAR programs are embedded. The importance of the system has been documented by studies showing that the addition of a court-based check-in improves rates of attendance and suggested by results showing that even shorter and less intense programs are effective if men are swiftly enrolled and face certain consequences for failures to attend and participate (Gondolf, 2000a; 2002). However, there is still a great deal of research that needs to be done in this area. Research is needed to explore various points of intersection between intervention programs for abusive men and the broader system of intervention. For example, what response is typical when men do not engage in intervention? What kind of coordination is in place for high-risk clients, or for clients whose partners' report continued experiences of severe emotional, verbal or physical abuse? How do reports written by PAR program providers impact service planning by probation officers? Other questions around the interface between the justice system and other agencies aimed at preventing and intervening in cases of intimate partner violence are also warranted.

1.4 Current study in context

The current study was designed in the context of past research on programs for men who have been abusive towards their intimate partners and with a consideration of the role of PAR programs within Ontario's response to domestic violence². In particular, within Ontario's system, PAR programs are charged with three important purposes: 1) changing men's attitudes towards violence; 2) providing support and referral to women victims of men's abuse; and 3) communicating information about men's progress to the larger system of justice and advocacy professionals attempting promote change in men's abusive behaviour and ensure women's safety. Research questions in the current study address PAR programs success in meeting each of these service goals.

² Due to the predominance of arrests of male perpetrators of intimate violence in heterosexual relationships, PAR programs in Ontario provide service primarily to men who have been abusive towards intimate female partners. However, some programs also provide service to smaller offender populations, such as men and women in homosexual relationships and women who have been arrested for assault of male intimate partners. The current study is limited to a consideration of PAR's role in providing intervention to male offenders in heterosexual relationships.

1.4.1 Changing men's attitudes towards violence

The first aim of the current study is to determine if participants in PAR programs show positive changes in abuse-supporting attitudes and knowledge from pre- to post-intervention. Based on pilot research, three attitude domains and one knowledge domain were targeted: personal responsibility for abuse and its effects, partner blaming, denial of expected relationship difficulties and knowledge of abuse-supporting cognition. It was hypothesized that the attitudes and knowledge of PAR program participants would change positively across intervention.

Secondary research questions in this area concerned whether attitude and knowledge change varies according to men's referral source (i.e., Early Intervention, Coordinated Prosecution or voluntary referral) and whether attitude and knowledge change is moderated by men's initial attitude towards intervention.

1.4.2 Providing support and referral to woman victims of men's abuse

The second aim of the current study is to examine the provision of service to women victims of men's abuse. Two specific questions were asked. The first concerned rates of contact between PAR programs and women. The second question explored needs identified by women who were contacted by the PAR program.

1.4.3 Participating as part of a larger system of promoting change in men's abusive behaviour

A final aim of this research was to examine the role of the PAR program as part of a larger system of promoting change in men's abusive behaviour. Rates of program completion were first investigated. Following this, initial information was compiled on the extent to which feedback from PAR program participants and counsellors may be used to direct additional intervention for men. Specifically, analyses explored the consistency between men's self-reported attitude change and counsellors' judgements of men's attitudes at the end of intervention.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Participants

Subjects for this research are 203 men who completed intake at participating agencies in September and October of 2005. Estimates of consent rates, based on 6 programs, indicate a research consent rate of 72%. Of the 203 men for whom pre-intervention data is available, 56 (or 27.6%) failed to complete the program (reasons for men's failure to complete are discussed in section 3.3.1. Self-report post-test information is available from 140 of the 147 men who completed the program. Given rates of research consent and of retention, the current sample is likely very representative of men attending PAR programs during this period.

Women's contact coordinators at PAR programs were able to contact partners of approximately half (n=104) of the 203 men who participated in the current study. Of these women, sixty-three, or 60.1%, of the women contacted by PAR programs consented to participation in the current study. A post-intervention contact was completed by PAR programs for 42 women, the majority of whom

(n=37) consented to complete post-intervention research. Information about rates of women contact is important to considering the success of PAR programs in meeting their objectives, and to generalizing judgments from a study sample to the entire sample of women partners of men attending PAR programs. Due to the moderate rates of PAR program contact with women and the moderate rates of women’s consent to research, considerable caution must be used in generalizing current information to partners of men in PAR programs generally.

2.1.1 Demographic characteristics: Age, ethnicity, income, employment, and relationship status

Demographic characteristics of participating men are reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of men participants

Characteristic of Participants	Mean (SD) or Percentage (number)
Age	36.6 (11.7)
Employment status	
Employed days	49.7 (91)
Employed evenings	6.0 (11)
Employed shift work	12.0 (22)
Unemployed	32.2 (59)
Income	
Under 10,000	31.6 (49)
10,000 to 14,999	11.1 (17)
15,000 to 24,999	19.4 (30)
25,000 to 34,999	7.7 (12)
35,000 to 44,999	12.9 (20)
45,000 and over	17.4 (27)
Relationship with the assault victim	
No relationship	24.7 (42)
Common law	17.6 (30)
Dating	4.7 (8)
Married	25.9 (44)
Separated or divorced	27.1 (46)
Average length of relationship	9.3 years (9.0)
Average length of separation	9.3 months (11.1)
Referral source	
Probation	60.0 (120)
Early intervention court (i.e., Bail)	29.5 (59)
Voluntary	9.0 (18)
Other	1.5 (3)
Past PAR program client	
Yes	9.4 (18)
No	90.6 (173)

Past assaults	
Yes	26.5 (49)
No	73.5 (136)
Judged level of risk to victim ¹	
Low	53.9 (55)
Moderate	37.3 (38)
High	8.8 (9)
Police report available to program ²	
Yes	47.1 (81)
No	52.9 (91)

¹ Because only some programs make this judgement, information on risk level is only available for 102 men (approximately half the sample).

² Results reported only for clients referred through EIC or probation

Men ranged in age from 18 to 77 years, with an average age of between 36 and 37. Thirty-one percent of men indicated that they identified with a particular ethnic group. Of those who identified an ethnic group, around fifty percent identified themselves as belonging to a European or East European group (46.9%), with the remainder identifying as Native Canadian (15.6%), Asian or South Asian (12.5%), Middle Eastern (9.4%), South or Central American (9.4%) or African Canadian (6.2%).

In terms of employment status, about fifty percent of the men were working days, 32% were unemployed and the remainder worked evenings or in shifts. The high rates of unemployment in this sample are reflected also in men's reported income, with 31.6% of men reporting incomes of less than \$10,000 a year and an additional third reporting income between 10,000 and 25,000.

Men reported being in a variety of relationship situations. Forty-eight percent of men reported being either married, common law or dating the partner that they assaulted. Twenty-seven percent reported being separated or divorced from the victim of their assault and remainder reported being in relatively short-term relationships that had ended by the time they began the PAR program. For men in a relationship, the average length of their relationship was 9.3 years. Of those men who were separated from their partner, the average length of separation was 9.3 months.

2.1.2 Referral information

Sixty percent of the men were referred to PAR programs came through probation services, 29.5% from Early Intervention Court, with 9% of clients attending voluntarily. Although the majority of the men were first time PAR clients, about 1 in 10 had been previously enrolled in the program.

2.1.3 Past assaults and level of risk to victim

Twenty-six percent of participants reported a history of assault in addition to the assault that led to their referral to the PAR program. Of those with a history of assault, the majority reported one past assault charge (55.6%), 29.6% reported two past charges and the remainder reported three or more past assaults. Police reports about the assault that led to men's referral to the PAR program was available to the program at the time of men's intake for forty-seven percent of clients referred

through the Early Intervention or Coordinated Prosecution streams. Additional information about the level of difficulties among clients can be derived from ratings of risk made at program intake. It should be noted that, in Ontario, some PAR programs make judgements (based on their experience working with men) about the level of risk that their clients may pose to the victims of their assault, whereas others refrain from making this judgement. Because of variability between programs, information about men's risk level is available from only 102 men, or approximately half the sample. In this subsample, fifty-four percent were rated as being at low risk to their victim, 37.3% were rated as being a moderate risk and 8.8% were rated as being a high risk to the victim of their assault.

2.2 Measures

Information on men's demographic characteristics and referral status was collected either from men themselves or from men's files. In addition, the following measures were used to gather information from men, their intimate partners, and their counsellors.

2.2.1 Abuse-Related Attitudes Assessment (AARA).

The AARA is a 39-item self report assessment of men's attitudes across four domains: 1) Readiness for intervention (10-items, e.g. "The only purpose of this program is to blame men for their problems", reversed); 2) Disavowal of personal responsibility for abuse and its effects (10-items, e.g. "My behaviour has made my partner angry but has had no lasting negative effects on her"); 3) Partner blaming (10-items, e.g. "My behaviour is not nearly as bad as my partner makes it sound"); and 4) Denial of expected relationship difficulties (9-items, e.g. "I have never been annoyed when my partner expresses ideas very different from my own"). Men respond to all items on a 4-point scale indicating their level of agreement ("strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", "strongly disagree"). For the first three subscales, men's scores are calculated by summing across items. Internal reliability for these scales are all high (i.e. alphas = .69, .83, .72 for disavowal of personal responsibility for abuse and its effects, partner blaming, and readiness for intervention, respectively). To calculate men's score on the denial scale, the number of relationship difficulties that men totally deny is counted (e.g. a respondent endorsing "strong agree" to the statement "I have never been annoyed when my partner expresses ideas very different from my own" would be given one point). Internal consistency for this scale is somewhat lower (alpha = .55).

2.2.2 Knowledge of Abuse-supporting Self-talk Measure (KABUSE).

The KABUSE is a 13-item measure of men's knowledge of abuse-supporting cognitions. On this measure, men are asked to judge whether a series of cognitions (e.g., "I am the only person who can make me mad or keep me calm") are "likely to lead to healthy behaviour," "likely to lead to hurtful/controlling behaviour" or "depends." Answers are marked either correct or incorrect according to typical PAR program teaching. Internal consistency for this scale is moderate (alpha = .62).

2.2.3 Counsellor judgement of men's attitudes.

Men's progress through the PAR groups is regularly assessed by their counsellors and by their Probation Officers. As documented in resulting reports and progress notes, some men are judged as having made more progress than others as a result of PAR participation. Given the role already played by counsellor judgement, the current research included standardized judgements of men made by counsellors. Specifically, counsellors were asked to judge men's level of responsibility, denial, and tendency to blame their partners at the beginning and end of intervention and to indicate if men were known to be abusive towards their partner while in intervention.

2.2.4 Quality of Life Index for Abused Women - Modified (QLI-M).

Finally, information was collected from men's partners using an adapted version of the Quality of Life Index for Abused Women developed by Dobash and colleagues (2000). The QLI-M is a 20-item self-report inventory specifically designed to assess the impact of men's abuse. It includes items assessing a range of women's experiences of their partner including the extent to which women fear their intimate partner, feel that their life is constricted by their intimate partner and their perception of their partner's attempts to change. The QLI was designed with input from victims of intimate abuse and has strong content validity.

2.3 Research Procedures

All men who complete intake at participating agencies were provided with information on this study and invited to participate. Consenting men completed research at the agency. Post-group assessments occurred during men's last meeting at the agency.

Women were asked to give verbal consent to research during regular phone contact by the PAR program staff. Consenting women were read the 20 questionnaire items on the QLI-M during the first contact between women and the PAR agency and during the contact that occurred after men had finished the PAR group.

3.0 Results

3.1 Changing men's attitudes towards violence.

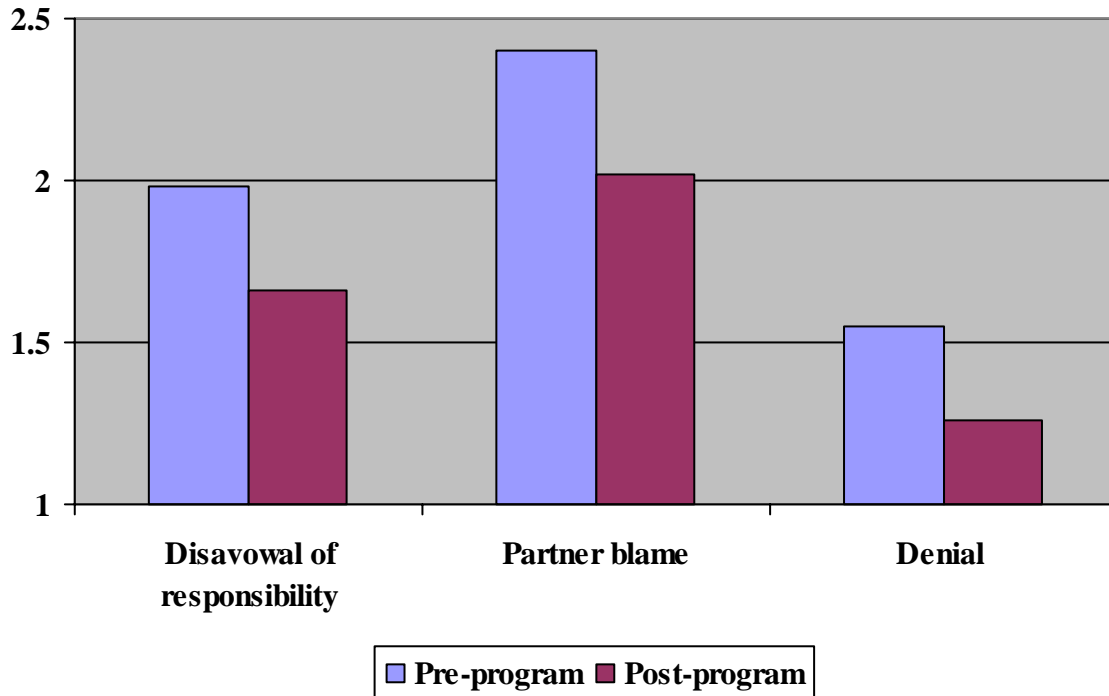
3.1.1 Do participants in PAR programs show positive changes in abuse-supporting attitudes from pre- to post-intervention?

The first major aim of the current study was to determine if participation in PAR programs is associated with positive changes in abuse-supporting attitudes from pre- to post-intervention. Three specific attitude domains were targeted: personal responsibility for abuse and its effects, partner blaming and denial of expected relationship difficulties.

Results, shown in Figure 1, indicated that men who completed PAR programs showed significant positive change in all three attitude domains from pre- to post-program. Specifically, men's

disavowal of personal responsibility for their abuse³ [$t_{\text{paired}}(126) = 9.15, p < .01$], their level of partner-blaming [$t_{\text{paired}}(126) = 8.54, p < .01$] and their level of denial [$t_{\text{paired}}(126) = 2.40, p < .05$] all decreased significantly over intervention.

Figure 1: Change in abuse-supporting attitudes from pre-to-post intervention

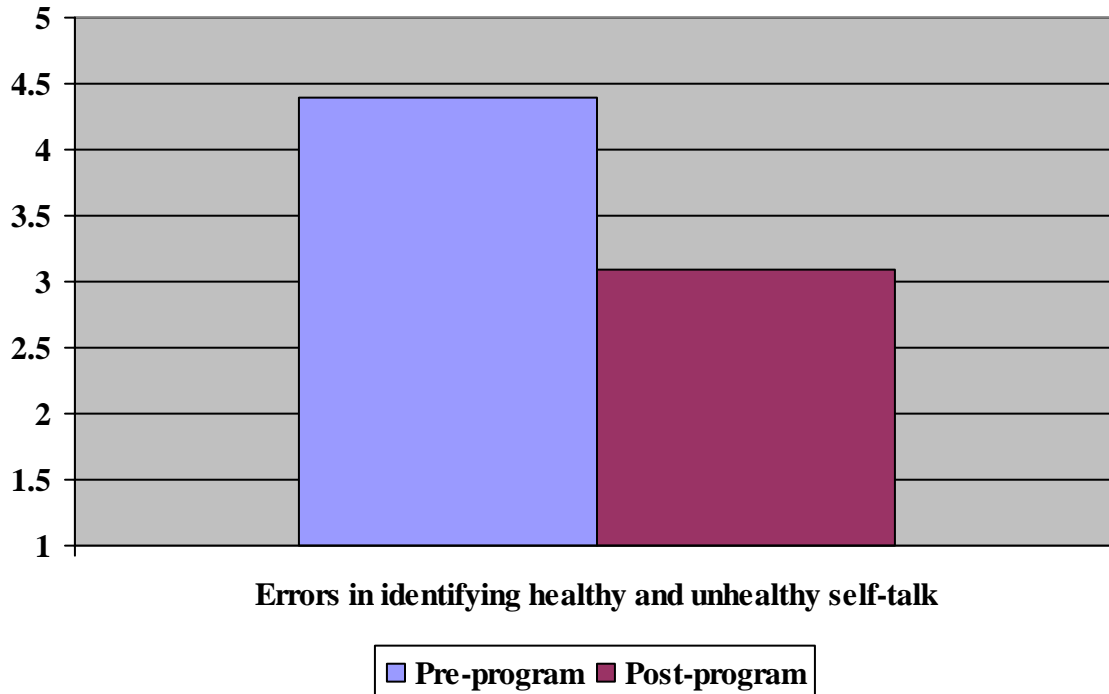


3.1.2 Do participants in PAR programs show positive changes in knowledge of abuse-supporting self-talk from pre- to post-intervention?

Also of interest was whether men who completed PAR programs showed significant positive changes in their knowledge of abuse-supporting cognitions. Figure 2 shows the number of errors made by men in correctly identifying abuse-supporting cognitions at pre- and post-intervention. As shown, at the beginning of intervention, men answered an average of almost four and a half of the 13 self-talk questions incorrectly. Errors that men were most likely to make were failing to recognize the potential harm in rumination about conflict (i.e., “I can’t believe we are having this discussion again – we just had it yesterday”) and entitlement (i.e., “I shouldn’t have to listen to this kind of criticism”) and failing to appreciate the potential value of considering limits to control of an intimate partner (i.e., “I cannot control the way she acts – she will make this decision for herself”). By the end of intervention, the average number of errors that men made was reduced to just over three incorrect responses, representing a significant positive change in men’s knowledge of abuse-supporting cognition [$t_{\text{paired}}(127) = 5.75, p < .01$].

³ Comparisons of men’s scores from pre- to post-intervention were done using paired t-tests. T-tests provide a hypothesis test of the difference between population means for a pair of random samples whose differences are approximately normally distributed. By convention, differences for which the probability that they occurred by chance is less than 5% are considered significant.

Figure 2: Change in knowledge of abuse supporting self-talk from pre-to-post intervention



3.1.3 Predicting attitude and knowledge change from referral source

Secondary research questions in this area concerned whether attitude and knowledge change varies according to men's referral source (i.e., Early Intervention, Coordinated Prosecution or voluntary referral) and whether change is moderated by men's initial attitude towards intervention. With reference to the first of these questions, results indicated that, at the beginning of intervention, there were no significant differences in the level of blaming, denial, disavowal of personal responsibility, and knowledge of abuse-supporting cognitions for men referred from probation, Early Intervention Court, or for men attending voluntarily. Similarly, examination of men's change from pre- to post-intervention suggested that the degree of men's attitude and knowledge change did not vary significantly by men's referral source.

3.1.4 Predicting attitude and knowledge change from client readiness

Analyses next explored the contribution of men's readiness for intervention to change over time. As a beginning point for exploration, the overall scores of men from pre- to post-intervention were compared. Results indicated that men who completed intervention had significantly higher change readiness scores at the end of intervention (average score, 3.52) than at the beginning of intervention (average score, 3.27)[$t_{\text{paired}}(126) = -6.29, p < .01$].

We next examined whether men's change readiness at the beginning of intervention predicted their degree of progress over intervention. No significant impact of men's initial change readiness was

noted⁴. One problem with this strategy of analysis, however, is the assumption that the impact of readiness is linear (in other words that increasingly higher levels of readiness will lead to increasingly higher levels of change). Rather than being linearly related, men's change readiness may be important to predicting change only at extreme levels. To explore this question, men were categorized according to whether their overall self-reported attitudes towards intervention were neutral or positive (74.7%) or whether they belonged to the smaller subset of men reporting many negative attitudes towards intervention (25.3%). Pre- to post-intervention change for each of these samples was then compared. Results⁵ indicated that men with low levels of change readiness differed in two ways from men with higher change readiness at program intake. Most importantly, results show that on average, low readiness men *increased* in their level of denial over the course of intervention. They also reported greater change in their level of partner blaming than men who began intervention with higher levels of readiness. Together, these preliminary findings suggest that men who begin intervention with negative attitudes may, in fact, become more rigid in their patterns of thinking but learn to answer questions in the "correct" way for the program. More research on the impact of men's change readiness to men's progress through PAR programs is clearly needed.

3.2 Providing support and referral to woman victims of men's abuse

3.2.1 Rates of contact between PAR programs and women

A second role of PAR programs within Ontario's broader response to domestic violence is to support victims of men's violence. Specifically, PAR programs attempt to contact victims of men's abuse, plan for their safety, and ensure referral to appropriate advocacy services. The current study investigated two aspects of this process – rates of partner contact and needs reported by women at the time of program intake.

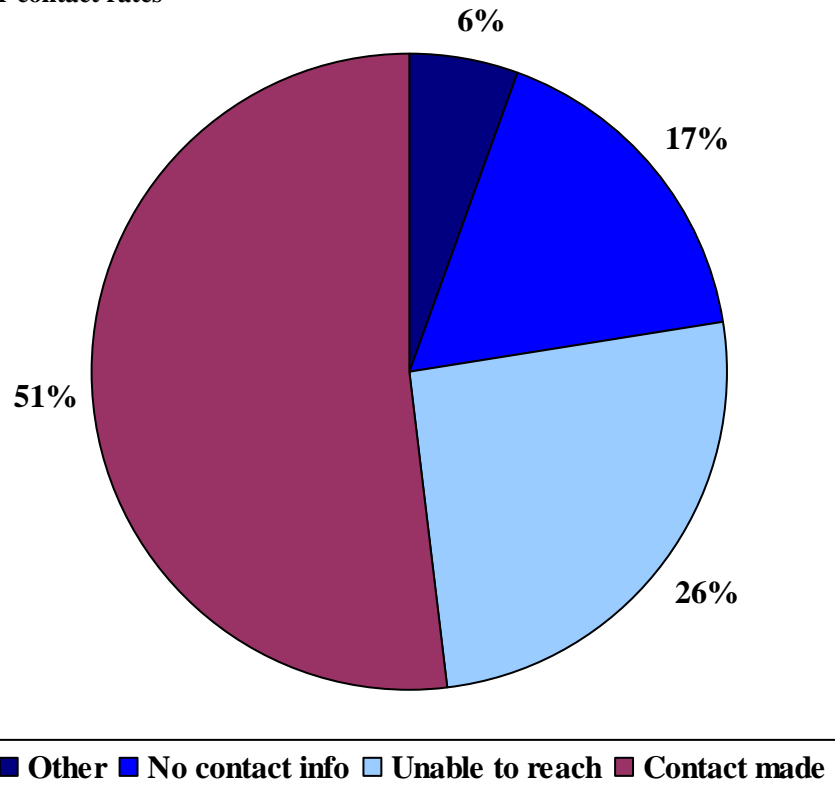
Overall rates of successful contact with men's intimate partners are shown in Figure 3. As shown, across sites, the average rate of contact with men's intimate partners was fifty-one percent. However, closer examination of the data from each site (not shown) revealed that rates of successful contact of men's intimate partners varied greatly between sites, with some sites achieving contact with over 65% of men's partners and others reaching only 25% or 30% of men's intimate partners.

The main reasons for failure to contact women were being unable to reach her after multiple attempts and not having contact information (see Figure 3). The relationship between men and their partners (as reported by men) *did not* predict the chances of contact. In other words, failed contact attempts were as likely for women who had an ongoing relationship with clients of the PAR program as for women with no ongoing relationship.

⁴ Analyses were completed with regression of men's initial attitudes, level of trust and the interaction of trust and readiness on their post-intervention attitudes and knowledge.

⁵ Analysis of variance with men's change readiness category as the independent variable and difference scores in attitude and knowledge domains as the independent variable.

Figure 3: Partner contact rates

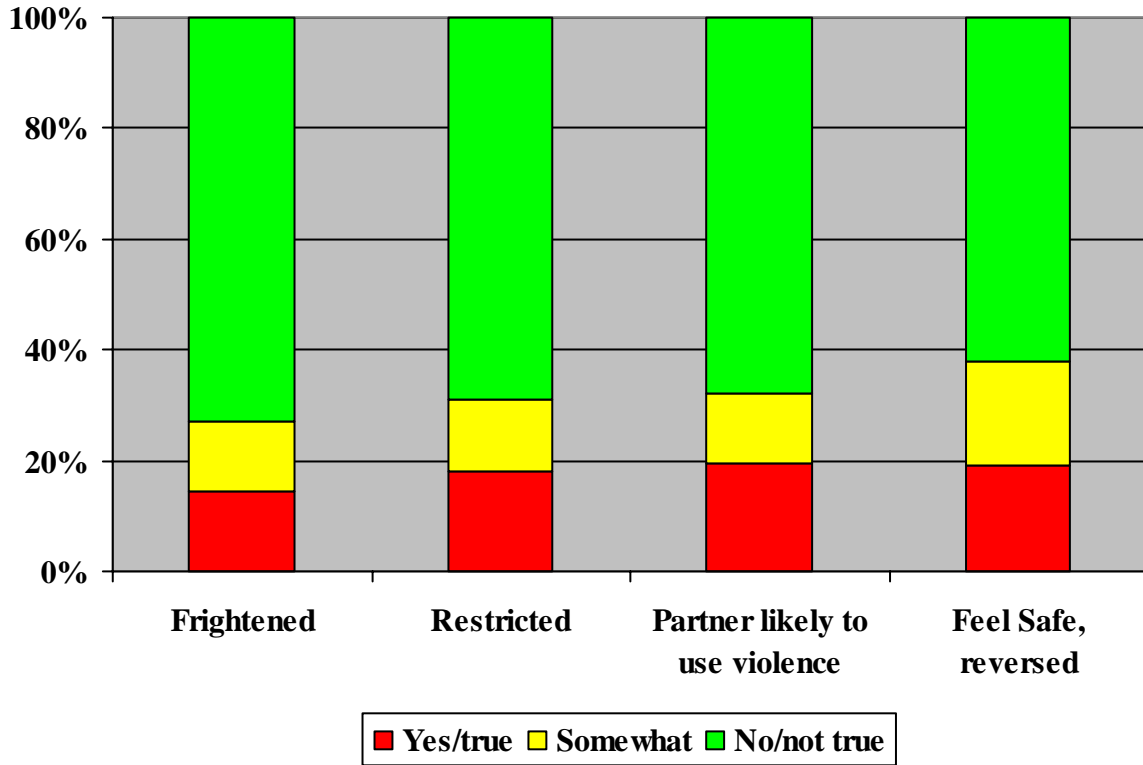


3.2.2 Needs identified by women at program intake

The needs that women identified at the beginning of intervention were next explored. Three areas of need were examined – women’s safety, their perception of their partners’ level of responsibility for their violence, and their overall satisfaction with their relationship with their partner.

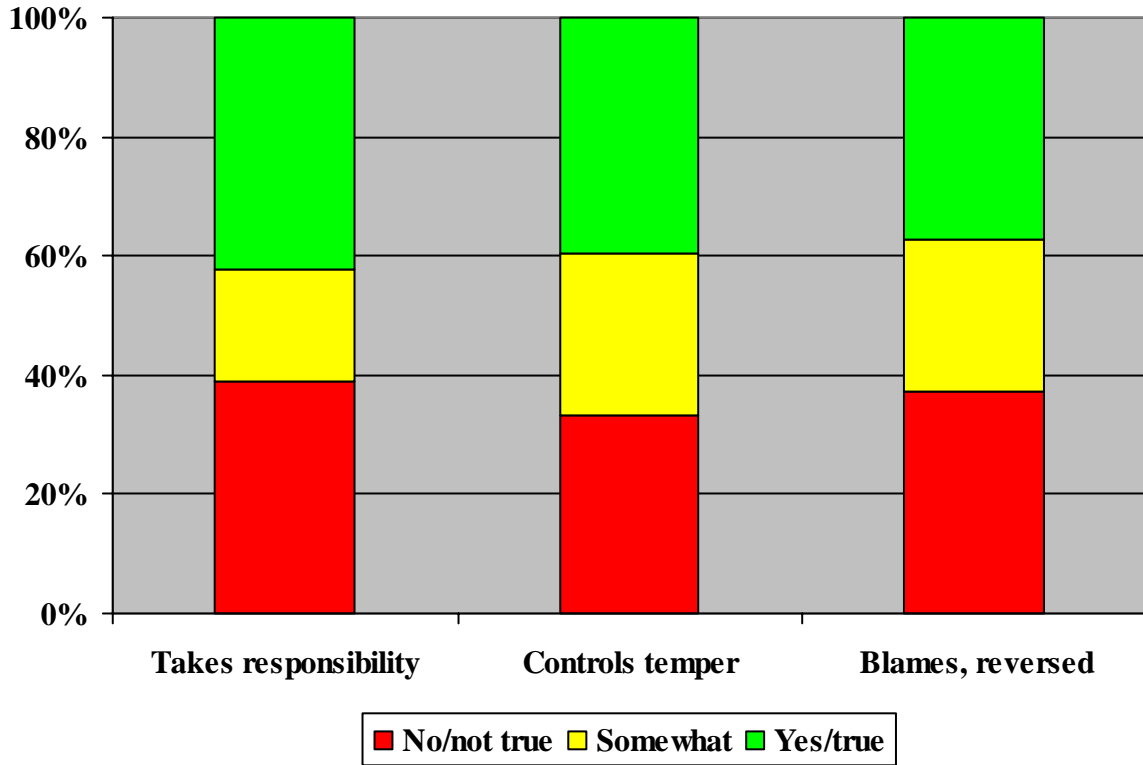
Women’s reports on their perceptions of safety during their first contact with the PAR program are shown in Figure 4. Women reported specifically on their level of fear of their partner, the extent to which they felt that their movements were restricted by their partner, their concerns about his potential to use violence and their feelings of safety. In this figure, the green bar represent women who feel generally safe, the yellow women who feel somewhat safe and the red women who feel unsafe. As shown, across domains, approximately 65% of women feel safe at the time their partners enter PAR programs. Between 15 and 20% of women feel unsafe.

Figure 4: Women’s perceptions of safety at their first PAR program contact



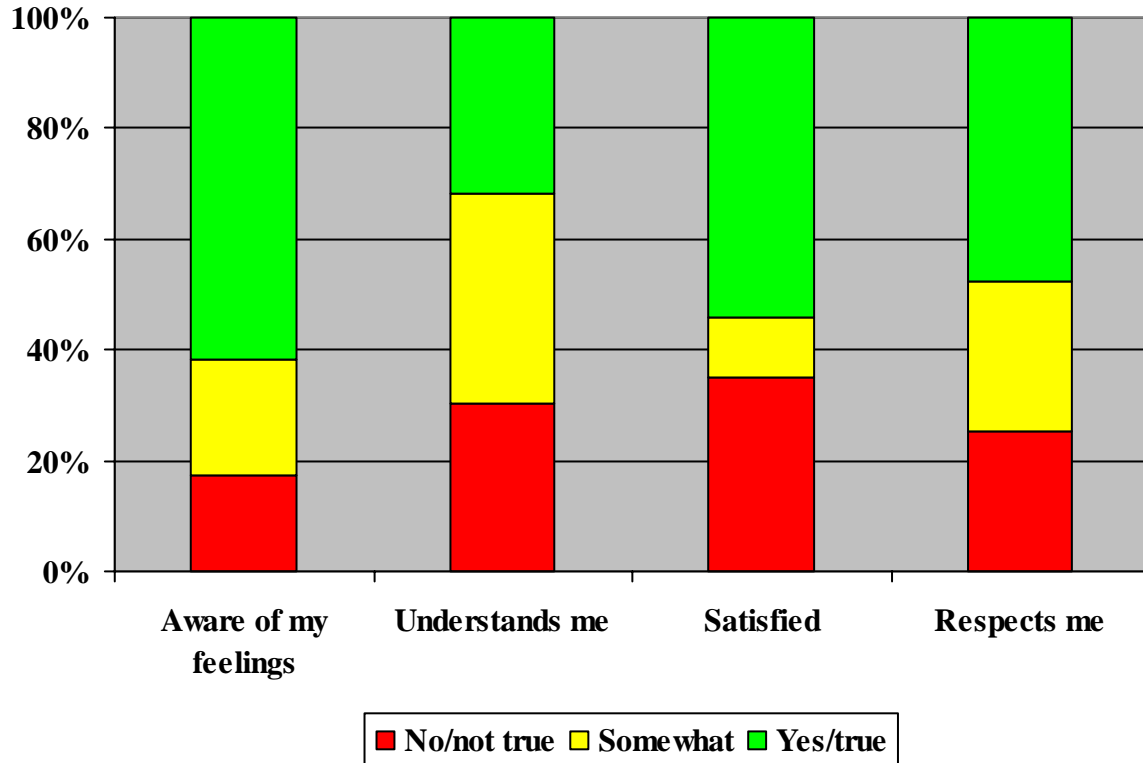
Women’s attitudes about the degree of responsibility that their partners have taken for their use of violence were also examined. Specifically, women were asked to report on the extent to which their partners had taken responsibility for his violence, blamed her for his violence, and controlled his temper. As shown in Figure 5, just under forty percent of women felt that men had not taken responsibility for their violence or temper and continued to blame them.

Figure 5: Women's reports about the extent to which men have taken responsibility for their violence



Finally, women reported on other aspects of their satisfaction with their relationship with their partner. Their reports are shown in Figure 6 with the red bars representing the number of women who feel unsatisfied, yellow representing women who feel somewhat satisfied and green representing the women who reported feeling satisfied. Results indicate that around fifty percent of women were generally satisfied with their relationship with their partners.

Figure 6: Women’s relationship satisfaction



3.3 Participating as part of a larger system of promoting change in men’s abusive behaviour

A final area of analysis concerned the role of PAR programs as part of the larger system of promoting change in men’s abusive behaviour. Two specific questions were asked. The first concerned rates of program completion and the second concerned the consistency between men's self-reported attitudes and counsellors' judgements of men's attitudes at the end of intervention.

3.3.1 Rates of program completion

In terms of completion rates, of the 203 men who consented to the current research, 147 men completed group. This translates to a dropout rate of 27.6%. Rates of dropout varied significantly according to men’s referral source. Only 10.2% of men referred though the Early Intervention Court process dropped out of intervention, as compared to 30.8% of men referred through probation. Rates of program dropout were highest among voluntarily referred clients, with dropout rates of 57.1%.

Reasons for men’s dropout were known for over 60% of cases. The most likely reasons for drop out were a conflict in timing between work and participation in the PAR program that could not be resolved (26.9%) or men’s further interaction with the justice system, such as an incarceration or an additional charge (30.8%). Other, less frequent, reasons for dropout had to do with men’s inappropriate behaviour in group, men’s health and primary need for drug or alcohol counselling.

3.3.2 Consistency between men's self-reported attitudes and counsellors' judgements of men's attitudes at the end of intervention

Finally, the current study examined the degree of agreement between men and their counsellors on their attitudes at the end of their involvement in the PAR program. Comparisons were made between counsellor judgements of men's level of blaming, minimization and personal responsibility and men's reports of partner blaming, denial, and personal responsibility. Correlations⁶ revealed that in two of these domains – partner blaming and personal responsibility for abuse – there were moderate correlations between men's reports and counsellor's judgements ($r = .39, .35$, respectively). Correlations between counsellor's judgements of men's minimization and men's reports of denial were low ($r = .08$)

4.0 Discussion

This study was undertaken to examine the success of PAR programs within the context of Ontario's response to domestic violence. Within this system, PAR programs are charged with three important purposes: 1) changing men's attitudes towards violence; 2) providing support and referral to women victims of men's abuse; and 3) participating as part of a larger system of promoting change in men's abusive behaviour. Research questions in the current study addressed each of these aims. Results provided support for the efficacy of PAR programs in promoting men's attitude change and contributing to the larger system of intervention. Program's success in supporting women partners of men is less well supported. Results from each domain of investigation are discussed below:

4.1 Change in men's attitudes and knowledge

Results of this study found that, on average, men who completed a PAR program showed significant positive change in all attitude and knowledge domains assessed. Specifically, men increased their level of personal responsibility for their abusive behaviour, reduced their negative and blaming attitudes towards their intimate partners and were less likely to deny relationship difficulties. Men also showed significant improvements in their knowledge of cognition, or self-talk, that is most closely related to abusive behaviour.

The importance of shifts in attitude to change in behaviour is supported by long traditions of research on intervention. For example, specific focus on changing attitudes that support criminal behaviour has been made a major focus of most general interventions for offenders (Ogloff & Davis, 2004). Although future studies are clearly needed to determine if changes in men's attitudes are related to changes in behaviour (see limitations), the current results provide a hopeful sign that PAR programs are fulfilling one of their main objectives.

⁶ A correlation indicates the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two random variables, as represented by r . Correlation values vary from -1 to +1 with values at 0 indicating no relationship and values approaching either + or - 1 indicating perfect correspondence.

4.2 Support and referral to woman victims of men's abuse

A second purpose of PAR programs is to provide referral and support for women victims of men's abuse. As a primary indicator of PAR programs success in meeting this aim, the current study examined successes and challenges in making contact with women and described needs identified by contacted women at program intake. Results indicate that, across programs, the average rate of successfully contacting women is 51%, with the most often reported reasons for failure to contact women being unable to reach her after multiple attempts or not have correct contact information. However, rates of partner contact did vary substantially across sites, with some programs having considerably greater success in contacting women than others.

Results were discussed with PAR program representatives to explore potential challenges to contacting women victims of men's abuse. Program representatives identified a number of system-related challenges to having higher rates of partner contact. One clearly identified challenge was trying to find women victims when there had been a long gap between the offence that led men to the PAR program and his intake into the program. A second major challenge was coordination and communication with other members of the justice system, specifically the Victim/Witness Assistance Program and Probation and Parole, for sharing information about women's current contact information. Despite differences in contact rates and coordination across sites, PAR program representatives were unanimous in their support of the important role of partner contact as part of the PAR program.

The current study also explored the needs identified by women during their first contact with the PAR agencies. Results indicated that women have a diversity of needs. About one third of the women contacted by the PAR programs expressed some concerns about their safety, with 15 to 20% clearly indicating that they felt unsafe. However, other women felt safe with their partners. When asked about their perception of responsibility, women's responses again varied with approximately 40% indicating that men had taken a responsibility for his violence and the remainder expressing a variety of level of concerns about men's responsibility. Finally, when general relationship satisfaction was considered, results showed that over 50% of women felt satisfied with their relationship and an additional 28% felt very unsatisfied. Overall, these results clearly suggest that the needs of women contacted by programs differ. For some, traditional safety planning and referral to woman's advocacy is critical. Others, particularly women who report feeling safe, who feel that their partner has taken responsibility for his past violence, and who are satisfied with their relationships, likely have different service needs. Providing appropriate referral and support for these women may require collaboration with agencies in addition to shelter and women's advocacy services, who have been the main focus of service referrals in PAR programs to date.

4.3 Participating as part of a larger system of promoting change in men's abusive behaviour

A third purpose of PAR programs is to participate as part of a larger system of promoting change in men's abusive behaviours. Results in this final section concern the successes and failures of system coordination around PAR programs. The first result relevant to addressing PAR's participation in the larger system is rates of program completion. Results of the current study found that almost three-quarters of men who completed intake at a PAR program also completed

the program. Rates of dropout are lowest for clients referred through the Early Intervention Court system (10%) and considerably higher for men attending voluntarily (57%). Perhaps of equal importance is that reasons for men's failure to complete programs are known for many of the men who dropout. Main reasons for dropout were work conflict that could not be resolved, further interaction with the justice system that precluded participation in the program (e.g., incarceration), and primary problems with substance use or health. The 74 % rate of program completion found across PAR programs in Ontario exceeds that typically reported in the literature for similar programs where dropout rates typically vary from 50 to 75% (Daly & Pelowski, 2000). This high program completion rate, along with excellent awareness of reasons for men's non-completion, are a very positive indicator of the effectiveness of co-ordination of the justice system and of PAR programs across Ontario.

Finally, review of studies of the effectiveness of programs for men who have been abusive towards their intimate partners have found that, although most men successfully cease or significantly delay subsequent violence, about one quarter of men re-assault their partners. Repeat offenders usually re-offend quickly and are responsible for some of the most severe violence perpetrated against women. To date, researchers have had little success identifying men who are likely to re-offend against their partners from pre-intervention data. A promising alternative for identifying the most problematic offenders is to use data collected over the course of men's involvement in intervention. The current study began investigating this possible alternative method of identifying problematic men by collecting information from multiple sources about his progress. As a first step then, correspondence between the post-intervention attitudes reported by men and judgements made by their counsellors on the same domains was examined. The current study found that agreement between men's reports and counsellors' judgements was moderately high in two of three domains examined. This rate of correspondence provides initial support for the utility of using these attitude domains as a basis of program feedback. Additional research is needed on the correspondence of the reports of men with their intimate partners and of profiles of men for whom there is cross-informant agreement and disagreement on his progress through intervention.

4.4.Limitations and concerns

There are three major limitations of the current study. First, it must be noted that the ultimate aim of Ontario's justice response to domestic violence is to reduce rates of violence against women. The current study argued that a major role of PAR programs in this process of assault reduction is to promote attitude change. PAR programs were then judged according to their success in meeting this objective. However, the links between these changes in attitudes and potential changes in abusive behaviour have not yet been made. Further research is critically needed to determine if identified attitude changes are meaningful as predictors of change in abusive behaviour.

The second major limitation concerns the generalizability of information collected from men's partners. This study documented some important challenges in the PAR program's role of supporting women – in particular, that programs are currently successful at contacting only about half of men's partners. Moreover, of the women who contacted, only 63% agreed to participation in research. This means that reports herein on the needs of women partners of men in PAR programs may not be representative of all women partners. It is also important to note that information on women's needs was only gathered from one source (women), as compared to the

multiple sources of information on men's attitudes pre- and post-intervention (men, women, and counsellors). Having multiple sources of information is important to assess and guard against the impact of bias in response. For example, just as men may present themselves and their attitude change in a more positive light to avoid "looking bad", women's reports of their safety, their partners' level of responsibility and their satisfaction with their relationship may be overly optimistic. Future studies would benefit from including counsellor judgements of women's level of risk and need along with women's reports on these domains.

Finally, the participation of multiple PAR agencies in the current research effort is both a strength and a limitation. Having a sample of men from around Ontario means that results can be more confidently generalized to PAR programs as a whole. However, the limited number of men recruited from each site means that little confidence can be placed in any site-specific result. For example, although considerable variation was noted from site to site in rates of partner contact, specific partner-contact rates for each site cannot be estimated with confidence.

5.0 Implications and Recommendations

There is a recognized need for improvement in intervention programs for abusive men. The results of the current study have a number of implications for such improvement, listed as follows.

1. The intervention needs of men attending PAR programs voluntarily, though Early Intervention Court (i.e., Bail) and through Coordinated Prosecution are not substantially different at program intake. In general, the attitudes and knowledge of men attending PAR programs via different referral streams were similar at the beginning of intervention. These results echo findings from Phase I of this research and suggest that differentiating service according to referral source is not likely to be a useful strategy for meeting the diverse needs of men referred to PAR programs.

2. Investigation of men's progress over intervention provides some suggestion that intervention may be more successful for men referred through the Early Intervention Court process. Greater training may be needed to inform members of DV courts of the advantages and parameters of the Early Intervention Process. Although men present with initially similar needs, there is some suggestion from the current data that men referred through the EIC process make greater progress through PAR programs than men referred through different routes. Specifically, dropout rates for EIC clients are considerably lower than for men referred through probation or who attend voluntarily.

Balancing the potential advantages of EIC referral are two concerns identified by PAR program representatives. The first is that men currently identified through the EIC system only sometimes meet the criteria for the EIC process (e.g., first assault, no major injury), and at other times have perpetrated much more serious and injurious offences and are not appropriate EIC clients. Second, a number of PAR program representatives indicated that the number of clients referred through the EIC process have been decreasing over time. Together, these observations suggest that additional training or discussions may be needed with members of the judiciary on the benefits of the early intervention process.

3. Information is still critically needed on the expected links between attitudes and behaviour. The current study focused on the impact of PAR program participation on men's attitudes and knowledge. The links between these changes in attitudes and changes in abusive behaviour have not yet been made. In other words, it is not yet clear whether changes in men's attitudes are related to changes in their behaviours. Establishing these links are essential given the nature of abusive behaviour and its potentially severe negative impact on the victims of men's abuse.

4. Rates of woman contact may be improved by increased openness in communication between PAR programs, Probation and Parole, and the Victim/Witness Assistance Program, by information sharing across programs and by more rapid processing of domestic violence cases in the court system. To meet the aim of providing support and referral to women, PAR programs must be able to contact women victims of men's abuse. A variety of barriers were identified to achieving high rates of partner contact across all sites. Some barriers concern the amount of time that it takes men to move through the system. Others involve sharing of information between individuals in contact with men's partners. PAR program sites may benefit from discussions among each other around more and less successful strategies for improving rates of partner contact. Central leadership around communication between parts of the justice system may also be helpful. Finally, continued efforts to improve the efficiency of the Domestic Violence Court system will also likely improve PAR programs' abilities to successfully contact victims of men's abuse.

5. Women who have been victims of men's abuse have diverse needs. Consideration should be given on how to best meet the needs of women contacted by PAR programs. Women victims of men's abuse have a diversity of needs, with some women requiring considerable support for safety and others requiring services that respects their view of their relationship as safe and generally satisfying. Consideration should be given to how PAR programs may best respond to variations in women's needs.

6. Consideration continues to be needed on the role PAR programs can play in helping to identify those men who are in most need of additional intervention or monitoring beyond participation in the PAR program. The current study began to investigate the possible role that PAR programs may play in providing feedback to help identify those men who are and are not making change. Analyses to date show some promise for a combination of counsellor judgement and men's self-report in identifying those men who do, and do not, meet program objectives. Additional research is needed to incorporate feedback from men's partners and to examine possible profiles of successful and unsuccessful PAR clients. In addition, broader consideration is needed on the possible role of PAR program feedback for helping to identify men who are in need of additional intervention and monitoring and on the possible implications of this feedback for men and for victims of their abuse.

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