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**Author(s): Eleanor Lyon, Ph.D.**

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# **Impact Evaluation of Special Session Domestic Violence: Enhanced Advocacy and Interventions**

**Final Report**

**Eleanor Lyon  
University of Connecticut  
School of Social Work**

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# Project Description

## Introduction

Despite more than twenty-five years of attention to domestic violence by advocates, intervention program specialists, researchers, and policy-makers, and dramatic increases in resources provided for criminal justice and community-based services, gaps remain in our knowledge about which types of interventions offer the most effective strategies to hold offenders accountable and enhance victim safety. In particular, several years after specialized domestic violence court sessions became more widely implemented, available knowledge remains limited about the impact of judicial monitoring, and the expanded treatment interventions and advocacy these sessions can provide—especially in the context of mandatory arrest that includes misdemeanor offenses. It is especially notable that consensus remains elusive about the efficacy of intervention programs for abusive men.

As courts across the country have moved to develop specialized approaches to respond to the complex challenges posed by domestic violence, finding the most effective interventions for men and support for their partners is crucial. Many group interventions developed for abusive men have been modeled on early approaches that were not created for court-ordered clients. Further, many of the existing court-referred programs offer limited skill-building, often ignore appropriate fathering, do not incorporate substance abuse issues throughout the program, and offer limited attention to different cultural and racial identities among group members. Models that address these and other limitations, with curricula that can be adopted effectively by trained facilitators, may hold potential for reducing repeated domestic abuse.

In addition, when courts place more emphasis on prosecuting domestic violence defendants, especially in misdemeanor cases, and ordering them into extended specialized programs, the roles played by advocates can become more complex and diverse. The project reported here evaluated the impact of a newly developed 26-week, 52-session skill building, culturally competent, psycho-

educational curriculum-based intervention for male domestic violence offenders with female victims (EVOLVE). EVOLVE was implemented beginning in 2000 in the context of three urban courts that have specialized domestic violence court sessions characterized by consistent judicial oversight with rapid response to violations, extensive specialized victim advocacy resources, and a graduated range of sanctions. In particular, the evaluation sought to determine:

- the impact of men’s participation in EVOLVE on rates of subsequent physical and emotional abuse;
- the impact of men’s participation in EVOLVE on their partners’ safety, safety planning, experience of court and well-being;
- the rates of program completion compared to the more general 26-week program in place in other court sites in the state, particularly across racial and ethnic groups; and
- how the victim advocates’ role was affected by this new resource.

## **Review of Relevant Literature**

Research and evaluation data on the role of the criminal legal system in responding to and preventing domestic violence has grown rapidly in the last fifteen years, as the number of jurisdictions that have adopted mandatory arrest policies and established specialized interventions has increased dramatically. As specialized programs have proliferated, several issues have gained importance for research and evaluation: a) the impact of group interventions for batterers, including promising attributes; b) more refined understanding of the characteristics of the abusive people (predominantly men) who are ordered to participate in them, so that programs can more efficiently modify their behavior; c) men's perspectives on their own behavior and the incidents that have brought them to legal system attention; and d) characteristics of court systems associated with effective interventions. The literature related to each of these issues is summarized briefly in turn. This review demonstrates that despite the growing body of literature, substantial gaps remain in our knowledge about the impact of group interventions on men and their female partners.

### ***Impact of Group Interventions***

In general, early evaluations of group interventions for abusive men produced mixed findings,<sup>1</sup> and more recent results of the best designed and most carefully controlled studies have not had consistent results, either. For example, Davis and Taylor's<sup>2</sup> study of 376 men who had pled guilty to misdemeanor domestic violence and were randomly assigned to 39 hours (offered in either 26 or eight week blocks) of batterer's education or to 39 hours of community service found no difference between the eight week and control groups after six months, but the men in the 26-week treatment group were significantly less likely to be arrested for a new domestic violence offense or to have police complaints filed.

In contrast, Feder and Forde's<sup>3</sup> study of 404 men on probation randomly assigned to either a 26 week group or to probation supervision without group intervention found no statistically significant differences between the groups on recidivism, measured either by police records or by victim report. However, the study did find a small effect on recidivism among the men assigned to the treatment group who completed all 26 sessions. The vast majority of men in this study (85 percent) had been sentenced following their first arrest for domestic violence, although nearly half had been arrested previously for other offenses.

A quasi-experimental design involving 339 men arrested in Seattle for domestic violence who were mandated into either group treatment alone (26 weekly sessions, followed by six monthly meetings), group treatment plus treatment for substance abuse, treatment for substance abuse or other issues without groups for domestic violence, or were incarcerated followed the men for two years.<sup>4</sup> Seventy-nine percent of these men had no prior convictions for domestic violence offenses, and 69 percent had no prior criminal history. Researchers found that the men who completed treatment were less significantly likely than either those who did not complete treatment or the men who had been incarcerated to have any official record of a new offense after two years (eight percent of completers, compared to 23 percent of noncompleters); differences between these groups remained statistically significant when demographic and criminal history variables were controlled, although they were not large.

Some of the most positive findings were reported from a large-scale evaluation (N = 618) of "model" treatment programs in four cities provided following court mandate.<sup>5</sup> This study found that a majority of the men (59 percent) did not reassault during 30 months of follow-up. In addition, 61 percent of the men who ultimately reassaulted did so within the first six months after program intake. Perhaps most significantly, 64% of the men who completed at least three months of the



programs did not reassault, compared to just 49% of those who dropped out. This study was notable in many ways, including its inclusion of data from 67 percent of the men's partners.

These and other studies were included in a recent meta-analysis of research on batterers' treatment<sup>6</sup> No differences were found for different treatment approaches (conceptualized as feminist psychoeducational groups based on the Duluth model, and cognitive behavioral groups). The authors concluded that, over all, the effects that can be attributed to treatment at this stage of knowledge are small. In experimental studies, based on partner report, "...there is a 5% increase in success rate attributable to treatment....A 5% decrease in violence may appear insignificant; however, batterers treatment in all reported cases of domestic violence in the United States would equate to approximately 42,000 women per year no longer being battered."<sup>7</sup>

The studies reviewed clearly involved different types and durations of treatment, different precipitating behavior, different court contexts, different monitoring and compliance standards, and different personal characteristics of the men involved. These issues, of course, are also likely to influence group effectiveness. The men who completed groups often tended to be less likely than non-completers to re-offend, or to do so after more time had passed. Some researchers have suggested that the longer treatment lasts, the more likely it is to be effective, while others have asserted that completion is more important than length.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Program Completion and Dropout***

Certainly, strategies to reduce program dropout are vitally important to effective intervention. Comparative analysis of the characteristics of program completers and dropouts has accompanied most evaluations of group treatment for abusive men. While some studies have concluded that lower age, educational attainment, unmarried status, unemployment, and self-reported alcohol use are predictors of dropout,<sup>9</sup> other research has found little or no relationship

between demographic variables and dropout.<sup>10</sup> Studies have begun to suggest, however, that court-ordered men may be more likely to remain in treatment than self-referred clients,<sup>11</sup> and that members of racial and ethnic minority groups have higher rates of dropout than Caucasians.<sup>12</sup>

High rates of dropout (40 percent to 60 percent within the first three months have been reported as typical)<sup>13</sup> have spawned some efforts to improve program retention. One evaluation of a pregroup intervention that consisted of a one-hour presentation and discussion of a 20-minute dramatic video found that it was associated with lower dropout rates and higher rates of group participation, when compared with a control group who received the usual intake.<sup>14</sup> Another evaluation of pre-group efforts to reduce dropout compared two alternatives: four weekly one-hour sessions and a single eight-hour workshop. Men who attended the workshop had substantially lower dropout rates after the fourth group treatment session than did those who attended the briefer and more dispersed intervention.<sup>15</sup>

A more recent effort to improve group retention focused on supportive telephone calls immediately after missed treatment sessions, and personalized handwritten notes from facilitators to express concern and a desire to continue working with the individual. Just 15 percent of the men who received immediate supportive communications ultimately dropped out of the treatment group, compared to 30 percent of those who received no contact. Further, the contrast was more dramatic among racial and ethnic minority clients: 10 percent of these men dropped out of the group with supportive contact, compared to 42 percent who dropped out of the comparison group.

The findings on dropout, then, are somewhat mixed. They appear to point to a combination of factors associated with attrition, including client characteristics, potential consequences of dropout (court-ordered men have lower rates), and features of communication between group leaders and participants. It seems that fairly minimal but systematic effort can reduce dropout, and

that different strategies may be particularly helpful for men from racial and ethnic minority groups.

Certainly, many national experts on interventions for abusive men who specialize in communities of color have argued that different, more culturally appropriate and sensitive, intervention models will contribute to lower dropout rates and more positive outcomes than the group models that are currently common.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Batterer Typologies***

The attempt to understand the dynamics of domestic violence, and ultimately to develop appropriate interventions that will effectively reduce or eliminate abusive behavior, has also led some researchers to investigate batterer typologies. Several alternative conceptualizations have been offered over the years,<sup>17</sup> with some more behaviorally-focused, and others based on psychological or neurobiological characteristics.

Some of the most recent typological refinements and their efficacy were presented and discussed as part of a special issue on a national research agenda.<sup>18</sup> Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan<sup>19</sup> offered empirical support for their four-type formulation: 1) FO (family-only batterers), 2) DB (dysphoric or borderline), 3) GVCA (generally violent and antisocial), and 4) LLA (low-level antisocial). They maintained that each of these types show different patterns (regarding change or stability in frequency and severity of abuse) over time, and argued for more consideration of situational and contextual data in future empirical work. Saunders<sup>20</sup> raised definitional and methodological concerns, and urged more attention to community, subcultural and societal level variables. Prentky,<sup>21</sup> applying his work on sex offenders, suggested that focusing on a differentiated conceptualization of anger (acute or chronic) could be fruitful in developing more refined approaches to interventions with domestically abusive men. Although substantial work has been done in this area, researchers and practitioners are clearly still far from consensus about batterer

typologies, definitional issues, and the types of variables that should be considered in creating them. In addition, typologies have generally not been a focus of evaluations of group interventions for abusive men, or informed court-ordered group referrals. There is growing agreement, however, that a “one-size-fits-all” approach to intervention is unlikely to be effective, and some evaluations have included analyses that could contribute to typological formulations.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Abusive Men’s Perspectives***

Efforts to modify the behavior of abusive men, as with any attempt at behavioral change, are likely to be most productive if their own understandings are taken into account. As Buchbinder and Eisikovits<sup>23</sup> noted recently, however, the literature on men’s perspectives is extremely limited. They maintained that “effective clinical and institutional interventions with batterers need to take into account their perspectives, their perceptions, their range of choices, and limitations on choice as experienced by them.”<sup>24</sup>

Despite the scanty literature, the analysis that exists can be useful for thinking about interventions. Most researchers have categorized men’s perspectives as excuses, justifications, or neutralizing techniques.<sup>25</sup> Buchbinder and Eisikovits provided data from interviews with 20 men who had been arrested multiple times, and found that their perspective changed over time. By the third encounter with police, the men expected the worst, felt increasing anger and despair, and a sense of entrapment in a situation where they could not win.<sup>26</sup> Conceivably, such anger and despair could contribute to men’s renewed efforts to change their behavior. It seems more likely, however, that increased anger and feelings of entrapment could lead men to feel that “the system” is biased against them, and changes on their part would not make much difference. While these findings are still only suggestive, they offer potentially useful information related to

challenges faced in interventions with abusive men who have had multiple encounters with the criminal legal system.

### *Court System Issues*

Increasingly, the importance of multi-institutional, coordinated community responses in the court context has been emphasized and received some support.<sup>27</sup> As part of coordinated court responses, research has begun to demonstrate that advocacy services can provide significant support of diverse kinds and can be associated with reduced risk of physical and psychological abuse over time.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, studies of advocacy in the court context have been extremely limited until recently.<sup>29</sup> As more emphasis is placed on court responses as the central feature of comprehensive interventions, expanded and effective advocacy has been urged more strongly, and models have proliferated.<sup>30</sup>

Early evaluations of comprehensive, coordinated court responses have indicated that such programs can be effective; they have been increasingly advocated as practitioners have acknowledged the complexity of the issues involved in domestic violence for both offenders and victims. Buzawa, Hotaling and Klein found that the model court they studied focused intervention resources on men who had prior arrests for domestic violence. Murphy, Musser and Maton found that the more coordinated intervention the court invoked, the lower were men's subsequent rates of recidivism. Additional investigations of comprehensive intervention approaches, including judicial monitoring, as in the Judicial Oversight Demonstration initiative, are currently under way,<sup>31</sup> and are clearly needed.

All of these issues provide the context for the present report on an evaluation of a newly developed model for court-ordered intervention with abusive men, although they were not all explicitly incorporated into the original design.

## **Scope and Methodology**

This project focused on an evaluation of EVOLVE, a newly developed broad based, skill building, culturally competent psychoeducational curriculum for male domestic violence offenders with female victims. Most programs that are 26 weeks or longer are educational programs based on the Duluth model. They meet once a week and feature didactic material and dialog. In contrast, the EVOLVE program meets twice weekly for 26 weeks, and includes one session each week that emphasizes didactic material and dialog, and one that focuses on explicit practice and skill-building. Also unlike most other programs, it is explicitly culturally heterogeneous, addresses issues of fathering and the impact of violence on children, integrates substance abuse education throughout the program, and includes a multi-session section on sexuality and sexual violence. It is drawn from the experience of recognized facilitators from diverse backgrounds, one of whom provided training and regular supervision through the first year of program implementation (which overlapped with the beginning of this evaluation).

The 26-week, 52-session curriculum was implemented in three large urban courts that have specialized domestic violence court sessions, judicial monitoring, specialized court staff throughout the judicial process, enhanced advocacy for victims, a collaborative team approach to case processing, and collaboration with networks of involved community service providers. The comparison site, also a large urban court, had some specialized court staff and enhanced victim advocacy, as well. It was selected as the comparison because of these court features, the use of a more traditional 26-week intervention (that met just once each week), its high volume, and the high rate of involvement of men of color, which was similar to rates found at the EVOLVE sites at the time the evaluation was proposed.

EVOLVE was designed to be used with men who had been arrested for domestic violence at least once before, or who had been charged with felonious assault. EVOLVE was intended as a

final community-based alternative to incarceration. Men were either convicted of their domestic violence offense and ordered to attend the program as a condition of probation, or had entered “guilty” pleas that would be invoked if they did not complete the program. This group could potentially have their charges dismissed or reduced if they completed the program successfully. It was anticipated that the men who had been arrested for domestic violence in the past would have typically participated in the 10-week group intervention program offered in all courts in the state on a pre-trial basis. The same assumptions applied to use of the program (called “Explore”) at the comparison site, as well.

***The projected samples.*** The evaluation design called for interviewing 440 men who entered the EVOLVE program and 175 men from the comparison court site who started Evolve over an 18-month period, and collecting self-report data on new incidents of physical and emotional abuse for a minimum of 15 months following program intake.<sup>32</sup> Data were to be collected at intake and at three, six, and 12 months after intake. Information was also to be obtained from police records for criminal history, and data on new arrests with conviction were to be collected through a minimum of 15 months post-intake.

The design also called for interviews with as many of the men’s victim partners as possible. All of the victims who had contact with the specialized advocates were to be told about the evaluation and asked for their consent to be contacted by researchers. Contact with victims through the advocates had worked very effectively in past projects,<sup>33</sup> and the process was consistent with increased judicial and university emphasis on victim safety and informed consent.

***The measures.*** The initial interviews with the men included the most extensive set of measures. They consisted, first, of a background questionnaire that covered demographics, family status, parents’ behavior (drug or alcohol problems, physical abuse of each other or respondent,



employment status or crime problems), and their hopes or plans for their relationship with the victim. The Michigan Alcohol Screening Test<sup>34</sup> was also administered. This test consists of 25 weighted items about drinking-related behavior and problems, and has been widely used with success in other evaluations of batterer treatment programs. It is designed to uncover potential problem drinking despite drinkers' tendency to minimize or deny it. The men were also asked to complete the 175-item Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III. Although this test is lengthy, it is briefer than many alternatives. It also contains sub-scales that correlate highly with DSM-IV categories. It, too, has been widely used in evaluations of batterers' treatment programs.<sup>35</sup>

The men's interview also included the physical assault and sexual coercion scales of the revised Conflict Tactics Scale.<sup>36</sup> They were supplemented with a version of the 21-item Profile of Psychological Abuse,<sup>37</sup> modified to report the program participant's own behavior (for example, "how often do you...become angry or upset if your partner wants to be with someone else and not with you?"). The Profile consists of behavioral statements scored on seven frequency options, ranging from "never" to "daily." It generates five sub-scales: Jealous Control, Ignore, Ridicule Traits, Criticize Behavior, and Fear of Abuse. Finally, the men were asked about their partners' responses, and their sense of their partners' fear (also derived from the Profile of Psychological Abuse). In addition, data on the men's criminal histories were obtained (number, type, and severity of prior criminal convictions; number and severity of prior family violence convictions; timing of first arrest and first family violence arrest).

Subsequent interviews with the men at 3, 6, and 12 months after intake asked primarily about abuse during the interim, their partners' responses, their partners' fear, any changes in employment or family status, and their hopes or plans for their relationship. These data were supplemented with data on subsequent convictions (general and family violence), and sentences to

periods of incarceration. In addition, data were obtained from the group facilitators about attendance, their rating of each individual's program participation after each session (in a single categorical rating developed collaboratively with the facilitators, consisting of did not attend, present but not engaged, or present and engaged), and status at termination (successful completion, negative discharge before completion).

***The samples achieved.*** Intake interviews were ultimately completed with a total of 544 men who attended at least one session of the group to which they were referred: 420 in the EVOLVE sites, and 124 in the Explore site. The projected sample size was not quite achieved for several reasons, some of which varied from one site to another. First, soon after the project got under way, state budgetary difficulties led to reductions in contracts with community-based group services providers. The reductions led to a slower pace of intakes at the program sites, and closed intake entirely for short periods of time. Although program capacity was restored in the following fiscal year, fiscal problems halted intake for another period during another point in the evaluation. Still, evaluators hoped that the projected target sample size might be met.

Second, program site accommodations were less than ideal. When these were combined with stringent informed consent requirements mandated by the programs and supported by the university's IRB process, enrolling evaluation participants became more difficult. In the sites where the programs had private offices for group facilitators at the location where group meetings were held, study participation proceeded easily, with very minimal refusal. At another site, however, initial interviews had to be conducted at the time of the initial screening interview. That interview took between one and two hours, as did the initial research interview. Some men were unable to commit that large a block of time because of work or family constraints, and others were unwilling to do so. At still another site, individual clinical intake interviews were held in one location where

there was no private space to conduct a research interview. In that site, initially, facilitators told the men about the evaluation during a group orientation session. Those who agreed to participate were allowed to leave that session to complete the evaluation interview. However, this process meant that group participants knew who was taking part in the study and who was not. There were occasions where the group dynamic was such that no one agreed to participate. When expanded office space made it possible to conduct interviews at the time of the clinical appointment, study enrollment increased substantially. Offering financial incentives also increased participation. Nonetheless, the early process consumed valuable time and other resources, since three of the study sites were at some distance from the research offices. It also extended the time during which men were enrolled in the study, so that the last men to be added had less than nine months elapse before the final collection of recidivism data.

Finally, the study was designed for men who were referred to and started one of the two programs involved. Since the first interviews were supposed to be conducted before the group intervention actually began, and were therefore completed at the time of the clinical screening interview or during one of the orientation sessions (when rules and expectations were presented and program information was collected at some sites), some of the men who were interviewed were either returned to court as inappropriate for the group (due to insufficient literacy, severe pathology, or other issues incompatible with participation in a group format that included “homework” assignments) or never appeared for their first group session. Although initial interviews were completed, these men (over 50 of them) were not retained in the evaluation. This decision marks a departure from many other evaluations, which include such men in their “non-completers” comparisons.

Space issues and logistical constraints also made follow-up interviews more difficult to complete. Group facilitators were unable to release men from much of their scheduled time in the group session, so men had to come early or stay late to complete the interviews in person. Again some men were unable, and others were unwilling to do this. Interviews were also conducted by telephone when possible, but despite the study process of reviewing consent and contact information for the next interview at the conclusion of each one, and efforts to update contact information through probation officers, high rates of mobility, widespread use of cellular phones that changed frequently, and caller-ID, added to incarceration, reduced success in follow-up interviews. Other researchers have acknowledged the difficulty of conducting longitudinal research with this population, and have noted that the problems have increased dramatically and rapidly over the past few years, as is true with (especially telephone) research with other populations, as well. As experienced researchers from a highly regarded longitudinal study observed recently, “The public’s reactions to identification, call block, call intercept, unlisted cell phones, and answering machines have made tracking increasingly difficult. The logistics and funds required to conduct such longitudinal follow-up have, consequently, become harder to anticipate.”<sup>38</sup>

The challenges involved in interviewing the men’s victims, in turn, proved insurmountable. Although the study’s researchers had substantial experience and success working with the specialized advocates to contact and interview victims in past studies, initial contacts had been with victims at the time of arraignment, and interviews had most commonly been conducted before the court case was finally disposed (i.e. when advocates were still in regular contact with them). Past experience, however, could not guide efforts for the present effort. Just before this study began, a victim homicide following court intervention led to new state-wide policies being adopted regarding victim contact, in an effort to enhance victim safety. As a result, the contact protocol became much

more elaborate and cumbersome than was true in the past. The agreement adopted with the advocates required that they contact the victim, send her a study description and explanation of procedures and incentives, and a release of information form through the mail (since by the time the men were referred to EVOLVE or Explore the women had primarily telephone contact with advocates, if any at all). The victim then had to sign the release of information form, provide contact information, and send it back to the advocate. The advocate then sent any agreement forms to the central advocate coordinator, who in turn forwarded them along to researchers. This cumbersome process, not surprisingly, led to just 20 agreements to participate. By the time researchers received the forms and contacted the women, some had changed their minds, and others had moved (phone not in service); in some cases the signed forms did not include the contact information. As a result, just five interviews were completed with women partners in the first year and a half of the study. After that, since a new contact protocol was not possible, efforts to include the partners were abandoned. This inability to include systematic information from the victims was a dramatic departure from past experience, and is the most serious disappointment and limitation of this evaluation.

Interviews conducted with all seven of the advocates who specialized in post-conviction work with domestic violence victims revealed that they initially shared the researchers' surprise at the lack of victim participation. These were precisely the women the advocates had worked with most repeatedly (because of past court cases), and with whom they had often established some rapport and trust. After more than a year of program implementation, however, the advocates had a different understanding of the victims' perspectives regarding the EVOLVE/ Explore group experience for their current or (now) former abusive partners. The consensus revealed in the interviews highlighted the following:

- The advocates themselves had much more limited contact with these victims. Their estimates of the percentage of victims they have been able to have direct contact with ranged from 10 to 15 percent on one end to “about half or less” on the other. This range was substantially lower than the 80 percent or more of victims that advocates typically contact in person or by telephone around the time of arraignment. “Stale information” is one of the advocates’ biggest challenges in trying to work with victims at this later stage of the court process. If they cannot reach victims, they cannot help researchers to do so.
- The minority of victims with whom the advocates do have contact are more likely than others to still be involved in a relationship with their abusive partner. Because of past cases and disappointments (among other reasons), the other victims had disengaged, and were no longer involved with the men in these programs. The women still involved were more likely than the others to be very fearful (a small proportion), or highly invested in the program working, or angry at the court system—primarily because they consider the program intrusive. (More information from these interviews is provided in a later section of this report.) In all of these scenarios, the women are unlikely to want to talk with researchers described by advocates, and have an uncertain relationship with the court system (even though all materials they are given stress the evaluation’s independence from the court and the confidentiality of all information shared during interviews). Some advocates suggested that incentive payments substantially larger than the \$20 offered for the first interview *might* have enhanced participation.

In short, interviews with the advocates suggest that the men’s female victims could not be included in this study for reasons that were not anticipated by researchers *or advocates* before the evaluation began. New state policies introduced legal constraints. A cumbersome contact protocol

made logistics unwieldy. The minority of victims with whom the advocates had meaningful contact were loathe to talk with researchers because of their connections with their abusive partners or their perceptions of the court system and its possible consequences—they were taking no chances. Clearly, different strategies and/or substantially higher incentives would be needed to overcome this highly unfortunate limitation.

***Data analysis.*** The analysis for the results that follow in the next section includes both quantitative approaches and qualitative summaries of some of the major open-ended items on the men’s interviews and major issues raised by advocates in their interviews. The quantitative analyses focus on descriptions of the men, comparisons of men in the EVOLVE and Explore programs, analysis of differences in completion rates, and analysis of differences in recidivism.

## **Detailed Findings**



The results that follow are divided into five sections: a comparative description of the men who participated in the EVOLVE or Explore group interventions; a related analysis of men’s responses to several open-ended items in the initial interview; a comparative and multivariate analysis of group completion; a comparative and multivariate analysis of post-intake recidivism; and a summary of implementation issues raised in interviews conducted with all of the advocates who work with the victims of men in the groups.

### The Men in the Groups

*Demographic characteristics.* The major demographic characteristics of the men in EVOLVE and the comparison group are shown in Exhibit 1. In most instances, apparent differences

**Exhibit 1: Demographic Characteristics of Group Participants by Type of Group**  
(in percent)

Characteristic		EVOLVE (N = 420)	Explore (N = 124)	Total (N = 544)
<b>Age:</b>	18 – 20	4.8	3.2	4.4
	21 – 25	22.4	18.5	21.5
	26 – 30	14.8	21.8	16.4
	31 – 35	19.5	24.2	20.6
	36 – 40	15.0	13.7	14.7
	41 – 50	20.7	16.9	19.9
	> 50	2.9	1.6	2.6
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>	African American	47.6	44.4	46.8 ***
	Caucasian	23.1	10.5	20.1
	Latino/Hispanic	26.7	44.4	30.8
	Other	2.7	0.8	2.2
<b>Education:</b>	< high school	5.9	6.5	6.1
	9 – 11 years	27.1	37.9	29.5
	high school grad/GED	45.1	42.7	44.6
	some college	17.3	8.9	15.4
	college grad	4.5	4.0	4.4
<b># children:</b>	none	23.4	16.4	21.8 **
	one	24.6	21.3	23.8
	two	25.1	24.6	25.0
	three – five	25.3	30.3	26.4
	six - eight	1.7	7.4	3.0

Characteristic		EVOLVE (N = 420)	Explore (N = 124)	Total (N = 544)
<b># children living with participant during incident:</b>	None	35.9	37.9	36.3
	One	22.3	23.4	22.6
	Two	14.3	18.5	15.2
	Three or more	27.6	20.2	25.9
<b>Relationship Status:</b>	Married, together	18.3	16.9	18.0
	Not married, together	49.2	56.5	50.8
	Relationship, but not living together	14.7	9.7	13.6
	“Broken up”	10.0	8.9	9.7
	Divorced	1.2	0.8	1.1
	Other	6.6	7.3	6.8
<b>Years in Relationship:</b>	Less than one	6.2	3.2	5.5
	One – two	25.0	19.4	23.7
	Three – five	28.1	31.5	28.9
	Six – ten	22.6	31.5	24.6
	Eleven or more	18.1	14.5	17.3
<b>Have job?:</b>	Yes	55.1	57.3	55.6
<b>Financial Support::</b>	Own job	55.3	57.3	55.8
	Partner’s job	5.7	12.1	7.2 *
	Unemployment	7.8	7.3	7.7
	TFA/public assistance	1.4	2.4	1.7
	Food stamps	6.7	9.7	7.3
	Social Security	1.7	3.2	2.0
	SSDI	2.6	3.2	2.8
	Parents	9.5	11.3	9.9
	<b>Primary language English: (yes)</b>	82.1	79.0	81.4

\* p < .05 \*\* p < .01 \*\*\* p < .001

between the two groups are not significant statistically. These men are not as young as abusive men in court settings often are: 57.7 percent are age 30 or older. This is compatible with the fact that they have generally been to court for domestic violence incidents in the past. Relative to the men in the comparison site, the men in EVOLVE are somewhat more likely to have completed high school (67.1 percent vs. 55.6 percent, although this difference is not quite significant statistically). The vast majority of the men in both groups are fathers, although only about two-thirds of the men in EVOLVE had children living with them at the time of the incident. Over

two-thirds were living with their partner at the time of the incident, although most were not legally married; and about one in ten were either “broken up” (separated) or divorced from their partner. Notably, most of the men had been involved in a long-term relationship with their partner: 41 percent of the men in EVOLVE, and 46 percent of the men in Explore, had been in the relationship for six years or longer. Over half of the men in both groups were employed, and many had other sources of financial support (including their partner or their parents, for some), as well. Finally, English was the primary language spoken by about four out of five. (All materials were translated into Spanish, the major other language spoken, and interviews were conducted in Spanish with those for whom English was difficult.)

As Exhibit 1 shows, there were significant differences between the two groups on three variables: race/ethnicity, the number of children, and the percentage obtaining financial support from their partner’s job. The men in EVOLVE were more likely to report they had no children (although they were equivalently likely to have children living with them at the time of the incident), and less likely to report that they received financial help from their partner’s job. The most important of the differences, however, is in race/ethnicity: men in EVOLVE were more likely to be Caucasian, and less likely to be Latino/Hispanic than those in the comparison site.<sup>39</sup>

**Childhood caretakers.** Exhibit 2 provides information about the group participants’ primary

**Exhibit 2: Childhood Caretaker Characteristics by Type of Group**  
(in percent)

Characteristic		EVOLVE (N = 420)	Explore (N = 124)	Total (N = 544)
<b>Primary Caretaker(s) In Childhood</b>	Mother & father	54.3	44.4	52.0
	Mother & boyfriend	5.0	6.5	5.3
	Mother only	26.4	33.1	27.9
	Father only	2.1	2.4	2.2
	Relatives	8.8	8.1	8.6
	Other	3.4	5.5	4.0

Characteristic	EVOLVE (N = 420)	Explore (N = 124)	Total (N = 544)
Male caretaker employed Yes	62.7	56.4	61.3
Female caretaker employed Yes	68.3	63.7	67.2 *
Male caretaker alcohol problems Yes	19.3	20.2	19.5
Female caretaker alcohol problems Yes	6.9	5.6	6.6
Male caretaker drug problems Yes	4.3	3.2	4.0
Female caretaker drug problems Yes	1.9	3.2	2.2

\* p < .05 Note: percentages related to individual caretakers are based on all men, to reflect their living circumstances, and not only on those who had a caretaker of a particular gender.

caretakers during childhood. Over half of the men in EVOLVE (54.3 percent, compared to 44.4 percent of the men in the comparison group; this apparent difference is not quite significant statistically) were raised primarily by their biological parents together. Men in the EVOLVE program were somewhat more likely to have been raised by male and/or female caretakers who were employed, although the primary difference among female caretakers was that those associated with the men in EVOLVE were more likely to have been employed part-time. With regard to drug or alcohol problems, nearly one in five were raised with male caretakers who had alcohol problems; rates of alcohol problems among female caretakers and of drug problems for caretakers of either gender (as reported by the men in the interviews) were substantially lower, and do not differ by type of group.

***Childhood exposure to violence and abuse.*** Data about group participants' exposure to violence and abuse in childhood is shown in Exhibit 3 (on the next page). The men in EVOLVE were significantly less likely than the men in the comparison group to have been aware of fighting and domestic violence between the people who took care of them while they were growing up, but these experiences were reported by less than half of the men in either group. Notably, however, there were no differences in rates of caretaker arrest, either in general or for a domestic violence-

**Exhibit 3: Violence and Abuse in Childhood by Type of Group**  
(In percent)

Characteristic	EVOLVE (N = 420)	Explore (N = 124)	Total (N = 544)
<b>Saw or heard fighting between caretakers while growing up</b> Yes	32.9	46.9	36.0 *
<b>DV between caretakers</b> Yes	25.7	40.3	29.0 **
<b>Either caretaker ever arrested?</b> Yes	14.4	15.4	14.7
<b>Male caretaker DV arrest?</b> Yes	6.2	4.0	5.7
<b>Female caretaker DV arrest?</b> Yes	1.2	2.4	1.5
<b>Hurt in fights they witnessed?</b> Yes	5.7	2.4	5.0 **
<b>Physically hurt growing up?</b> Yes	15.7	18.5	16.4
<b>Hurt sexually growing up?</b> Yes	2.6	4.0	2.9

\* p < .05    \*\* p < .01

related incident. The men in the EVOLVE program *were* more likely than those in the comparison group to have been hurt in the course of the fights they witnessed in childhood, although the percentages are low for both groups. Finally, about one in six of the men reported having been hurt physically by a family member while they were growing up, and a very small percentage admitted they had been hurt sexually by a family member. There is no difference between the groups in the reported experience of abuse during childhood.

**Alcohol and drug experience.** Data on participants’ alcohol and drug experience is shown in Exhibit 4 (on the next page). Michigan Alcohol Screening Test (MAST) scores are derived from weighting responses to 25 questions with yes/no answers, and then summing them to produce a composite score. The scores produce the categories shows in the Exhibit. More than half of the men in both groups score in the problem or potential problem range. Notably, however, substantial proportions of the men with scores indicating problems or potential problems consider themselves to be “normal” drinkers. (Of course, “normal” was not defined for them; it is a reflection of their own self-labeling.) Men in the EVOLVE group are less likely than the

#### Exhibit 4: Alcohol and Drug Experience by Type of Group

Characteristic	EVOLVE (N = 420)	Explore (N = 124)	Total (N = 544)
<b>MAST score:</b> Low risk	46.3	42.7	45.5
High risk	21.4	31.5	23.7
Alcoholism	32.3	25.8	30.8
<b>Consider self a “normal” drinker?</b> yes	35.9	44.0	37.9 *
<b>Have tried “street” drugs</b> yes	78.0	81.5	78.9

\* p < .05

others to consider themselves normal drinkers, although they are somewhat more likely to be categorized on the MAST as low risk.

**Psychological ratings.** Clinical scores compatible with DSM-IV categories were obtained from the 175-item Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III. In general, the men did not score in the “pathological” range in great numbers. Scores indicative of pathology ranged from none on the compulsive scale to 23 percent on the anxiety scale. The other scales that had 10 percent or more of the men scoring in the pathological range were the narcissism scale (16.5 percent) the depression scale (16.1 percent), the paranoid scale (11.7 percent), and the alcohol dependence scale (10.7 percent). Anxiety was notable for its elevated scores: 17.6 percent of the men scored in the pathological range, and an additional 26.7 percent had scores that indicated the presence of clinical symptomatology. The scales with the next highest combined scores suggesting pathology or clinical symptomatology were avoidance, at 31.1 percent and depression, at 29.7 percent..

The two groups were quite similar in their clinical scores, as well. Only four showed differences that reached statistical significance. These were the depression scale (18.2 percent of the comparison group had scores in the pathological range, compared to 9.9 percent of the men in EVOLVE); the major depression scale (7.3 percent of the men in the comparison group had

combined scores indicating pathology or clinical symptoms, compared to 3.3 percent of the men in EVOLVE); the avoidance scale (40.9 percent of the men in the comparison group had combined scores suggesting pathology or clinical symptoms, compared to 31.2 percent of the men in EVOLVE), and the antisocial scale (8.8 percent of the men in EVOLVE had scores in the pathological range, compared to 3.3 percent of the men in the comparison group).

Analyses of MCMI-III scores were conducted after the scores of men who scored in the “invalid” range on the measure of “disclosure patterns.”<sup>40</sup> Over all, 12.9% of the scores were removed from analysis for this reason: 14.1 percent of scores for the men in the EVOLVE program, and 8.9% of those in the comparison group.

In sum, the majority of the men fell well within the “normal” range on the majority of the clinical scales, and the two groups did not differ appreciably from each other. In fact, less than 5 percent scored within the range indicating pathology on several scales: histrionic, sadistic, compulsive, somatoform, bipolar-manic, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, thought disorder, and major depression. However, the men in EVOLVE had more troubling scores on the major depression and antisocial scales, while the men in the comparison group had more troubling scores on the depression and avoidance scales.

***Past use of physical or sexual violence or abuse.*** Participants’ use of physical or sexual violence or injury with the same partner before the incident that led the court to refer him to the group was measured by responses to the items in the physical and sexual coercion and injury subscales of the revised Conflict Tactics Scale. Summary scores were calculated by simply adding the number associated with the frequency category (0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = 2-5 times, 3 = 6 or more times) which the participant used to indicate how often he had used the particular “tactic” in the relationship prior to the arrest incident. Exhibit 5 shows the mean scores by group

**Exhibit 5: Means of Past Physical, Sexual and Injury Scales by Type of Group**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>EVOLVE (N = 420)</b>	<b>Explore (N = 124)</b>
Minor physical assault	2.66	2.59
Severe physical assault	0.66	0.99
Minor sexual coercion	0.21	0.13
Severe sexual coercion	0.07	0.03
Minor injury	0.29	0.27
Severe injury	0.06	0.08

for each of the subscales. For most items, the participants in EVOLVE admitted to using slightly more of the listed tactics, and more frequently. The comparison group admitted to slightly higher rates of severe physical assault and injury. However, none of these apparent differences were significant statistically.

Exhibit 6 shows the percentage of participants in each group who admitted using the

**Exhibit 6: Comparative Use of Particular Tactics in the Past by Type of Group**  
(In percent)

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>EVOLVE (N = 420)</b>	<b>Explore (N = 124)</b>	<b>Total (N = 544)</b>
Grabbed her	46.6	47.1	46.7
Pushed or shoved her	47.6	42.5	46.5
Slapped her	30.8	29.1	30.5
She felt physical pain the next day	18.3	17.8	18.5
Twisted her arm or hair	14.9	17.9	15.6
Threw something at her that could hurt	11.5	10.8	11.4
Punched or hit her with something that could hurt	7.9	15.7	9.7
Slammed her against a wall	8.6	10.8	9.1
Beat her up	9.4	8.3	9.1
Choked her	8.6	9.1	8.9



indicated tactics at least once before the arrest incident. Only the most commonly used tactics are displayed in the exhibit, in descending order of frequency. Nearly half of the men in both groups admitted grabbing and pushing or shoving their partners in the past; just under a third acknowledged they had slapped their partners. Less than ten percent of either group admitted to having “beat up” their partners before the incident that led to their current arrest.

Similar types of information were collected and recorded at the sites during their intake process, although the questions and responses were not systematically recorded, the information was not precise, and the sites were not consistent. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, in the comparison site, intake assessments found violence at substantially higher rates than were indicated in the interviews with researchers. For example, “escalation of domestic violence” was recorded for 41.9 percent, “Physical violence in the relationship” was recorded for 87.6 percent, “intimidation or property violence” was indicated for 57.7 percent, and 57.3 percent “sees himself as the victim.” Although these figures have unknown validity and reliability, the responses in the research interviews must also be regarded as undercounts.

***Past use of psychological abuse.*** Psychological abuse was measured by the 21-item Profile of Psychological Abuse. Analysis of mean scores on each of the sub-scales (Jealous Control, Ignore, Ridicule Traits, Criticize Behavior, and Fear of Abuse) showed virtually no differences between groups in the admitted use of the types of psychological or emotional abuse measured. Exhibit 7 (on the next page) shows the percentage of participants who acknowledged using the specific behavior, or inducing fear at least once during the relationship. Again, only the most commonly used behaviors are displayed in the exhibit, in descending order of frequency. The exhibit shows that the most common form of psychological/emotional abuse acknowledged by the men in both groups was “Suggest she’s crazy or stupid;” over half of the men in both groups

admitted doing this at least once, and 13.8 percent of the men in EVOLVE and 17.1 percent of the men in the comparison group indicated they did this at least once a week. None of the

**Exhibit 7: Comparative Use of Psychological Abuse in the Past by Type of Group**  
(In percent)

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>EVOLVE (N = 420)</b>	<b>Explore (N = 124)</b>	<b>Total (N = 544)</b>
Suggest she is crazy or stupid	50.4	51.2	50.6
Ignore her when she begins a conversation	41.4	31.7	39.2
She tries to second-guess how I will act	40.2	35.8	39.2
She worries that what she does will make me angry	37.3	39.3	37.8
Make TV, magazine, the newspaper, or other people seem more important than she is	31.5	31.7	31.6
Call her names with sexual connotations such as “slut” or “whore” or “cunt”	28.2	28.5	28.2
Become angry or upset if she wants to be with someone else and not with me	26.6	21.1	25.3
Intercept her mail, telephone calls, or drill her about who called her, who wrote a letter, or what she was talking about	25.4	22.0	24.8
Keep her up late yelling at her, accusing her of having affairs or accusing her of other things	23.5	17.9	22.2
Ignore her suggestion to have sex or not do what excites or satisfies her	20.6	20.3	20.5

apparent differences between groups are significant statistically. The men were most likely to admit to items included in the “ignore” sub-scale, followed by, in order, “ridicule traits,” “fear of abuse,” “jealous control,” and (a distant last) “criticize behavior.” In addition to “calling her crazy or stupid,” men admitted that they ignored her when she began a conversation, and that their partners tried to second-guess how they would act with greatest frequency. 15.1 percent of the men in EVOLVE estimated that they ignored their partners at least once a week (compared to 16.3 percent of the others), and 18.2 percent indicated their partners tried to second-guess at least

once a week (compared to 15.4 percent of the men in the comparison group). The only difference on a specific item that reached significance statistically at the nominal level (ever happen/never happen) was “I make her feel as if she is ‘walking on eggshells’ when I am around her.” Sixteen percent of the men in EVOLVE indicated this had occurred at least once, compared to 8.9 percent of the men in the comparison group. In general, the set of behaviors shown in the exhibit, acknowledged by at least one out of five of these men, adds importantly to the picture of the abusive patterns they have used.

**Criminal history.** Information about group participants’ prior criminal history is shown in Exhibit 8. These data were obtained from the state’s criminal history information system

**Exhibit 8: Criminal History by Type of Program**  
(In percent)

Characteristic		EVOLVE (N = 420)	Explore (N = 124)	Total (N = 544)
<b># of Prior Convictions</b>	None	12.7	6.5	11.3
	One	9.6	11.3	10.0
	Two	14.9	14.5	14.8
	Three – five	32.5	33.9	32.8
	Six – ten	20.0	18.6	19.6
	More than ten	10.3	15.3	11.5
<b>Age at First Arrest</b>	Under 18	15.5	14.6	15.3
	18 – 20	21.9	21.1	21.7
	21 – 25	24.3	24.4	24.3
	26 – 30	12.1	13.8	12.1
	Over 30	26.2	26.0	26.2
<b># of Prior DV Convictions</b>	None	28.0	15.6	25.2 *
	One	34.4	45.1	36.8
	Two	22.4	22.1	22.4
	Three – five	13.7	16.4	14.3
	Six – ten	1.5	0.8	1.3

\* p < .05

maintained by the state police. This system provides information about arrests *in the state* that led to convictions. Therefore the arrest frequencies in the Exhibit do not include those that did

not lead to a formal conviction, or those that were dismissed as part of “bargaining” when there were convictions on the same date related to charges in other arrests. In short, these are very conservative measures of past criminal activity. As the Exhibit shows, even by this conservative measure, most of the men in these groups had extensive criminal records—only about one in ten had no previous convictions. Although the men in the EVOLVE group appear to have somewhat shorter records, and are about twice as likely as the men at the comparison site to have no recorded prior convictions, the differences are not significant statistically. Exhibit 7 also shows that there is essentially no difference between the groups in the age at which the men were first arrested for a crime for which they were convicted. Nearly four in ten experienced their first such arrest before the age of 20.

The history of convictions for family violence is even more telling. First arrests on misdemeanor family violence charges are commonly *nolled* (prosecution is suspended for 13 months; if no further criminal activity occurs, the charges are dismissed) in this state if a defendant is ordered to attend the 10-week group program and he/she is reported to have completed it successfully. These cases, then, are not included in these figures. Again, the men in the EVOLVE program have somewhat fewer family violence convictions, but the differences, while significant statistically, are not substantial.

***Physical or sexual violence and injury in the arrest incident.*** Participants’ use of physical or sexual violence, and injury experienced by their victim, were measured with the same Conflict Tactics Scale items as those used to describe past abuse with the same victim reported earlier. The men were asked to say whether or not they had used each tactic in the incident that led to their arrest. Exhibit 9 shows the average scores for each scale, where each tactic was given a score of 1 if they had used the particular behavior. The differences in means are statistically

**Exhibit 9: Means of Physical, Sexual and Injury Scales Scores for Arrest Incident by Type of Group**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>EVOLVE (N = 423)</b>	<b>Explore (N = 124)</b>
Minor physical assault	1.22	1.66 **
Severe physical assault	0.39	0.52 *
Minor sexual coercion	0.01	0.04
Severe sexual coercion	0.02	0.03
Minor injury	0.20	0.29 *
Severe injury	0.15	0.18

\* p < .05 \*\* p < .01

significant for three of the six subscales. Notably, the behavioral means for the men in EVOLVE are consistently lower than those for the men in the comparison group, and this is reflected in a lower mean for minor injury, as well. It is also worth noting that the means for severe injury, while small, are higher for the incident than they were for all past violence.

The data from the most commonly reported specific items from the CTS for the incident are shown in Exhibit 10. Every item on the list shows lower frequencies for men in the

**Exhibit 10: Comparative Use of Particular Tactics in the Arrest Incident by Type of Group (In percent)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>EVOLVE (N = 420)</b>	<b>Explore (N = 124)</b>	<b>Total (N = 544)</b>
Pushed or shoved her	43.9	57.3	47.0 **
Grabbed her	44.2	54.8	46.7 *
Slapped her	18.7	33.1	22.0 **
She felt physical pain the next day	19.7	28.6	21.8 *
She went to a doctor because of the fight	13.8	15.8	14.2
Punched or hit her with something that could hurt	11.5	14.8	12.2
Twisted her arm or hair	9.1	15.4	10.5 *
Beat her up	9.8	12.2	10.4
Choked her	6.4	9.8	7.2

\* p < .05 \*\* p < .01

EVOLVE program, and the majority of these differences are significant statistically. Nearly half of the men in both groups admitted to pushing or shoving their partners during the incident that led to their arrest, and a similar percentage said they had grabbed her. Notably, the men were more likely to acknowledge using five of these tactics during the incident (push, punch/hit, cause her to feel pain, hurt her enough that she went to a doctor, and beat her up) than they were to admit using them during the entire previous history of this relationship. They were equally likely to admit grabbing her.

About a third of the men in both groups admitted they had had the same types of “problems” with a different partner. About two-thirds considered at least some part of what had occurred in the incident for which they were arrested to have been “domestic violence.”

### **Interventions**

Information on how the court system had intervened in these cases was not collected consistently by programs across sites. However, variations in the response were clear: just 55.2% of the men in the EVOLVE program, for example, were also serving probation terms. In case of problems with group participation, probation officers had options for their responses. The remainder of the men in EVOLVE had pled guilty but had not been formally “convicted;” they would have to serve a sentence if they did not complete the program successfully. All of the men in the comparison site were serving probation terms, however. In addition, 8.5 percent of the men in the EVOLVE program and 12.5 percent of the men in the comparison site also had open child protection cases (a difference that approaches statistical significance, at  $p = .056$ ). As a source of further complication, 11.6 percent of the men in EVOLVE were also involved in a family or civil legal case; this information was not available for the men in the comparison site.

## The Men's Perspectives

The men were asked several open-ended questions during interviews to obtain their perspectives on their experiences in their relationships and with the legal system. Responses to three of those questions in the intake interview add richness to the quantitative descriptions of the men, and provide a context for their group and subsequent experiences. These questions asked the men to provide a description of what they liked most about the relationship with the woman they were being sanctioned for abusing, a description of the incident which led to their present arrest, and how their behavior had (or had not) constituted “domestic violence.”

***What they liked most about the relationship.*** The men's responses varied considerably. Some clusters were one-dimensional—the men could only describe a single aspect of the relationship (if any) that they liked. Examples included that she looked good, had money, kept her hair together, was clean, liked shopping and good sex. Several commented that there was nothing they particularly liked—“we were just fooling around”—but this was not common.

More of the responses were somewhat more complex and multidimensional. Some described a relationship that had changed dramatically, from wonderful to terrible: As one man said, “Nothing [is good] now. Before, everything was different. One thing went bad and everything went bad.”

Most commonly, descriptions focused on what she did for him. Some of these emphasized her domestic activities: she was the mother of his children, a good cook, was clean, and kept a “good house.” Others focused on the support, acceptance, and strength she provided for him, and the ways she helped him to “be a better person,” as in the following:

- She knows when I'm slipping or messing up. She's my backbone. She's supportive.
- She is cool. She is the only one that goes to bat for me. She really understands me.

- She's good to me. She knows me better than I know myself. Just being there for me.

Another common cluster of responses focused on her attributes and strengths, sometimes including her independence, as the following examples illustrate:

- She likes to better herself; she doesn't settle for less. She is very goal-oriented. She's smart—she graduated from high school. (And...) she listens, and will do anything for her man.
- She is a good woman, a loving woman, a good mother. She has backbone, and she sees through me.
- She has pride—she does for herself. She takes care of the bills and takes care of business.
- She is smart, positive, and [has] good self-esteem. All together, she is a great package.

Finally, some of the men (but this was less common than the other patterns) emphasized sharing, and an element of partnership, in the relationship, as the following excerpts illustrate:

- Our goals. We have so much in common that we both like to do. Everything!
- We relate to each other. We do fine when everyone stays out of our business. Our communication is good. We finish each other's sentences.

***Descriptions of the incident.*** The men's descriptions of the incident for which they had ultimately been sent to the program often contained multiple elements. One was the *topic*, if the incident occurred in the context of an argument (which was not always the case), such as jealousy on the part of either about the other's intimate involvement with people outside the relationship, drug or alcohol use, smoking, money, and family or children. Another element was the *affective context* in which the incident occurred. Some of the men said they had been upset about something else (such as work, family trouble, car trouble) when the dynamics escalated, or they were "high" on drugs or alcohol. A third element was the *behavior* they described—the level or type of violence that occurred, who did it, and in what sequence.



All of these elements provided components for the men's assignment of responsibility that often came through in their descriptions. All of these elements appeared to be influenced at times by the men's prior exposure to and experience of court-ordered interventions, as well as their investment in the relationship. The descriptions appear to be compatible with Hearn's framework<sup>41</sup> of men's descriptions of their involvement in violence, which involves five clusters: 1) repudiations (full denial of responsibility; removal of self and intention from the action); quasi-repudiations (includes recognition of certain types of violence, but also lack of awareness and minimization); 3) excuses and justifications (violence is recognized, but the men deny responsibility or blame); 4) confessions (recognition of violence and acceptance of responsibility and/or blame for it); and 5) composite and contradictory accounts (various combinations of the first four clusters).

Repudiations were common, and essentially asserted that nothing had happened, either because the woman or someone else had lied or because it was an accident. They also include assertions that the man is really the victim in the incident. The following descriptions illustrate this pattern:

- I was in court for a previous case (robbery) and [she], who was 7 months pregnant and her new boyfriend attacked me while I was leaving the court. I was hit by him and he fled the scene. She said that I hit her and I was arrested for domestic violence.
- I cannot really tell you what happened because nothing happened. I can tell you what the police report said. I came to the house to get my son and it said I hit her while she was holding my son. It said I hit a mirror and the glass cut her.
- I was injured on my job the previous day. We were driving over to my mother's house. The car was not registered and the cops were pulling people over. We pulled the car into my mother's parking lot and attempted to walk away. We thought that the cops were going to leave, but they didn't, and we went back to the car. Soon after that we were surrounded by the cops. They asked me to get out of the car. I was told by the cops that a witness has said I was choking my wife. I did not touch her at all. I was arrested with unlawful restraint.

- I was talking to my ex-wife on the phone and [the victim] tried to grab the phone and it hit her in the nose and she had a bloody nose. She called the police.
- One morning we were smoking marijuana. She thought I was going to leave her for my child's mother. She started to cry. I was making a sandwich, and I had a knife in my hand. I went to comfort her and give her a hug, and I accidentally cut her in the back. I called the cops. She told me to leave because I had other warrants. I turned myself in. I was arrested for assault and rape. The rape charge was dropped—she said that out of anger.
- She came over to my friend's house to try to talk me into backing out of court and to get back with her. She smashed the car on the hood. I told her I was going to call the police but I didn't because in the past I would get arrested, too. (We were in the process of court for custody of the kids.) She went to the police two weeks later and told them I pushed her. I had to take this program to avoid trial.

Quasi-repudiations were very common in the men's descriptions. Although they include recognition of some types of violence, it is minimized. Variations included (again) assertions that the violence was an accident, that it was "only" verbal, it occurred because of drinking or drug use, and it's really because of the interpretations and interference of over-zealous outsiders.

The following illustrations were typical of this pattern:

- We were breaking up. She was arguing and fussing. We had my lunch in a bag—a sack of cans. I swung the bag in the opposite direction from her. The bag ripped, and a can hit her. I didn't even know it hit her.
- Me and her got in an argument...and she tried to shut the door in my face. I tried to open it and it hit her in the face. She went to the hospital...
- She wanted to separate and be alone. She took off that day and went to the park. I went there and she was drinking...We got into an argument and I threatened her, saying I was going to kill her. There was no physical violence. I tried to give her a hug. But there were a lot of people around. I guess she called the cops.
- We started drinking at 9 am and drank all day. I guess I hit her because I was arrested. I blacked out and woke up in jail.
- I had been drinking a great amount. I don't remember what I did. All I can tell you is what she said I did, which was that I arrived home and started arguing with her. I started smacking her and hit her against the wall. She tried to leave but I wouldn't let her. She said I then pulled out a knife and threatened to kill her and myself.

- She saw me earlier in the day with another girl, and she got mad. We started arguing. Someone flagged the police because she was screaming. They thought I hit her. They arrested me for screaming. [It was a] “baby mama drama.” *Why do you think you were arrested?* Because people saw a couple screaming, with a kid there. People don’t mind their fucking business.

Excuses and justifications were the most common pattern in the men’s descriptions. The most common excuse was that either he or they both were drinking; examples are not needed to illustrate this dimension. The most common justification was that the woman had “started it,” as the following examples show:

- We were walking and she just started flipping and talking shit and her attitude changed. I started arguing some things back and forth. She got me mad and I fucking kicked her. She hit me back. I got set up.
- Her jealousy caused a fight between us. I was out drinking with some friends and she came up and started hitting me. I pushed her away. The neighbors called the police and said I hit her. I was just protecting myself because she was hitting me.
- My wife was involved in an adulterous situation. We got into an argument. She was using that situation to escalate my anger. I tried to avoid her by going to the bathroom. She followed me to the door and told me to get out of the bathroom. While I was in the bathroom, I had too much time to think. I opened the door and she knew I was angry. I grabbed her by the hair and pulled her to the floor. I told her not to mess with me and I stormed out of the house. When I came back she told me that she had called the police. I told her that we both were going to jail, and I tried to cut myself. She grabbed the baby and left the house. I left, too, and found out later that a warrant was out for my arrest.
- [He found her in bed with another man, so] I had to beat her up.
- We had an argument about my daughter that I had with another girl. It started out as a verbal argument, until she slapped me and I slapped her back. She started the incident—she always does. I always apologize.
- We began arguing. I got mad and I slapped her. When I slapped her, she calmed down...I don’t like hitting women, but sometimes she keeps talking and talking so I have to hit her.
- There was no argument. She runs her mouth, and that triggers me. I walk away. She doesn’t want me to walk away [and] follows me and calls me names until I hit her.

Confessions were not unusual, and were generally straightforward. The following single illustration is typical in its simplicity:

- We got in an argument about another female. I popped her upside the head and left.

Composites and contradictory descriptions form a residual category. They combined aspects of the first four clusters in such diverse ways that examples are not provided. Most of the men's descriptions, however, fit reasonably into one of the first four groups.

***Do they consider what happened to be “domestic violence?”*** As previously reported, although about two-thirds of the men said they thought of what had occurred as domestic violence, the other third did not. Of those who accepted the definition, most were quite literal: it was domestic violence because a) the law said it was, or b) the behavior was physical, and the man and his victim lived together. There was also a substantial group of men who referred to earlier court-ordered education they had received, and commented that even emotional and psychological abuse should be considered domestic violence, “because it hurts.”

For the one-third of the men who did not think what had occurred was domestic violence, several considerations predominated:

- Who was involved. They did not regard an incident as domestic violence if a third person “caused” it, such as a daughter or a family friend.
- The type or severity of violence involved. For many of the men, actual “hitting” is necessary for it to count. Pushing, shoving, or grabbing are not enough. As one man said, “It was wrong to grab her, but it wasn’t serious enough to count as domestic violence.” Another noted, “I don’t consider slapping a person as domestic violence when other people are really beating them up.”

- The location. For some men, the abuse has to occur within the residence in order to count as domestic violence.
- The issue involved. For many of these men, jealousy is an issue that disqualifies the label of domestic violence. As one man complained, “They need to assess the problem. It’s a jealousy thing, not a domestic violence things.” Another concurred, “It was a case of jealousy. I don’t consider that violence.”
- The frequency of the behavior. Many of these men think that the violence must be repeated in order to count; if it is “just” one incident, it should not count. As one commented, “I don’t think it is [domestic violence] because it’s not all the time.
- The cause of the behavior. Many thought that if drugs or alcohol or the woman “caused” it, then it should not count as domestic violence. One man who disavowed the label explained that “she made it physical and it causes me to hit her back.” If she was physically involved in the incident, it should not count.

**Summary.** This brief summary of responses to three questions on the intake interview help to provide a context for understanding the men’s perspectives as they approach the group interventions. The relationships in which they are or were involved with the women they have been judged guilty of abusing vary dramatically, from brief encounters to lengthy partnerships that include children. Most of the men, to one degree or another, do not feel that they were primarily responsible for what happened. Instead, the woman or other situational factors are at least partly to blame. Although two-thirds acknowledge that the behavior constituted “domestic violence,” a large portion of this group is simply accepting the reality of the legal definition. Another third has reasons to reject the label. Clearly, resistance to the institutional label of them as “batterers” or “abusive men” is common. When so many begin groups with such efforts to

portray themselves as non-violent or as victims of the system, circumstances, or their partners, groups interventions face considerable challenges.

### Group Completion

The men completed the two types of group at very similar rates: 63.5 percent successfully completed EVOLVE and 65.2 percent completed the comparison group. Exhibit 11 shows the

**Exhibit 11: Successful Group Completion by Race/Ethnicity and Type of Group**

	African American	Latino/Hispanic	Caucasian	Other	Total
<b>EVOLVE: % successful</b>	55.9	71.8	66.3	63.6	63.5 * (N = 394)
<b>Comparison: % successful</b>	65.3	68.0	58.3	0.0	65.2 (N = 112)

\* p < .05

comparative successful completion rates across race and ethnicity for each type of group. Most notably, the Latino/Hispanic men in both groups were *most* likely to be successful, and at somewhat higher rates, in the EVOLVE group than in the comparison group. It is also notable, however, that the African American men were *less* likely to complete the EVOLVE group successfully relative to Latinos/Hispanics and Caucasians, and relative to African American men in the comparison group. Caucasians have the lowest rate of successful completion in the comparison group, but those figures are influenced by the low numbers of Caucasian men in that group, and apparent differences across race/ethnicity are not significant statistically. The racial/ethnic differences within the EVOLVE group, however, reach statistical significance.

Alcohol problems as measured by the MAST were significantly associated with successful completion only in the EVOLVE group, although the trend was in that direction for the comparison group, as well. Seventy percent of the men in EVOLVE who were classified as “low risk” completed the program successfully, compared to 61.6 percent of the high risk men

and 53.9 percent of those rated as alcoholics. A similar pattern was found among the men in the comparison group, with successful completion rates of 68.2 percent, 67.6 percent and 58.1 percent, respectively. Perhaps this difference is more dramatic among the men in EVOLVE in part because problem drinking makes attendance at two meetings per week more difficult. It is not, however, that simple. Although Caucasians in EVOLVE were significantly more likely than either African Americans or Hispanics/Latinos to score in the “alcoholic” range (53.3 percent did, compared with 27.1 percent of African Americans and 23.2 percent of Hispanics/Latinos), the relationship between scores on the MAST and successful completion of EVOLVE is only significant statistically ( $p < .03$ ) among African Americans: 64 percent of those rated “low risk” were successful completers, compared to just 41.2 percent of those rated “alcoholic.” (Apparent differences by MAST score were in the same direction for Caucasians and Latinos/Hispanics, but were less dramatic and not significant statistically.)

Completion rates were highest for men with just one or two prior convictions, in both groups (but findings were significant statistically only for the comparison group), and substantially lower for men with 11 or more (44.2 percent in EVOLVE and 33.3 percent in the comparison group). However, although the trends were generally in the same direction for analyses with only prior convictions for domestic violence offenses, findings were not significant statistically for either group (and the highest rates of successful completion in the comparison group were among men with two to five prior convictions for domestic violence!). It is also worth noting that African American men in EVOLVE were more likely than the others to have six or more prior convictions (37.1 percent, compared to 29.3 percent of Caucasians and 21.6 percent of Latinos/Hispanics), although these apparent differences were not significant statistically.

Significantly higher rates of completion (about a 20 percent difference in both groups) were also found for men who were employed at the time of intake. Further, African American men in both groups were less likely than the others to be employed at that time. Although men who were legally married to the woman they had abused were more likely to complete the group than men in other statuses (both groups), the differences did not reach levels of statistical significance. Similarly, relationships between marital status and race/ethnicity did not differ significantly in either group, although Caucasians in the EVOLVE groups were nearly twice as likely as African Americans or Latinos/Hispanics to be legally married (32.6 percent, compared to 12.2 percent and 16.5 percent, respectively). Notably, there were no significant or clear substantive relationships between number of years in the relationship and completion status, nor between number of years in the relationship and race/ethnicity.

Some of the clinical ratings were found to be significantly associated with successful completion rates, especially among men in the EVOLVE group. For them, men who scored in the “normal” range were more likely to complete the group successfully than were those who scored in the pathological range on the following scales: avoidance, depression, masochism, drug dependence, and antisocial. Significant differences were found in both groups for men on the borderline, anxiety, and schizotypal scales. Some differences were found in relationships between clinical scale scores and successful completion rates across race and ethnicity among men in the EVOLVE groups (but not in the comparison group), as well. Specifically, differences were found for African American men (but not the others) between those in the “normal” range and those in the “pathological” range in the avoidance, depression, antisocial and anxiety scales.

Study data indicate that 22 men—11 in each type of group—were negatively discharged but started the group again later. Four in EVOLVE and 5 in the comparison group completed.



## **Recidivism.**

The men who successfully completed the groups also had lower rates of recidivism, as measured by arrests with convictions following the start of the program, and looking *only at the men who started their group at least a year before recidivism data were collected*. Of the men in this timeframe in EVOLVE, 83.4 percent of those who completed the program successfully had no subsequent arrests leading to conviction, compared to 58.3 percent of those who were negatively discharged (this is statistically significant at  $p < .001$ ). A similar pattern was found for the comparison group, although it was less dramatic, and not statistically significant. In that group, 75.9 percent of the completers had no recidivism, compared to 57.6 percent of those who were negatively discharged.

At least as important, the same patterns were found for arrests that led to convictions for domestic violence offenses, as well. 91.4 percent of the men who were successful in EVOLVE had no subsequent convictions for domestic violence, compared to 80.0 percent of those who were negatively discharged (the difference is significant at  $p < .02$ ). For men in the comparison group, those figures were 93.0 percent and 75.0 percent, respectively (this difference, too, was statistically significant at  $p < .04$ ).

These differences in recidivism held up within racial/ethnic groups, as well. Among the men in EVOLVE (again, who started their group at least a year before recidivism data were collected), 80.7 percent of African American men who completed the group had no new arrests leading to conviction, compared to 56.1 percent of those who were negatively discharged ( $p < .01$ ); no new domestic violence arrests leading to conviction were found for 90.7 percent of African American completers, compared to 77.4 percent of those who were negatively discharged (not quite significant statistically). Comparable figures for African American men in

the comparison site were 70.4 percent vs. 41.7 percent for any type of crime, and 92.3 percent vs. 54.5 percent for a domestic violence crime.

Similarly, 83.3 percent of Latino/Hispanic men in EVOLVE who completed the group had no new arrests leading to conviction, compared to 56.0 percent of those who were negatively discharged ( $p < .03$ ); no new domestic violence arrests leading to conviction were found for 90.3 percent of Latino/Hispanic completers, compared to 83.3 percent of those who were negatively discharged (not significant statistically). Comparable figures for Latino/Hispanic men in the comparison site were 82.1 percent vs. 68.8 percent for any type of crime, and 92.9 percent vs. 87.5 percent for a domestic violence crime.

Finally, 90.0 percent of Caucasian men in EVOLVE who completed the group had no new arrests leading to conviction, compared to 75.0 percent of those who were negatively discharged (not significant statistically); no new domestic violence arrests leading to conviction were found for 95.9 percent of Caucasian completers, compared to 83.3 percent of those who were negatively discharged (not significant statistically). Comparable figures for Caucasian men in the comparison site are not provided because the numbers are so small, but the pattern of differences between completers and those who were negatively discharged is repeated.

***Timing of recidivism.*** Completers were less likely to have new convictions, and when they did, the offenses occurred longer after the men had started the group. Among the successfully completing men in EVOLVE who started their group at least a year before recidivism data were collected, and were ultimately arrested for a new crime that led to conviction, 22.2 percent did not do so until at least a year after they started the group, compared to 10.0 percent of the men who were negatively discharged ( $p < .001$ ). The comparable figures for men in the comparison group were 38.5 percent and 7.1 percent respectively ( $p < .03$ ). The patterns for timing of new

domestic violence offenses were similar: men in both groups who committed new crimes and successfully completed their programs were more than twice as likely as those who were negatively discharged to have waited at least a year before reoffending, although the number of men who committed new domestic violence offenses is sufficiently small that the findings do not quite reach statistical significance for either group. Again, the comparative patterns found for timing of new arrests that led to convictions within racial/ethnic groups are consistent for each group: successful completers who were subsequently arrested did so after more time had elapsed than was true for those who were negatively discharged—for any type of crime, as well as for domestic violence offenses.

### **An Advocacy Perspective**

The interviews conducted with all seven (two each at the EVOLVE sites, and one at the comparison site) of the specialized post-conviction advocates provide some additional perspective on the way the programs operate, and the challenges they face. This brief summary focuses on two issues: advocacy with the partners of the men in the groups, and perspectives on program operations.

***Advocacy issues.*** As previously noted, the advocates are less likely to have regular contact with the victims of the men in these groups because they are no longer involved in the relationship, they are angry at the court system, or contact information is out of date. As one noted, “If they’re on probation, lots of time has passed since the initial arrest. We’re working with stale information. That’s been the biggest challenge. That skews the information I get. The victims I can connect with—they’re still involved with their partners.”

When the women are angry at the system, it is commonly because the program is seen as “intrusive” and demanding because it meets so often (twice a week for two hours each session).

They maintain that program attendance and frequent court appearances interfere with their abusive partner's ability to work, especially overtime hours. As one advocate reported, "The court says that employment problems aren't our problem. She has to understand that we're doing this for her protection." One advocate reported that she has seen some special considerations made available to middle class men in her jurisdiction, although it does not necessarily happen frequently. "...They have been able to convince their probation officers that they need to go to another program that meets less frequently. There have been about three in the past two months."

Advocates reported that the victims with whom they work commonly want to have their protective orders modified, so that they can resume contact or living with the men in the groups. "It's hard to have a victim understand that he can't move back in until he's established in the program. They have a protective order. Maybe it's not healthy to be back together until time has passed. Not yet...The court likes to see the intervention working for some time...Financially it's a burden. The modifications are usually done after they've been involved in EVOLVE for ten weeks or more." Another added, "[Victims] will say it's too much. 'Something has to be done. We have only one car, and I need him to be here for the kids... You have no idea how hard it is. You're making it impossible!'"

Advocates also work with some of the women about safety issues, even with women who no longer want to be involved in the relationship "He may still want to be in the relationship, and they are afraid of him coming around and reoffending. They have concerns about their children's exposure to violence. There may be stalking or harassment, and sometimes they will contact the police. But sometimes they don't want to contact the police again, so we work it out that their protective order violation is raised in court."

Some advocates spoke of cultural differences in the advocacy issues they address. For Latinas, one observed, “The women are familiar with men’s control. Anger management is strange to many of them. If they’ve been through the [10-week] Family Violence Education Program, they’re used to anger management. Some clients will say it’s not necessary, but others will say ‘This is exactly what he needs.’ Age has a little influence, too. If they’ve been in a long relationship, maybe 20 years, the whole arrest process is different for them—that’s just the way he is.”

Some advocates observed that this program has introduced new issues about the limits of the advocate’s role. One noted, for example, that she wanted to learn the time and location of a woman’s partner’s group because she had been trying to serve him with papers related to child support. The group facilitators refused to provide the information, because they thought they would be helping to “set up” one of their clients.

Advocates reported that, although the women who are still involved with their partners are hopeful about the program, most are more realistic than with earlier interventions that the court has tried. As one commented, “They hope he gets something out of the program. I don’t think they necessarily *expect* him to get something. EVOLVE is the last resort. The guy hasn’t taken well to treatment—he’s already been through the 10-week program and other things.” The victims who are hopeful the intervention can produce the desired changes sometimes become frustrated. “They’re counting on the interventions to take care of it. When they realize that the system can’t do it they get frustrated with the system, or they get resigned to their fate. That’s sad.” However, advocates noted that some of the women advocate for as much help as possible this time, including substance abuse and/or alcohol treatment, and the court is often able to provide resources and referrals.

For the women who are still hopeful and involved, advocates reported that most of their conversations focus on the man in the program and what he needs. “They want him to be a father, to take financial responsibility for the kids. They rarely talk about themselves.” As another advocate echoed, “Child support plays a role. They want him back on his feet so he can go back to supporting the child physically or monetarily.” It is no surprise, then, that the parental aspect of the EVOLVE program is a source of hope and enthusiasm for these partners. “They always want to know if there’s a parental piece. Their concern is that he become a better father.”

*Systemic issues.* Three types of systemic issues were raised by advocates: consistency of response, court resources, and relationship and coordination with group facilitators. The primary concern raised was that the court does not respond consistently to violations and other problems that may arise during groups. Most noted this as an area of concern. One was most eloquent: “There needs to be a more consistent approach on the part of probation to determine when to violate in domestics...When a victim calls and says he’s drinking or abusing her again, I would love to be able to review with her what will happen in probation. But I can’t, because it depends entirely on the officer...I’ve always argued for consistency...Then you can plan better.” She noted, however, that the officers’ inconsistency was related to inconsistency from the court. “The experience of PO’s is that if they violated, the court would just order more probation and send him back to EVOLVE.”

Inconsistent court resources were also an issue during the evaluation period. Advocates reported that probation officers were affected more than others by state layoffs that occurred. At the time of the interview one reported that two officers were now gone and had not been replaced. “We don’t know when someone will be reassigned. While they were here it was working well—they understood the issues.”

Finally, relationships with group facilitators affect advocates and the victims with whom they work. All of the advocates spoke highly of the facilitators working with their court. They took active part in court team meetings (in the EVOLVE sites where meetings occurred), and were generally responsive to concerns expressed by victims via the advocates. Most of the advocates have frequent contact with the facilitators in the course of team meetings, and when either has concerns about how the intervention is proceeding, although there is variation across courts and the individuals involved.

***Program impact.*** Most of the advocates reported that they do not have information about how the program has affected the men or their victims. What happens in groups is not a common topic, and most advocates did not think the women knew very much about what occurred during sessions. One advocate, however, reported that “They report positive changes from the program. Many men go home and share what happened in the group. I tell [the women] that I will check if something he reports sounds weird to them. But he’s been accurate.”

# Discussion



The findings just reviewed provide a picture of the challenges that can be faced by court-ordered group treatment programs for domestically abusive men. The men in this study were similar in many respects to those described in other evaluations, on most demographic and family background measures. Similar to other studies that investigated clinical attributes, the majority of the men did not reveal signs of serious pathology. They were more likely to be men of color than most studies, and this was by design. They also had more extensive criminal records, especially for domestic violence offenses, than men in most other studies. This, too, was by design. This evaluation focused on group interventions intended for men who would otherwise be incarcerated, in a state with a history of utilizing community-based alternatives to prison whenever the courts consider it possible and reasonable. In fact, the widespread use of non-incarcerative alternatives with domestic violence offenders had contributed to the development of this program in the first place.

In this context, the program completion rate of over 63 percent for EVOLVE and 65 percent for the comparison group is notable. That rate is higher than many other studies, particularly for programs with high percentages of men with extensive criminal records and high percentages of men of color, and especially when the definition of “completion” was just that—confirmed attendance at 52 sessions for the EVOLVE program and at least 24 of the 26 in the comparison site, combined with completed payments for all sessions. (According to notes in the files, at least one EVOLVE participant was negatively discharged after attending all 52 sessions because he did not complete his payments.) Some studies, in fact, have used a 3-month cut point to analyze differences.<sup>42</sup>

However, this study did not find some of the same associations with successful group completion that others have found. Significant associations were found with employment (for

both groups), prior criminal convictions (for the comparison group only), race/ethnicity and alcohol dependence (for EVOLVE only), but were only near significance for marital status, and educational attainment (and that only for the EVOLVE group). There were no significant associations between completion rates for either type of group and specific types of violence or psychological/emotional abuse acknowledged during the relationship or during the incident.

Some of the strongest associations were found between successful completion and scores on the clinical scales—particularly for the men in the EVOLVE groups. In particular, men in both groups who scored in the pathological range on the Borderline scale were significantly less likely than those in the normal range to complete the program successfully. Further attention to men with Borderline disorder was urged recently in the discussion of batterer typologies.<sup>43</sup> It may be that the associations with success for men in the EVOLVE group in particular is an artifact of the substantially greater sample size for that group, and not a product of other differences between the men or the groups themselves.

Latinos/Hispanics were the most successful racial/ethnic group in both types of intervention group—significantly so in the EVOLVE group. They also were least likely to have large numbers of prior convictions and were significantly younger than the African Americans and Caucasians in EVOLVE, although youth in general was not associated with greater success. Although the reasons for their greater success are not clear from the available analysis, the result is certainly encouraging.

Most troubling was the significantly greater likelihood of African American men to be negatively discharged from EVOLVE. This finding is likely attributable to the multiple ways in which these men were more associated with higher-risk characteristics than their counterparts. To summarize, the African American men were also: more likely to have more than six prior

convictions, less likely to be employed, and significantly less likely to complete the program successfully when they scored in the pathological range on the avoidance, depression, antisocial and anxiety scales, and in the alcoholic range on the MAST. Perhaps it is the cumulative impact of these (and other) factors that interfered with their successful completion of EVOLVE.

Despite these associations with program completion, attempts to develop theoretically sound multivariate predictive models of success were totally unsuccessful. Perhaps this is a finding in itself, or perhaps it reflects a failure of measurement or imagination.

As with other studies, the findings show that the men who complete the groups successfully have lower rates of recidivism. The patterns in rates of men with no new arrests leading to conviction held up strongly within racial/ethnic groups, as well, and were comparable across racial/ethnic groups. Further, African American men who successfully completed EVOLVE were more likely to remain arrest-free than their counterparts from the comparison site (and had the same rates for domestic violence offenses). No specific significant correlations were found, however, between the number of new offenses (either criminal acts of any type, or of domestic violence offenses in particular) and any clinical scale score or other available measure except for number of prior convictions.

Some of the analytic ambiguities may be attributable to the study's limitations. Differences between the two groups may have been reduced by the incorporation of some of the EVOLVE sessions into the curriculum of the comparison group. Inconsistencies in responding to violations across group sites, and the occasional practice of returning men to groups from which they had previously been violated may have compromised fidelity. Measuring criminal history and recidivism only by arrest incidents which resulted in convictions may have been too conservative a measure, although charges are less likely to be dismissed against people with

prior records. Certainly the use of convictions as the recidivism measure only made timing more critical in this study. The complications of study enrollment described in the discussion of methods meant, again, that intake lasted substantially longer than projected; this, in turn, meant that a larger proportion of the men than planned were just finishing their group experience shortly before data collection had to stop. Given the amount of time it takes for criminal cases to be processed through the system, arrests incidents which will later result in convictions may have occurred but not been counted by this study. Despite the need for longer time to elapse, it is also true that nearly 87 percent of the men in the study (88.4 percent of the men in EVOLVE, and 81.3 percent of the men in the comparison group) had started their group a year or longer before the recidivism data were collected; these are the men for whom recidivism data were analyzed. In fact, 70.3 percent of the men (73 percent of those in EVOLVE and 61.6 percent of the men in the comparison group) had *completed* their group participation at least a year before recidivism data were obtained. It may be that the higher percentages of men in the comparison group with later start dates accounts for some of the results for recidivism: perhaps different patterns would be found if the entire sample from each type of group could be included in the comparisons.

The lack of data from victim reports adds to the challenges of the recidivism measures, as well, although this may be less significant in light of the lack of involvement of a majority of them in the men's lives. Under the best of circumstances under current state policy, the advocates would only have been able to aid researcher contact with women whose partners had cases in the court system. Clearly, despite past successes with research recruitment of victims through the advocates, recent and unanticipated changes in policy and victim dynamics make new approaches strongly advisable.

The qualitative findings add substantial richness to the results, and provide understandings that are compatible with past research, but extend them. In particular, findings about the men’s descriptions of their relationships help us to go beyond some of the stereotypical assumptions of unidimensionality that are often made. The results related to the men’s definitions of their behavior, and their understanding of “domestic violence,” in particular, add new material to the available literature.

# Implications

This study has contributed to the understanding of the complexities of systems and people that must be addressed if we are to intervene successfully with men who have come to court for repeated instances of abuse of their partners. Many of these men have extensive histories of witnessing, experiencing and engaging in violence in a domestic context. When they are involved in group treatment they may simultaneously be involved in treatment of other issues, such as drug or alcohol problems, in civil or family court as well as criminal court, and dealing with the loss of a valued relationship. Many will also have other clinical problems that can interfere with their successful engagement in the groups.

While this study did not find that a 52-session, 26-week group had a greater impact on recidivism than a group that met for 26 sessions in 26 weeks, it did find that stringently-defined completion rates were similar between the two groups, and that those rates were higher than are commonly found for lengthy interventions—especially with groups that contain high percentages of men with prior records and high percentages of men of color. It also found that general recidivism was somewhat lower among successful completers of EVOLVE than their counterparts in the comparison group. It may be that the greater “intrusiveness” and resulting disruptions in work and family life of the more intense intervention balanced out the potential lower impact of lesser dosage. Since other studies have found that the organization and structure of interventions can be important, as well as the number of hours involved, further comparative research and policy considerations are warranted around this issue.

The findings that showed that African American men with clinical scores in the pathological range for specific dimensions were less likely to complete EVOLVE successfully suggest the importance of more complete assessments of men as part of the group referral process. Further research is warranted that would focus on the interaction of race/ethnicity and

mental health diagnostic categories, to shed additional light on barriers to successful group participation, and specialized supports and interventions that might be needed. Continuing the research that would advance our understanding of meaningful typologies among those who engage in domestic violence would also aid this effort.

The study also points to the potential impact of resource disruptions and insufficiently clear protocols for monitoring and enforcing intervention programs that are part of criminal sanctions. If men know in some places that some of them will not experience consequences for marginal compliance with court orders, they may have less incentive for full compliance.

The theme of the importance of attending to men's roles as fathers was raised by the female partners of the men, in particular, but also by the men themselves. Although the evidence of the benefits of this attention is not yet clear, it deserves further exploration, in both programming and evaluation research.

Further attention is warranted, as well, to men's constructions of their behavior, and the meanings they attach to different behavioral labels. More research and evaluation designs that connect subjective constructions with objective measures are clearly needed.

Future research needs to pay closer attention to strategies to overcome the rapidly growing difficulties involved in longitudinal designs—especially if they call for telephone contact. Alternative contact approaches that still do not cross ethical boundaries for intrusiveness need to be developed. Experimentation with a reasonable balance of a range of incentives would be valuable.

Finally, the study supports further efforts to develop meaningful group interventions for abusive men (it did not address abusive women)—particularly those that are sensitive and competent regarding issues of race and ethnicity. Latino men had the highest rates of successful



completion, especially in the EVOLVE groups, and that is a very positive finding. In general, nearly two-thirds of these high-risk men completed the groups, and those who did were less likely to return to the criminal system. That should provide encouragement for further intervention development. The stakes are high.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, early evaluations of batterers' groups. Edleson, Jeffrey and M. Syers. "The Effects of Group Treatment for Men Who Batter: An 18-Month Follow-Up Study," *Research on Social Work Practice* 1 (1991): 227-243. Hamberger, Kevin and J. Hastings. 1993. "Court-Mandated Treatment of Men Who Assault Their Partner: Issues, Controversies, and Outcomes," in *Legal Responses to Wife Assault*, ed. Zoe Hilton, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993: 188-229. Tolman, Richard and Jeffrey Edleson, "Intervention for Men Who Batter: A Review of Research," in *Understanding Partner Violence: Prevalence, Causes, Consequences, and Solutions*, ed. S. Stith and M. Straus, Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations. 1995: 262-274. Edleson, Jeffrey, "Controversy and Change in Batterers' Programs," in *Future Interventions with Battered Women and Their Families*, ed. Jeffrey. Edleson and Zvi Eisikovitz, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996: 154-169.

<sup>2</sup> Davis, Robert and B. Taylor. "A Proactive Response to Family Violence: The Results of a Randomized Experiment," *Criminology* 35, (1997):307-333.

<sup>3</sup> Described in Jackson, Shelly, Lynette Feder, David R. Forde, Robert C. Davis, Christopher D. Maxwell, and Bruce G. Taylor, "Batterer Intervention Programs: Where Do We Go from Here?" Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, NIJ, June 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Babcock, Julia and Ramalina Steiner, "The Relationship between Treatment, Incarceration, and Recidivism of Battering: A Program Evaluation of Seattle's Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence," *Journal of Family Psychology* 13 (1999): 46-59.

<sup>5</sup> Gondolf, Edward, "A 30-Month Follow-Up of Court-Referred Batterers in Four Cities," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 44 (2000): 111-128.

<sup>6</sup> Babcock, Julia, Charles Green, and Chet Robie, "Does Batterers' Treatment Work? A Meta-Analytic Review of Domestic Violence Treatment," *Clinical Psychology Review* 23 (2004): 1023-1053.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1044.

<sup>8</sup> Jones, Alison, Ralph D'Agostino, Jr., Edward Gondolf, and Alex Heckert, "Assessing the Effect of Batterer Program Completion on Reassault Using Propensity Scores," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 19 (September 2004): 1002-1020.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, Hamberger and Hastings, 1989, *Ibid.* Rosenbaum, A. R., P. J. Gearan, and C. Ondovic, "Completion and Recidivism Among Court and Self-Referred Batterers in a Psychoeducational Group Treatment Program: Implications for Intervention and Public Policy," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma* 5 (2001): 199-220. Faulkner, K., R. Cogan, M. Nolder, and E. Shooter. "Characteristics of Men and Women Completing Cognitive-Behavioral Spouse Abuse Treatment," *Journal of Family Violence* 6 (1991): 243-254.

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<sup>13</sup> Taft, Casey, Christopher Murphy, Jeffrey Elliott, and Tanya Morrel, "Attendance-Enhancing Procedures in Group Counseling for Domestic Abusers," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 48 (January 2001): 51-60.

<sup>14</sup> Stosny, S. "'Shadows of the Heart': A Dramatic Video for the Treatment Resistance of Spouse Abusers," *Social Work* 39 (1994): 686-694.

<sup>15</sup> Tolman, Richard, and G. Bhosley, "A Comparison of Two Types of Preadmission Preparation for Men Who Batter," *Journal of Social Service Research* 13 (1990): 33-44.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Williams, Oliver, "Healing and Confronting the African American Male Who Batters," in *Family Violence and Men of Color*, ed. Ricardo Carrillo and Jerry Tello, New York: Springer, (1998):74-94. Carrillo, Ricardo and Rolando Goubaud-Reyna, "Clinical Treatment of Latino Domestic Violence Offenders," in *Family Violence and Men of Color*, ed. Ricardo Carrillo and Jerry Tello, New York: Springer, (1998): 53-73. See also Gondolf, Edward and Oliver Williams, "Culturally Focused Batterer Counseling to African American Men," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 2 (October 2001): 283-295.

<sup>17</sup> See Gondolf, Edward, "Who Are These Guys?: Toward a Behavioral Typology of Batterers," *Violence and Victims* 3 (1988): 187-203. Saunders, Daniel, "A Typology of Men Who Batter Women: Three Types Derived from Cluster Analysis," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 62 (1992): 264-275. O'Leary, K. Daniel, "Through a Psychological Lens: Personality Traits, Personality Disorders, and Levels of Violence," in *Current Controversies on Family Violence*, ed. Richard Gelles and Donileen Loseke, Newbury Park: Sage, 1993: 7-30. Johnson, Michael, "Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence Against Women," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57 (1995): 283-294.

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<sup>18</sup> Jordan, Carol, “Toward a National Research Agenda on Violence Against Women—Part 2,” a special issue of *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 19 (December 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Holtzworth-Munroe, Amy and Jeffrey Meehan, “Typologies of Men Who Are Maritally Violent: Scientific and Clinical Implications,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 19 (December 2004): 1369-1389.

<sup>20</sup> Saunders, Daniel, “The Place of a Typology of Men Who Are ‘Maritally’ Violent Within a Nested Ecological Model: A Response to Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 19 (December 2004): 1390-1395.

<sup>21</sup> Prentky, Robert, “Can Sex Offender Classification Inform Typologies of Male Batterers? A Response to Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 19 (December 2004): 1405-1411.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Gondolf, Edward, “Who Are These Guys?...” *Ibid.* and Saunders, Daniel, “A Typology of Men...” *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Buchbinder, Eli and Zvi Eisikovits, “Between Normality and Deviance: The Breakdown of Batterers’ Identity Following Police Intervention,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 19 (April 2004): 443-476.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*:445.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Ptacek, James, “Why Do Men Batter Their Wives?” in *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*, ed. Kirsti Yllo and Michelle Bograd, Newbury Park: Sage, 1988: 133-157; Hearn, Jeff, *The Violences of Men*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998; Eisikovits, Zvi, H. Goldblatt, and Z. Winstok, “Partner Accounts of Intimate Violence: Towards a Theoretical Model,” *Families in Society* 80 (1999): 606-619.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>27</sup> For example, Gamache, Denise, Jeffrey Edleson and Schock, 1988, “Coordinated Police, Judicial, and Social Service Response to Woman-Battering: A Multiple Baseline Evaluation Across Three Communities.” Pp. 193-209 in G. Hotaling, et al., eds., *Coping with Family Violence*. Newbury Park: Sage. Syers, M. and J. Edleson, 1992, “The Combined Effects of Coordinated Intervention in Woman Abuse.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 7: 490-502. Crowell, N. and A. Burgess, Eds., 1996, *Understanding Violence Against Women*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. Brown, J., 1997, “Working Toward Freedom from Violence: The Process of Change in Battered Women.” *Violence Against Women*, 3: 5-26. Davies, J., E. Lyon, and D. Monti-Catania, 1998, *Safety Planning with Battered Women: Complex Lives, Difficult Choices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Strube, M., 1988, “The Decision to Leave an Abusive Relationship: Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Issues.” *Psychological Bulletin* 104: 236-250. Buzawa, E., G. Hotaling, and A. Klein, 1998, “The Response to Domestic Violence in a Model Court: Some

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<sup>29</sup> Peled, E. and J. Edleson, 1994, “Advocacy for Battered Women: A National Survey.” *Journal of Family Violence*, 9: 285-296. Lyon, E., and P. Mace, 1991, “Family Violence and the Courts: Implementing a Comprehensive New Law.” Pp 167-179 in D. Knudsen and J. Miller, eds., *Abused and Battered: Social and Legal Responses to Family Violence*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, Inc.

<sup>30</sup> See Davies, Lyon and Monti-Catania, 1998, note 7. See also Hart, B., 1996, “Battered Women and the Criminal Justice System.” Pp. 98-114 in E. Buzawa and C. Buzawa, Eds. *Do Arrests and Restraining Orders Work?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; and Pence, E., 2001, “Advocacy on Behalf of Battered Women.” Pp. 329-343 in Renzetti, C., J. Edleson, and R. Bergen, Eds., *Sourcebook on Violence Against Women*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>31</sup> “Experiment Demonstrates How to Hold Batterers Accountable,” *National Institute of Justice Journal* 244 (July 2000): 29.

<sup>32</sup> The original proposed design focused only on the EVOLVE sites. The comparison site was added to provide an additional comparative reference point. Although the projected sample size was smaller than that for the three EVOLVE sites combined, power analysis indicated it was sufficient for its purpose.

<sup>33</sup> See Lyon, Eleanor. “Special Session Domestic Violence Courts: Enhanced Advocacy and Interventions.” Final report to the National Institute of Justice. 2002. Grant 98-WE-UX—31. State-supported evaluations spanning nine previous years in these courts also contributed to familiarity and confidence in this approach.

<sup>34</sup> Selzer, M. “The Michigan Alcohol Screening Test (MAST): The Quest for a New Diagnostic Instrument,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 3 (1971): 176-181.

<sup>35</sup> For example, Gondolf’s evaluation of 4 “model” programs, cited previously.

<sup>36</sup> Straus, Murray, Sherry Hamby, Sue Boney-McCoy, and David Sugarman. “The Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2),” *Journal of Family Issues*, 17 (May 1996): 283-316.

<sup>37</sup> Sackett, L. and Daniel Saunders. “The Impact of Different Forms of Psychological Abuse on Battered Women,” *Violence and Victims* 14 (1999): 105-117.

<sup>38</sup> Gondolf, Edward, and Crystal Deemer, “Phoning Logistics in a Longitudinal Follow-Up of Batterers and Their Partners,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 19 (July 2004): 748.

<sup>39</sup> Differences across sites in race/ethnicity were much less dramatic at the time this evaluation was designed. The magnitude of this difference in the study may reflect demographic changes in the urban area that houses the comparison site (its “Hispanic” population is growing more rapidly than the other sites, according to the Census), or have other explanations.

<sup>40</sup> See Millon, Theodore, Roger Davis, and Carrie Millon, *MCMI-III Manual*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Minneapolis: NCS, Inc., 1997: 118.

<sup>41</sup> Hearn, Jeff, *The Violences of Men*, *Ibid.*, 108-110.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Gondolf, Edward, “A 30-Month Follow-up...”, *Ibid.* He found a 54% total completion rate for the court-ordered men in his samples.

<sup>43</sup> Holtzworth-Munroe and Meehan, *Ibid.*, 1385.