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Courtenay S. Silvergleid and Eric S. Mankowski

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Participant and Facilitator Accounts of Processes of Change

Courtenay S. Silvergleid
Eric S. Mankowski
Portland State University, Department of Psychology, Portland, OR

Understanding what facilitates change in men who perpetrate domestic violence can aid the development of more effective batterer intervention programs (BIPs). To identify and describe key change processes, in-depth interviews were conducted with nine successful BIP completers and with 10 intervention group facilitators. The accounts described a range of individual-level processes of change consistent with prior research but also included several processes spanning the community, organizational, and group levels of analysis. Program completers and facilitators gave mostly similar accounts, though differed in their emphasis of criminal justice system sanctions, group resocialization of masculinity, and the participants' own decision to change. All accounts especially emphasized group-level processes and the importance of balancing support and confrontation from facilitators and group members. The findings demonstrate the importance of obtaining multiple perspectives on change processes, and support ecological and systems models of batterer intervention.

Keywords: *domestic violence; batterer intervention programs; process of change*

Inconsistent findings regarding effectiveness of batterer intervention programs (Gondolf, 2002; Healey, Smith, & O'Sullivan, 1998) have com-

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pelled some researchers in the field to study more closely how the intervention process may reduce domestic violence. By asking "What processes account for program effectiveness, when it occurs?" (Gondolf, 1997), researchers can develop basic knowledge about how intervention programs work and, more practically, identify which program and intervention system components are essential to the change process. This information is critically needed in guiding efforts to improve the effectiveness of batterer intervention programs (BIPs; Scott & Wolfe, 2000).

Several studies have suggested initial candidates for key change processes in successful completers of BIPs (see Table 1). Pandya and Gingerich (2002) interviewed six participants in a BIP about their change process. The men's stories of change highlighted the importance of overcoming denial of violent behavior and engaging new ways of thinking and acting. Scott and Wolfe (2000) reported the importance of similar components of the change process after interviewing nine men who had successfully changed their abusive behavior as a result of an intervention program. In semistructured discussions, the men endorsed 21 "processes" or factors that helped them change. Four processes were most heavily emphasized, including (a) recognizing and taking responsibility for past abusive behavior; (b) developing empathy for others; (c) reducing dependency, including accepting full responsibility for changing their abusive behavior; and (d) improving communication skills.

In a somewhat larger study, Wangsgaard (2001) conducted four focus groups and 21 follow-up interviews with participants enrolled in counseling for their abusive behavior. Like the men that Pandya and Gingerich (2002) and Scott and Wolfe (2000) interviewed, participants in Wangsgaard's study acknowledged the importance of recognizing their abusive behavior and taking responsibility for changing but suggested that the single most important factor in their change process was the emotionally safe treatment environment or "asylum" that was created through respect, "talk-share-common ground," and support from the other group members and the facilitators. In other words, the men in Wangsgaard's study highlighted the importance of an external factor, in this case "the group," in facilitating their engagement of internal psychological processes. Stefanakis (2000) described a similar

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Table 1
Processes of Change Identified in Research on Batterer Intervention Programs

Level of Analysis	Scott & Wolfe, 2000, *N* = 9 perpetrators	Stefanakis, 2000, *N* = 20 perpetrators	Wangsgaard, 2001, *N* = 21 perpetrators	Pandya & Gingerich, 2002, *N* = 6 perpetrators
Individual level	Recognizing and taking responsibility for past abuse Developing empathy for others Reducing dependency Improving communication skills	Personal agency to make the most of the provided opportunity		Overcoming denial Engaging new ways of thinking and acting that are transferred outside of group
Group level			Emotionally safe group environment ("asylum") Respect, talk-share common ground, support among group members	
Community level		Externally presented opportunity to create a new nonviolent identity (e.g., spiritual experience, supportive or benevolent other)		

dynamic after interviewing 20 men who were previously violent and who were violence free for 2 years. He reported that these men credited their change to two primary complementary factors: an externally presented opportunity to create a new nonviolent identity (e.g., spiritual experience, supportive or benevolent other) and the personal agency to make the most of the provided opportunity.

Although each of these studies provides some useful information about either the individual processes or program elements that might facilitate change for men who are abusive, additional research is needed to expand the scope of prior studies to include extraindividual influences on change (e.g., criminal justice system; see Gondolf, 2002) and how these multiple levels of change may be interrelated. In addition, no studies have examined group facilitators' accounts of the change process, whether clients and facilitators share a common understanding of the change process, and what implications any differences between their accounts may have for program implementation and effectiveness.

As part of a larger survey research project on the mediators of change in batterer intervention, we undertook a study to identify, describe, and analyze the range of processes of change that contribute to the effectiveness of BIPs in reducing men's violence. Because of our concern that previous studies have relied almost exclusively on individual batterer's reports, we conducted in-depth interviews with group facilitators and successful program completers. Perpetrators' reports are undoubtedly shaped, in part, by their own motivation to either complete an intervention program or avoid further sanctions. Furthermore, people in treatment rarely have a complete and accurate understanding of their own change processes (McCord, 1978). For these reasons, including testimony from additional sources (e.g., group facilitators, victims, and probation officers) creates a more comprehensive and potentially valid picture of the processes of change in BIPs.

Method

Research Setting

We approached a privately owned counseling facility in Portland, Oregon, that specializes in domestic violence intervention and asked for their collaboration in conducting the current study. The program was chosen, in part, because it utilizes several of the influential approaches to batterer intervention including the Duluth model (Pence & Paymar, 1993), cognitive-behavior models, and group psychotherapeutic models. More specifically, the program sets five program goals for their clients: (a) taking responsibility

for one's behavior and remaining accountable, (b) understanding the effects of abuse, (c) learning anger management skills, (d) changing attitudes about power and control in relationships, and (e) healing from violence and abuse.

Program Participant Interviews

A purposeful sample of program participants was recruited using facilitators' nominations of men from their groups. Facilitators were asked to use specific criteria in their nominations. First, participants needed to be close to finishing the program (i.e., within 2 weeks of having completed their requirements). Second, they needed to have been significantly impacted and changed during the course of their participation in the program. This restricted the sample to men who facilitators believed could most likely provide information about successful change processes. Finally, facilitators were asked to consider how well and how willing they believed these men would be to articulate their experience in the program. In other words, they were asked to consider whether a man would be a good informant, articulate, reflective, and willing to share his experience (Morse, 1991).

Ten nominated men were initially contacted by telephone to arrange an interview, and nine of these consented and completed a semistructured interview with the first author. All of the men were White, between age 28 to 53 years ($M = 37.5$ years), and had annual incomes ranging from U.S.$15,000 to more than $75,000 (more than one half were under $35,000/year). About one half ($n = 5$) had attended some college or vocational training. Interview questions tapping multiple domains of change processes included "What has encouraged/allowed you to change?" "What influence does your group leader have on you/your process of change?" and "What impact do the other men in your group have on you?" Interviews took place in a private counseling room at the intervention program, generally lasted 60 to 90 minutes, and were audiotaped and transcribed for subsequent analysis.

Facilitator Interviews

Group facilitators represent an additional, potentially more valid and reliable source of information about how perpetrators change their abusive attitudes and behaviors, as they are the primary witnesses to men's process of change. The first author interviewed 10 of the 13 facilitators at the intervention program, most of whom were male ($n = 8$) and White ($n = 9$). In-depth, semistructured interviews included the following questions, which tapped multiple domains of change processes: "What aspects of the program encourage/allow men to change?" "What is the role of the other men in this change process?" "What is your role in this process?" The location and

conduct of the facilitator interviews were the same as for the program participants.

Because of the lack of established theory about the processes of change in batterer intervention, we decided to use a data-based, inductive approach to interview analysis (Charmaz, 2000). The first author began by reading each transcript and developed a list of potential change processes. For the purposes of the current study, we defined *change processes* as resources or influences that the interviewee identified as facilitating movement toward nonabusive behaviors and attitudes, including tangible activities such as journaling and sharing with group members and intangible "states" such as transformed awareness. These self-identified components of change are not measuring program outcomes or change over time but rather reflect men's constructed understanding of their change, which can relate to actual behavior change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983). Following the initial readings and listing of change processes, the second author reviewed the list and definitions of change processes. After some refinement of the initial categories, the first author again read the transcripts and indexed (dichotomously coded) them for the presence of identified change processes. Indexing was iterative, with additional change processes being added to accommodate processes identified in the second and subsequent readings. After each transcript had been indexed, the change processes from all transcripts were listed, sorted, and organized into an integrated framework, drawing on ecological models of batterer intervention (Edleson & Tolman, 1992; Phillips, 2000; see also Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the concepts identified in prior studies of processes of change (Scott & Wolfe, 2000; Stefanakis, 2000; Wangsgaard, 2001). The resulting framework grouped the change processes into one of four levels of analysis: community and extratherapeutic influences, organizational influences, group processes, and individual psychological development.

Findings

Community-Level and Extratherapeutic Influences

The program participants credited several community-level, extratherapeutic factors in explaining their process of change. "I've always had a very poor opinion of the justice system as a whole, even criminal. [But] the system worked for me because it helped me recognize an issue and a need that I have that wasn't being met." Some were very clear that without intervention from the criminal justice system, they never would have started the journey toward change. "I think what it will take for most men is a court situation like it did

for me." Several of the men talked about how they were motivated by fear of losing their wives or the love of their children. "The first and foremost [reason why I changed] would be because I'm totally in love with my wife and my family and that would be the number one reason why I would change."

Facilitators also identified the impact of extratherapeutic influences such as the criminal justice system, the child protective service system, and threats from partners as important processes of change. It was surprising, however, that these influences were only mentioned by four of the facilitators, given that 70% of the participants at this particular intervention program are mandated to attend the groups by the criminal justice system. The facilitators who did discuss this source talked about the power of these factors to inspire men to actively engage in the program: "I think [involvement with the criminal justice system] is sort of springboard for a lot of men, it's hitting bottom." One facilitator elaborated on this point:

> What I hear a lot from men in group is hitting bottom. A lot of guys come in here about as low as they have ever been, they've been to jail for the first time, they've been arrested, they've felt some humiliation. They've felt the cold steel of the handcuffs literally around their wrists. They have been into a system that is totally not consonant with how they have ever seen themselves before. There are a lot of shame issues, a lot of guilt issues, and they hit bottom. And that is a very powerful change agent.

Organizational-Level Influences: The Facilitators

In batterer intervention, the group facilitators are the primary vehicles for organizational or programmatic influence. They provide the principle connection between "the program" and the participants. We subsequently decided to consider comments describing processes of change related to the facilitators as reflections on the organizational level of influence. It was clear that the program participants respected and appreciated their facilitators. They spoke almost glowingly about their counselor's skills and concern for the men in their group to "get it" and felt that in some way their particular counselor was the only one who could have helped them change. Five of the men talked about how they thought their facilitators' style was better in comparison to any substitute facilitators (occasionally facilitators would substitute for one another during vacation or illness).

> He makes you learn, but he's not so stern like a teacher. I mean, if you have a teacher that's fun, it makes you want to learn. If you have one that's just whipping you all the time, you're like, "I'm just going to do what I have to and get out of here." And I give [his facilitator] a lot of credit for that because we had a

> couple of substitutes and you could see the difference. It was like, man, if I had them all the time, I don't know if I would keep coming back.

Another man spoke similarly about the unique and necessary skills and attitudes of his facilitator. "He was kind to everybody. He let people talk about their problems. He didn't cut them off like some of these counselors."

It is important to note, it was not only empathetic or caring qualities that earned this level of appreciation. One man spoke with equal admiration about his facilitator's confrontational style.

> He's very persistent, and he expects you to learn, and he will make sure that you learn. Because we've had guys that have transferred in from other classes that had been in someone else's class like six months . . . we've got guys who've been here half the time and know more than they do. It's like I have a lot of respect for him, and I know what he's doing, and it feels awkward when he's trying to "get me" on something. And I don't mean that in a bad term, but I mean it's an awkward position, but you know the point he's getting to. It not only helps you learn, but helps the other people learn too. He's very good at what he does, from what I hear, compared to other counselors.

Neither support nor confrontation from the facilitators stood out in isolation in the program participant's accounts. Instead, some balance of both from the facilitator appeared necessary to fully engage the participants.

The facilitators similarly acknowledged the role they played in the men's change process, pointing in particular to the importance of balancing support and confrontation in their approach. Support and respect were credited with creating an environment in which change was possible. "It is vital to treat these clients with respect." Facilitators felt that without a basic level of support, which equates to safety in the group, the men would not share. "Safety is very important for any growth or change or exploration or risk taking." Without sharing, the participants would not have an opportunity to explore new ways of being and/or acting.

However, it was not enough for facilitators to just support the men. A critical balance between support and confrontation appeared present in their descriptions of their relationships with the participants. Several facilitators commented about "walking the fine line with positive regard and support . . . [Balancing the support] with the need to confront and deal with the real issues that people have to deal with and the abuse and violence that has gone on."

Many of the facilitators felt that the modeling they provide to the group through either self-disclosure or respectful communication also facilitated

change for men. Some talked about trying to model openness and accountability by revealing their own experiences of being abusive.

> I think that the modeling we try to do as counselors is important. . . . Largely because I have a background of being hugely controlling and psychologically abusive for a lot of years and so I think it has been helpful for men to see that I was able to change and how I was able to do it.

The facilitators also expressed how important it was to model respectful communication. In fact, many contrasted their approach to more harshly confrontational programs, suggesting that they felt it was important to model what they wanted the men to learn. "You need to treat them with respect. I think one of the things that happens in some programs is that they come in attacking and abusive and that just galvanizes the [men] more." Another facilitator commented "I think we need to model exactly the values that we're trying to teach."

Group-Level Processes

All of the program participants talked with passion about the impact of the other men in the group on their own process of change. In fact, their reports of the influence of the group members were so rich that we were able to identify three intertwined processes: balancing support and confrontation, sharing and hearing stories, and modeling. The facilitators echoed the importance the program participants placed on group processes and offered explanations for how the group affected the men that were strikingly similar to those offered by the participants, diverging only to emphasize the role of resocialization within the group.

Balance of support and confrontation. The participants described the group as a place where they received support. This support from other group members appeared to facilitate change by fostering a level of trust such that participants felt comfortable sharing their successes and failures.

> It eventually became a good support for me, kind of a sanctuary where I would come back with all my problems and stuff and they would help me sort them all out. . . . You are seeing things you have never seen before, making changes, and you run into a lot of frustrations, ups and downs, high points and low points. Especially during those low points or when you have made mistakes, you've just had some big argument . . . and you can bring it to the group and say, "Look, I know this is going to be a big argument. How can I make this right? I can't see it. Help me out." . . . And everybody will say "Yeah, well this you did good, but

> this you really did stupid." Maybe you thought that you were doing it okay, but you weren't. So after you look at it a little bit, you're like "Oh wow! I should do that differently." So that was a big thing for me, just the support of that group.

The man quoted above is espousing the benefits of support; however, he is also highlighting the way in which support was coupled with confrontation. He described being confronted about his actions by the other men in the group; however, because he felt supported by them, the confrontation was appreciated not resisted. This theme of blending or balancing support and confrontation was echoed by several of the men.

> And the other thing that works great in a group format is . . . we didn't cut anyone any slack. . . . If someone was in denial—I remember one incident where this guy was all upset about his wife and didn't trust her and was following her around. And he didn't believe that he was a stalker. But he's basically stalking her—we as a group just came down real hard on him. They came down hard on me [too], and you know, I learned from it. And we did that amongst each other.

Like the program participants, the facilitators suggested that there is a balance or tension between empathy or support processes and accountability or confrontation processes that occurs in the group setting. "It is an empathy-accountability thing, it's the tension between that, I think when they experience a balance of those two things from other group members, it is so powerful." Elaborating further, another facilitator commented:

> I think two things that really encourage or allow men to change are often at odds with one another. And there's a tension between them. An empathetic environment that allows men to be who they are in a nonjudgmental frame so that they can let down their defenses a little bit on the one hand. And on the other hand, an environment of complete and total accountability where men are confronted and challenged for their willingness to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviors and for the ways in which their behaviors are affecting other people.

Sharing and hearing stories to build community. According to the participants, one of the reasons they felt supported by and, therefore, willing to be confronted by the other men in the group was the sense of commonality that existed among them. This sense of commonality was, in part, built through the sharing of stories. According to the participants, listening to the other men in the group tell their stories helped reduce each individual man's sense of isolation and fear. Each came to feel as if he was not alone in his experiences. "The contribution from the other guys [in] group was, 'I can relate to

that, I can relate to this.' They can relate to me. And it's like this is not unique . . . why should it be shameful?" The facilitators agreed.

> There's a commonality of experience, I think, that is very important. [When] the other men share their stories and start to see that they are not so different from each other, that really helps break the denial and helps with more disclosure. . . . There is a feeling of support, of other men supporting them.

The facilitators confirmed the role sharing stories played in lessening men's shame and isolation and increasing their accountability. "Shame is something that keeps things in the closet. Being in a group in which people can disclose this stuff and not be torn limb from limb makes it easier for them to come clean with themselves."

In addition to reducing shame, the facilitators suggested that just the act of sharing or publicly admitting a problem and a desire to do something about it creates movement and change in a way that a private confession cannot.

> I think it is different to, in your own mind, tell yourself that you want to change a particular behavior, but if you don't tell anybody else, it just doesn't have as much power as if you tell other people about it. I mean you become sort of accountable to those people perhaps in your own mind. The more people you tell about, the greater the motivation that you develop to actually change.

In addition to building a sense of accountability to the group, facilitators felt that sharing stories about their day-to-day interactions (successes and failures) allows men to gather helpful suggestions and strategies about how to interact differently. "They are bringing questions to the group that are of a personal nature . . . and they are like, 'ok, this is what happened, and this is what I said, and I felt really crappy afterward. What could I have done differently?'" Participants confirmed that sharing and hearing stories allowed them to learn from one another, to learn about what they did well, what they did not do well, and garner suggestions for what to try next time. "You feed off other people, and you learn from them. When people are reading their journals, you learn a lot from . . . their thought processes." One of the things they learned about was how to be more accountable and take ownership of their actions.

> You've got the people at the end or near the final stages, and . . . they're like "this is what I did. I was abusive and controlling—this is what I did." Not just saying I'm abusive and controlling, but "I grabbed my wife and I shook her violently for 5 to 10 seconds and I was verbally abusive to her." They keep going

> down the list and you hear this stuff. You kind of realize that maybe you're in the same picture and the same mold as them.

The facilitators concurred and suggested that hearing and witnessing stories also creates change by inspiring men to want to change. "In the first session, [new men] are resentful, defensive . . . however after hearing the other men talk about what they're learning about themselves and the benefit they have gained from being in the group, that often will start a change process."

Similarly, the more senior members of the group also appear to be encouraged and reenergized in their change process when they reflect back on where they came from in their thinking. "For men who have been here for awhile, sometimes they don't appreciate how far they've come until they see the new guys coming in and they say, "Oh man, does that sound familiar? I didn't realize how far I've changed."

Modeling and mentoring other members. Related to the impact of hearing other men's stories, men described how watching other men's actions in the group also was part of their process of change. "You learn from other people. You learn by how they say things, you watch them, you see what they do and you learn from them, you really do." Several men discussed how they were inspired to change, to take emotional risks, by watching the other men in the group change and take risks. One man talked about how listening to other men "open up" inspired him to do the same despite his fears.

> [That first day] was weird . . . It was WOW, these people are just letting go in here. How am I going to do this? I don't know of any way I'm going to be able to let go what I've done in my life to this counselor. But as the days went on, it was just like, it was water running inside of me. It finally started sinking in. In about the fourth week I really got into it because . . . God, these guys are here, they're telling things.

The facilitators discussed the benefit of being mentored but, in addition, clearly articulated the impact of mentoring.

> You've got these seasoned guys leaving, but you've got other men now ready to step into their shoes. Sometimes it's striking . . . that a guy who was really taking a secondary position, really steps into [the lead position.] The most obvious example I can think of recently that happened to me is I had a man who was in one group for about 6 weeks, a relatively short period of time. And he wasn't sharing a lot, was displaying some fairly typical denial and blame, and then he moved to a different group, a brand new group, so he was the only old guy, and from the very first week, he became the group leader. And did a great job, and

> also coincided with him becoming accountable. So from the second week on, he's already talking about how the program's helping him, how he's changing. And he wasn't doing any of that in the previous group.

According to this narrative, the client found himself in the role of mentor, which directly facilitated his change process. He grew or changed to fill the vacated role of leader.

"Resocialization" into a new manhood. Facilitators, but not the participants, mentioned that one of the critical processes of change within the group is essentially a "resocialization" into a new manhood. Together the men create a new culture of how to be men,

> new ways of being men, you know, talking and adopting language, that communicates respect for others, their partners and wives, and the importance of that starts to rub [off] on the other men. I've always viewed this as a cultural, as a resocialization activity.

Other facilitators were less explicit in their labeling of the process as a "resocialization" but, nonetheless, appeared to be describing a similar process.

> Well I think in most groups [what] I find most powerful, where I see the most change, [is when] men in the group challenge other men's sexist beliefs and role model accountability, nonsexists beliefs, and a willingness to be vulnerable.

Individual Psychological Development

New skills and program activities. The program participants were very clear about the impact of the new skills and program activities on their change process. The new skills included learning how to take a "time-out," identifying feelings and engaging positive self-talk. The activities included completing journals and writing a letter of accountability (which describes their violence, its effects on others, and their plan for making amends) and reading required texts and books about domestic violence. All credited the readings, journals and behavioral skills such as time-outs and positive self-talk with a new level of awareness and commitment to change.

> You start keeping your journals. Then you start evaluating them. In the first phase is that denial period where you are still in denial. Then pretty soon you're like seeing suddenly, "well that is abuse, that is negative self-talk." And then you start to dissect it even more. Then the further you get into the program until

> you get to the end where you write your letter of accountability . . . which was a very hard thing to write and then you are really dissecting yourself and the exact things that you've done or are doing. Being that aware of what is going on you suddenly realize, at least I did, man I don't want to be that. That is ugly. That is ugly. So that was all it took. Big difference.

Many of the men talked specifically about the benefits of taking "time-outs" in response to a question about what happens for you now when you get upset or get angry, or something frustrates you. One man provided the following description.

> I recognize my warning signs right away. I breath out, flip my eyes, when I clench my fists, I clench my jaw, when I start shuffling side to side on my feet, I know that I'm getting upset about something. I may not realize what it is, but I know that something's upsetting me. So I just slow down, and I've had people say, "You've got anything to say?" [And I say] "Just a second." Because I sit there and try to analyze it before I start opening up my mouth.

The facilitators also emphasized the development of new skills and engagement of activities required in the program. One facilitator summed it up by saying "I do think that the cognitive-behavioral tools that we use here contribute to men's changing because they offer men something really concrete that they can put into practice." The facilitators suggested that skills such as time-outs and positive self-talk create change by raising men's awareness and motivation. "The time-outs give men some breathing room from all this reactivity and it gives them an opportunity to do some reflection . . . and they may start to view themselves and their choices differently." According to the facilitators, this breathing room facilitates change because it creates the opportunity for conscious behavior change. In addition, the tools help the men begin to feel successful, and this success generates motivation.

> We teach people skills and tools and when people start to use those skills and tools and they see that it brings them better results in their relationships. I think that is a real motivator because people want to win, people want to feel good.

Like the participants, several of the facilitators specified the role that the journals play in raising awareness and creating change.

> It is a long, slow, grueling process and I think that the change occurs for people as they do their journals because that is the active work that they do. . . . We get the journals and we give feedback on the journals. People develop insights into

themselves and into their own condition through that process. They develop their own "a ha(s)".

Self-awareness. The theme of awareness was frequently referenced in connection to the program activities. The participants were even more articulate than the facilitators were regarding the impact of self-awareness on their process of change. They described the impact of becoming aware of the fact that they were abusive, that there was something wrong with the way they had been acting.

> The big thing is being responsible for your abuse and violence. I think that's the big first step . . . and I think that's really got to kind of proceed anything . . . it really does. Because if you don't know what you're working on, then how can you work on it? You can't. Am I right? You can't start working on a car unless you know what's wrong with it. So if you don't know what's wrong, if you don't think you've been abusive or violent, then how can you fix it because you don't think anything's wrong?

Like the facilitators, the participants credited increased awareness with their ability to make different choices.

> To me, it's a matter of awareness. I mean, I am really aware of what I'm doing, and how I'm doing it, and how it's affecting other people. That I actually have a choice on how I want to do this.

According to the participants, when they became "aware" of past abusive behavior and the possibilities for different choices, they were able to consciously work toward change. In addition, simply recognizing past abusive behavior was in and of itself a motivator to become more actively engaged in the program. In describing what it was about the program that facilitated change, one man offered the following.

> It brought something to your attention that you never had brought to your attention before. And it made me look back and go, "wow, maybe that's right." So then you would listen more because wow, that makes sense. I never looked at it like that way, so you would be intrigued and learn a little bit more, and grab a little more piece of the pie.

The most emphasized aspect of awareness was the participant's new understanding of the effects of their abuse on others. For many men, truly sitting with that understanding, the devastating impact of their actions on those around them, was a strong impetus for change.

> It's awful. I'd hate to have somebody do that to me. It's really awful. . . . I want to cry when I go back and I just go through all the stuff I've done. I verbally abused her more than anything. I've never held her down and beat her up or bloodied her up or anything, not to that point, but I've pushed her and I head butted her—it's all the same. It's all abuse. It hurts.

Deciding to change. The participants were unique from the facilitators in their emphasis on the impact that deciding to change had on their process of change. They talked at length about the fact that they changed because they wanted to change and had decided to change. When asked why they were "successful" completers of the program while others in their group did not finish, they talked about how someone has to want to change. "Nobody can force you, really, to be somebody else, so you have got to desire to change." In speaking about their desire to change, they talked about consciously desiring to be a different person. "I wanted . . . it's time to be a different person. I wanted to be a different person. I wanted life to be much happier and not go through this fighting anymore and causing these kids pain." For many participants their motivation to change came from an awareness that they were like something they did not want to be. In this context, several men directly mentioned their fathers. "One day I looked in the mirror and I saw I was my dad, and I didn't like it. So, I gotta change myself."

Discussion

The current study was designed to explore how BIPs work to affect change in men who are abusive. Richly detailed accounts from BIP participants and group facilitators described a broad range of change processes, spanning multiple levels of analysis. These findings support ecological (Edleson & Tolman, 1992; Phillips, 2000) and systems models (Gondolf, 2002) of domestic violence intervention that incorporate community-, organizational-, group-, and individual-level influences (cf. Pandya & Gingerich, 2002; Scott & Wolfe, 2000). The findings are also consistent with behavioral outcome research showing that community- (e.g., criminal justice sanctions) and group-level intervention contributes to change (e.g., Murphy, Musser, & Maton, 1998).

The current study also provides a unique opportunity to evaluate clients' and facilitators' accounts of change within the same program. In general, the facilitators' and participants' accounts mostly overlapped, suggesting that batterers derive their understanding of change from facilitators, who in turn reflect their training in the program's intervention philosophy, curriculum, and structure. The program thus appears to provide a relatively coherent and

useful explanation of change that clients and facilitators are confirming. However, there were several areas of divergence between their accounts, most notably that more participants emphasized extratherapeutic factors (e.g., criminal justice sanctions; fear of losing family relationships), and their own decision to change as key influences in their change process.

When discussing the influence of community-level or extratherapeutic forces, the participants and some facilitators described how the criminal justice system can provide a much-needed "wake-up call" for men, often by forcing them to really look at their abusive behavior and acknowledge that they have a problem. Given the popularity of the Duluth model, which theorizes the importance of a coordinated criminal justice response to domestic violence, it is encouraging that the interviewees identified the role of this influence in the change process. It was noteworthy that more of the facilitators did not comment on the impact of arrest given that the majority of their clients are mandated to treatment. This may be a function of the boundaries of their professional roles, as their contact with the men generally begins after they have been confronted by the criminal justice system. Programs may want to consider more fully the potential motivating influence of continued criminal justice sanctions for some men in groups. Perhaps most intriguing is the fact that previous research on processes of change has not explicitly identified the impact that community forces, such as the criminal justice system, have on men's change process.

Program participants and counselors were clear that the facilitators played an important role in the process of change, providing support and confrontation, modeling, and education. The fact that interviewees identified the importance of support echoes previous research that highlighted the importance of respect and safety from the facilitators in creating an environment conducive to change (Wangsgaard, 2001). In the current investigation, interviewees suggested support from the facilitators was necessary for the men to feel safe enough to be vulnerable and publicly acknowledge their abusive behavior. Distinct from previous findings on processes of change was the emphasis interviewees placed on confrontation from the facilitator. Program participants and facilitators were clear about the value of having facilitators confront men about their denial and minimization of their abusive behavior. Although not suggested by previous studies, this process of change does appear indicated by the Duluth model of intervention.

By far, group-level dynamics were the most strongly emphasized source of change identified by the facilitators and participants. This is not particularly surprising given the credit attributed to "the group" in one previous study (Wangsgaard, 2001). What is, perhaps, unique is that the interviewees' descriptions in the current study were so rich that several distinct group-level

processes linked with positive change could be identified: balancing support and confrontation, sharing and hearing stories, modeling, and mentoring. Program participants and facilitators emphasized the impact of support from the group coupled with accountability and confrontation. They described how the trust and respect present among the group members created a safe zone that allowed for mutual confrontation. This safe zone or safety in the group was promoted by hearing other men's stories. Listening to other group members share experiences of being abusive reduced each individual man's sense of isolation and fostered a sense of security in the group. In addition, when men shared their own stories, they received immediate, tangible feedback that enabled them to make better decisions in the future. Finally, men reportedly changed as a result of observing or modeling other men in the group and by serving as mentors themselves for newer group members.

The only significant difference between the accounts offered by the facilitators and those of the participants with respect to group processes can be understood as a difference of role perspective. Facilitators were more apt than program participants to name what was happening in the group as a process of resocialization. This may be a result of their more distanced role in the group, their own professional education about socialization processes, and the opportunity to draw more generalized conclusions about what happens in groups as a function of witnessing many different groups.

Facilitators and participants heavily emphasized processes of change related to individual psychological development. This is not surprising given previous findings on processes of change (Eckhardt, Babcock, & Homack, 2001; Scott & Wolfe, 2000; Stefanakis, 2000). Interviewees discussed the positive impact that program activities such as journaling, engaging positive self-talk, and writing letters of accountability had on men's desistence from violence. The journals, in particular, were credited with raising men's awareness of their abuse, of the impact of their abuse on others, and on alternative nonviolent actions that they could engage. These reports parallel and extend earlier findings highlighting the importance of recognizing abusive behavior (Pandya & Gingerich, 2002; Scott & Wolfe, 2000) in the process of change.

The emphasis interviewees placed on the need to balance support and confrontation to facilitate change in men who are abusive does not map closely onto one particular level of analysis. Clinicians have long argued for the necessity of respect and safety to achieve personal change (Daniels & Murphy, 1997). The facilitators' and participants' accounts appear to confirm this assessment. Most of the men talked of the deep shame and fear they carried into their first meetings at the program, which blocked them from acknowledging past abuse and their need for help. Participants and facilitators

identified the supportive environment of the group, above all else, as an antidote for this shame.

However, the facilitators' and the participants' accounts make it clear that support alone is not sufficient for change. The participants appreciated and gained a new awareness when the facilitators or the other men in the group pointed out fallacies in their thinking or harmful consequences of their actions. For men in BIPs, the process of confrontation may be particularly vital because the abusive and violent behavior that brings men to these programs is supported and endorsed in other contexts. Consequently, challenging those norms within the context of the program becomes essential to facilitate change. Without support, men who are confronted may withdraw, resist, and continue to deny their abusive behavior. Yet without confrontation, men may never accept responsibility for their behavior or be sufficiently challenged or motivated to change.

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

In the current exploration, not all of the program participants may have stopped their violent behavior, calling into question whether the processes they described led to behavioral change. The selection of "successful" participants depended on the behaviors that the facilitators could observe in the groups. Future studies on process of change should obtain corroboration of behavior change, such as reports of wives, partners, or police. Furthermore, the accounts were based on retrospective, potentially self-serving constructions of the change process. Retrospective accounts are useful for understanding how individuals construct an understanding of their change process but do not necessarily reflect the actual process of change over time. Another valuable research design would be to follow men throughout their involvement in a BIP and conduct interviews about their change process at multiple time points. Finally, all of the program participants were White, and most were working or middle-class men who may engage different processes than other men. It is reasonable to suspect, as do others (Williams, 1994), that the experience for men of color in these programs may differ from that of White men. Future studies should assess whether more diverse samples of men identify similar processes of change.

By including program participants' and facilitators' accounts in the current study, more comprehensive and potentially valid information on processes of change was obtained. Understanding of these processes could be further enhanced through the development and longitudinal administration of survey measures that assess stages and processes of change (e.g., Eckhardt et al., 2001) and through observational studies that compare and contrast the

prevalence of various processes in several programs based on different theories of change.

Obtaining knowledge about change processes is crucial to understanding how BIPs work. The current study corroborates findings from prior studies that emphasize individual change processes (e.g., self-reflection, awareness, skill development, and motivation to change) but also extends these findings to encompass additional processes at organizational and community levels of analysis. Given the validity of ecological models of domestic violence (e.g., Edleson & Tolman, 1992), it is not surprising that we found support for change processes at multiple levels of analysis. Longitudinal studies that assess processes of change at multiple levels in batterer intervention systems (Gondolf, 2002) will further explain how the relationship among these processes (e.g., individual support combined with system level confrontation) lead to the most effective intervention outcomes.

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Courtenay S. Silvergleid, M.S., is a doctoral candidate in the Systems Science/Psychology Ph.D. program at Portland State University. Her research investigates how multiple perspectives on the coordinated community response to domestic violence can be reconciled, and on the coordination of state services for victims of child abuse and domestic violence.

Eric S. Mankowski, Ph.D., is an associate professor of psychology at Portland State University where he teaches in the areas of applied social and community psychology, and the psychology of men and masculinity. His research focuses on understanding how masculinity is socially constructed and its connection to violence, substance abuse, and other health and social problems.