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A comparison study: Self-report of verbal abuse and dependent/insecure personality traits by participants [sic] in court mandated domestic violence treatment

Rosemary Jane Ferris

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A COMPARISON STUDY: SELF-REPORT OF VERBAL ABUSE AND DEPENDENT/INSECURE PERSONALITY TRAITS BY PARTICIPANTS IN COURT MANDATED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TREATMENT

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters in Social Work

by
Rosemary Jane Ferris
June 2001
A COMPARISON STUDY: SELF-REPORT OF VERBAL ABUSE AND
DEPENDENT/INSECURE PERSONALITY TRAITS BY PARTICIPANTS IN
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ABSTRACT

Domestic Violence (D.V.) research reports that there is a positive correlation between verbal and physical abuse in intimate family violence. Recent studies have also explored personality traits of abusers. This study reviews secondary data that was gathered at The Gary Center, a community-based organization, who provides court-mandated treatment for perpetrators of domestic violence.

This study utilized existing data gathered from perpetrators who were enrolled in a D.V. program versus data gathered from perpetrators who had completed a D.V. program at the agency. The data review used two (2) anonymous self-report instruments: The Non-Physical Abuse of Partner Scale (NPAPS) and The Dependency and Insecurity in Romantic Love Scale (DIRLS).

Results concluded that men who had completed a D.V. program demonstrated more non-physical abusive behaviors than men who were enrolled did; however, these same men reported lower dependent/insecure personality traits surrounding romantic love than men enrolled in a D.V. treatment group.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I also thank Mr. Steve Petty, L.C.S.W., for his constructive criticism and constant praise; both were delivered in style and grace, which encouraged me and guided me toward professional growth.
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CHAPTER ONE
ABUSE BETWEEN INTIMATES

Introduction

"Emotional violence does not result in the death of the body, it results in the death of the soul" (Anonymous). Statistics collected by the U. S. Department of Justice (1996) from police reports across the United States indicated that every 15 seconds a woman suffered physical injury at the hands of her spouse or partner. Berry (1998) reported this type of abuse, domestic violence, refers to "abuse by one person of another in an intimate relationship" (p. 1).

Domestic violence (D.V.) is not limited to physical battering, but includes other forms of abuse as well. Other forms of abuse include, verbal, psychological, and sexual abuse, which are intended to humiliate the other and instill fear. Brownmiller (1975), reported that woman battering has been part of human existence since the beginning of the patriarchal system. Brownmiller posited that monogamous pairings of women and men provided women with physical protection from the outside
world. However, at the same time it induced the subjugation of women to the authority of men in the home. Miller (1976) noted, with the authority given to men by society, each man assumed control of his household and regarded his wife as his property. This authority and control may have protected a woman from the violence of the outside world, yet at the same time, made a woman vulnerable to violence in her home.

Scope of the Problem

Researchers have not reached a consensus on a definition of what constitutes abuse, partly because the term abuse is not a scientific or clinical term. Gelles & Straus (1988) contend that “abuse terminology is a political concept” (p. 57); however, they do concede that “acts of omission and commission that are harmful to individuals in families including verbal maltreatment” (p. 59).

No one can be sure how much emotional/verbal abuse really exists in families; Gelles & Straus report, “we know from our surveys that verbal violence almost always accompanies physical violence and abuse” (p. 68). These
Researchers speculated that very few studies are done on emotional/verbal abuse because it "hits" too close to home and is all too common.

Research suggests there is no absolute profile to describe a batterer (Dutton, 1995). While control is an important factor in a variety of batterer profiles, all batterers are not alike. It is important to conduct research that will give descriptive information regarding the various batterer profiles. This study therefore, examined data that focused on self-report survey of dependent/insecure personality traits in persons who have completed a court mandated D.V. group, versus those currently enrolled. Thus, a second hypothesis is that men who have completed a domestic violence group will demonstrate lower dependency/insecurity traits involving romantic love than men enrolled in a domestic violence group.

Problem Statement

Research in domestic violence reported significant positive correlation between verbal and physical aggression (Stets, 1991). According to Cahn and Lloyd
(1996), engaging in nonphysical forms of violence, such as verbal abuse and intimidation, increases the probability that physical forms of violence will take place.

The implementation of court mandated D.V. treatment groups have occurred in all fifty-eight (58) counties in the State of California. The approach used in the batterer's treatment groups is psycho-educational not psychotherapy. Psycho-educational groups used in the treatment of perpetrators of D.V. rests on insight-oriented techniques and learning tools to help the group participants manage emotions and stress in productive, rather than destructive ways.

The curative factors of group work delineated by Yalom (1995) are found in domestic violence psycho-educational groups. Group cohesiveness, an essential ingredient of all group work is found in the batterer's group because of their shared experience of arrest for partner abuse. The group members quickly bond and support each other through the educational process.

The batterer treatment groups are co-facilitated by male and female clinicians that work together in concert
to model healthy interpersonal relationship skills as well as demonstrating supportive communication techniques. The facilitators keep the focus in the here and now, which minimizes the batterer’s projection of blame to others, while encouraging active participation of all members in the group process. Additionally, the facilitators shape the norms of the group by reinforcement of desired behaviors; e.g., honesty, acceptance of responsibility, and a supportive attitude.

Purpose of the Study

This project examined existing data that measured whether men who completed court-mandated group treatment for domestic violence have lower measures of non-physical violence and dependent/insecure personality traits than their still enrolled counterparts. The hypothesis of this study is that men who completed a fifty-two-week court mandated domestic violence group reported fewer nonviolent abusive behaviors then men do who are enrolled in a fifty-two-week group.

The data, obtained through a quantitative survey design, measured anonymously self-reported behaviors.
The behaviors are 1) use of verbal abuse and psychological intimidation and 2) existence of dependent/insecure personality traits in romantic love.

Although the information generated by this review of secondary data cannot be generalized to the larger population due to the use of a non-probability sample group, it can reveal trends or associations important to the body of knowledge in social work. Additionally, by the capture of trends and associations that support existing research this study could be useful in designing policy statements surrounding this social problem.

The research on programs that serve the perpetrators of domestic violence is minimal, thus, research knowledge must be compiled so that a comprehensive assessment of factors will strengthen the argument for or against legal interventions in social welfare policy that clearly demonstrate "...findings used for social change" (Glicken, 2000).

Consequently, this study’s focus on existing data gained through a self-report survey used to determine differences between nonphysical forms of violence, i.e. verbal abuse and intimidation in persons enrolled in a
D.V. program versus those who completed such a program is both meritorious and necessary. This comparison between the two groups examined information provided by perpetrators of domestic violence, which is a useful tool to improve treatment interventions when working with this population.

This study also examined data reported using an additional self-report survey that measured each participant, currently enrolled versus those who had completed a D.V. program, for indicators that revealed ambivalent attachment and dependent/insecure personality traits in romantic love.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study may be the setting. Those enrolled in a Domestic Violence program completed the NPAPS while in a group setting; whereas, those that had completed a Domestic Violence program completed the NPAPS in the privacy of the exit interview. There may have been more of a need of those currently enrolled to
answer the questions in a more favorable way while in a group setting then if they had not been in such a setting.

Being that only one agency was used for the data limits the studies ability to generalize the results to the entire battering population. The two groups: completed versus enrolled, do not have previous scores to measure reliability and validity. However, the scores for non-physically abusive behavior and dependent/insecure traits were derived from the NPAPS and DIRLS, both of which have good content and factorial validity, and evidence of construct validity.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Perspective

The Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal." Today, we understand that dictum as "all people are created equal," unfortunately, the founding fathers literally meant, men.

The world-view during the Colonial period was that women were considered to be the property of her husbands'. This meant that a husband was allowed to beat his wife with a stick no bigger than his thumb (the origin of the axiom for measurement, i.e. "the rule of thumb").

The early law of this country, built upon English common law, further stated that a husband could pull his wife's hair, choke her, spit in her face, and kick her about the floor (Davidson, 1977). Although the laws of United States espoused democracy, women's lives were under the authority of their husband; thus, women were not given equal treatment under the law.
Davidson (1977) reported not only did society in general support male dominance, but religious institutions sanctioned female obedience to their spouse as well. Wollstonecraft (1792), a pioneer of women's rights, wrote a tongue-in-cheek reply to the male dominance found in colonial society:

"[F]ormed to obey she ought to learn betimes to suffer injustices and to bear insults of a husband without complaint; it is not for his sake, but for her own, that she should be of mild disposition. The pervasiveness and ill nature of women only serve to aggravate their own misfortunes and the misconduct of their husbands. (p. 56)."

This demonstrated the popular opinion of this period: a wife was blamed for her husband's misconduct and deemed as deserving of the violence used against her.

Martin (1978) reported that during the colonial period, the U.S. courts acknowledged the husband's right of chastisement. Women, who were beaten however, had no legal standing in America's courts until the late 1800's and thus, were not allowed during the colonial period "to discredit, or shame the family by seeking legal action"
Jones (1953) found that in the late nineteenth century there was still no general awareness of routine violence against women, nor were there laws in place to discourage it.

Friedan (1963) brought the subject of violence against women into public awareness as she described the "tyranny of women's private lives" (p. 12). This gave birth to the initial uprising in the women’s movement and consciousness-raising time of the 1970’s; which became known as the "women’s liberation (lib) movement." These brave and early pioneers of the women’s lib movement brought to light the plight of thousands of women, i.e., domestic exploitation.

According to Amatniek (1968), American societies high regard of privacy created a powerful barrier to public awareness of this problem and were responsible, in part, in allowing family violence to remain invisible. In the 1980’s public awareness and advocacy, by women for women, brought intimate family violence into the daylight and demanded that this blight upon women be addressed.

The social sciences began systematic study of the characteristics of both the batterer and the victim.
These early studies (Straus, 1974; Straus & Sweet, 1980) characterized the batterer as a man whom had been socialized in the patriarchal system and over identified with that systems beliefs, "leading him to restrict his behaviors to those prescribed by the stereotypic masculine image" (p. 87). Ganley (1981) found that stereotypical sex role training in men provided males few skills in developing personal relationships and those men learned to avoid and suppress their emotions.

Saunders (1982) reported that when perpetrators of domestic violence were asked to give examples to identify emotions such as sadness, loss, and embarrassment, they repeatedly described examples that represented the emotion of anger rather than the aforementioned emotions.

Communication Theory and Verbal Abuse

Nichols (1984), defined communication theory as an intellectual position derived from general systems and information theory. These individual theories limit the focus of interaction to what "goes on between, rather than within" (p. 397) individuals.
The melding of the two (2) theories that form the foundation of communication theory, concentrate on input (thought) and output (verbalization) from individuals as the primary vehicle used in the transmission of data in relationship interactions. Communication theorists developed a series of axioms about the interpersonal nature of communication, known as meta communication, which according to Nichols (1984), means communicating about communication. These axioms describe both nonverbal and verbal informational cues, which are considered to demonstrate the pragmatics, or behavioral effect, of communication.

Nicholas (1984) describes two dichotomous types of relationships between communicants: complementary and symmetrical. The first, a complementary relationship is defined as one person in the position of power, and the other subjugated to that control; e.g. the "stay-at-home parent," who receives instructions from the controlling spouse regarding daily activities.

The second, a symmetrical relationship, is based on equality, where each person mirrors the other, e.g., in families where both husband and wife are free to pursue
their careers. These terms are used for descriptive purposes, and serve as a pictorial example to demonstrate the two styles of interacting among individuals.

Nichols (1984) reported communication theory's focus, based on circular causality, defined as, "patterns of communications are linked together, [which]... form the stimulus and response between partners" (p. 85). This type of communication, known as a feedback loop, generated a negative response when perceived negative stimulus exacerbated the problem.

Research in psychology and social work noted the same circular causality nuances in patterns of communication involving violent intimate relationships. Pagelow (1984) reported, if a man interpreted a remark or comment from his partner as an insult or challenge, it compelled him toward a violent act. Straus, (1989) defined verbal aggression as communicated (verbal or nonverbal) behavior that is used to cause psychological pain to another person and perceived by the recipient as having that intent.
Verbal Abuse as a Precursor to Physical Abuse

Stets (1991) noted a significant positive correlation between verbal and physical aggression. Research has shown that batterers use systematic, repetitive infliction of psychological trauma as a technique to disconnect and disempower their partners; and, that it was not necessary to use violence often to keep their partner in a constant state of fear.

Dobash, Dobash, Cavangh, & Lewis, (1995) validated early research findings that men who used physical violence often, used other forms of intimidating and controlling behavior, and "these acts are integral to the overall constellation of violence" (p. 113). In a follow-up study (Dobash, et. al., 2000), reported verbal aggression, inherent in family violence, has yet to be fully recognized as a dangerous type of abuse. Straus and Sweet (1992) found that verbal aggression, a critical part of the pattern of domestic abuse, had antecedents similar to those of physical aggression.

Sabourin (1996) reported that most abusive men perceived that they lose most verbal arguments with their
Moreover, the discussion of findings reported by Sabourin, supported other research, which noted verbal aggression acted as a catalyst to physical aggression. The evidence that verbal and physical aggression are intertwined and may even occur at the same time was substantiated very early in domestic violence research by Straus (1974), who reported that couples who reported high levels of verbal aggression also reported high levels of physical aggression.

Purdy and Nickle (1982) found that psychological abuse was important to recognize because it created a constant atmosphere of terror in a woman’s life, which caused her to become passive in an attempt to delay the physical assault.

Cultural Influences and Domestic Violence

Sabourin (1996) reported the relationship between verbal and physical aggression can be explained “as an outcome of cultural influences” (p. 207). However, it is important to note that psychological and physical abuse do not discriminate based on ethnicity or economic class.
Hampton (1991) reported the environment in which marital partners were raised seemed to be the most important contributor to family violence.

Montgomery (1992) reported a consensus among researchers and clinicians, that race or ethnicity did not appear to influence violence in the home.

Specifically, studies have shown that couples participated, both implicitly and explicitly in a reproduction of the relational ideology presented by the culture, e.g., rules that prohibited the expression of verbal aggression in public encouraged it in private (Fagan & Brown, 1994). This research concluded that no race or ethnic population is immune to the problem of domestic violence; therefore, interventions must address individual, as well as cultural influences.

Personality Traits of Abusers

The association between verbal/psychological abuse and domestic violence begs the question, "what kind of person (personality) is associated with the abuser?" Research on the subject of intimate violence and the corresponding personality traits of abuser and victim
began to surface in the late 1970's. Ball (1977) reported abusive men described themselves as feeling helpless, powerless and inadequate.

Researchers (Bowlby, 1980; Straus, 1974; Dutton, 1995) posited that because of poor "attachment" to their primary caregiver in the formative years, a weakened ego results. Therefore, abusive people choose a spouse whom they can focus their dependency needs. Bernard & Bernard (1984) reported that the abuser "tends to remain highly dependent on his spouse because he is not capable of developing other sources of emotional intimacy (p. 65).”

Bornstein (1998) reported that unconscious dependency needs were at the heart of maladaptive behaviors. He contended that healthy personality development "entails a lifelong struggle to integrate dependent and autonomous strivings to achieve a state of flexible interdependence" (p. 434). The sense of self versus other reported by Kohut (1971) as "the most fundamental essence of human psychology [that is]...the individual’s need to organize his or her psyche into a
cohesive configuration, the self, and to establish self-sustaining relationships between this self and its surroundings” (p. 528).

Hotaling & Sugarman, (1986) concluded that the picture of an abusive man that has emerged in the literature is consistent with the diagnoses of either borderline or antisocial personality disorder. Thus, the focus of treatment addresses certain traits or characteristics of the male abuser that can be integrated into the fifty-two (52) week psycho-education group.

Clinicians involved in these programs have observed that it often takes from four (4) to six (6) months of in-group treatment for the batterer to break through the denial and minimization of his actions that lead him to this program (Wexler, 1999). Only then, after this break through, is it possible to begin working toward changing the underlying attitudes and/or personality traits that influence the battering behavior.

Popular misconceptions of family violence decry perpetrators as mindless, unpredictable, mentally unstable, incomprehensible, or socially desperate. If this were proven by research then societal concern about
violence could be considered a non-issue. Unfortunately, the characteristics and personality traits of the perpetrator are not as rare as many would like to believe (Caesar and Hamberger, 1989).

Margolin, Sibner, & Gleberman, (1988) described characteristics of men, who assault and batter their wives as, "exhibiting low self-esteem and vulnerable self-concepts" (p. 122). Dutton (1995) described male perpetrators as "sadistic, passive-aggressive, addiction prone, jealous, passive, and dependent" (p. 80). These studies suggested that because of stereotypical masculine training, the batterer reported feeling ashamed of his dependency needs and tended to over react in abusive ways (Bornstein, 1998).

Bowlby's (1958) seminal research, which resulted in attachment theory, reported that,

A child's unique development is a function of his or her interactions with the care-taking environment...this interaction between personality features and environmental conditions during early childhood...lead to the development of coping capacity on the one hand and vulnerability on the other (p. 192).
Subsequent research (Mahler et al., 1975; Ainsworth, 1973; Horner, 1979) helped identify personality development as a separation-individuation process that has profound effect on all relationships that follow. If this process is thwarted or severely compromised, the result is often a maladaptive and damaged ego.

These theories suggested that the developmental tasks involved in gaining a stable and consistent positive sense of self are thwarted in the infant/child. The child is unable to negotiate the two parts of him/her self (good vis-à-vis bad). Unable to integrate them, the coping patterns and behaviors are often rage-filled.

Dutton (1995) reported the inability to integrate the two self’s led to "dissociative splits of the everyday self from this rage-filled, bad, or shadow self" (p 98). The terror reported by men on the other-side of spousal abuse treatment interventions depicts a repression of this terror as unacceptable by Western male socialization standards.

Certainly, abused women often described their husbands as two different people, e.g., Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality, which alternated between obsessive
attempts to either, seduce or avoid them. This juxtaposed position (i.e., “come here—no, go away”), has many labels. Some researchers (Bowlby 1980; Ainsworth, 1982) described these individuals as dependent/insecure personality; others (Gabbard, 1994; Turner 1996) include these individuals in the borderline/anti-social personality disorder category.

Gabbard (1994), when discussing the development of object constancy described the individuals who develop “stranger self-object” as those who “lack a soothing maternal introject” (p. 533). The infant child, as a result of neglect experienced the parent “as a stranger who cannot be trusted...[which] is characterized by a profound detachment from all relationships...and by sadistic attempts to bond with others through the exercise of power and destructiveness” (p. 534).

Men who batter their wives have been found to have vulnerable self-concepts. Turner, (1996) reported that a secure attachment between child and caregiver was known to lead to competence in regulating negative emotions, e.g., absence of aggressiveness. Bernard and Bernard (1984) report that most batterers were extremely jealous
of and dependent upon their partners. This resulted in an attempt to control them to keep them from abandoning them, when in reality their actions drove their partner further away.

Attachment theorists (Spitz 1945, 1965; Mahler 1968; Bowlby 1958, 1980; Ainsworth 1973) suggested that insecure attachments create higher levels of aggression and agitation during stressful situations, and provide the foundation for rage-filled actions. Perpetrators of domestic violence who chose aggression as their strategy could have its origin in the insecure attachment.

Gelles (1997) reported that early research "took a distinctively psychiatric view of both offender and victim" (p. 79). Gelles described men who perpetrated violence often do so as a result of daily or routine conflict, e.g., disputed shopping, cleaning, and meal preparation activities. Moreover, the abusers were dependent on the abusive relationship for sustaining ego integrity. Numerous studies reported that the social positioning of men supported male dominance through various means including force (Dobash and Dobash, 1984 & 1998, Dobash, et. al., 2000; Lee, 1997).
Researchers in the area of domestic violence disagree on many issues; however they do concur that the one size fits all profile of a male batterer is too simplistic (Dobash, et. al, 2000). These studies also reported that a number of demographic, relational and situational factors are all connected in domestic violence.

Dutton (1995) postulated that male abusiveness was more than just a learned pattern of behavior; it resulted from numerous influences on personality. Although theorists disagreed on exactly what these influences were, they generally agreed that abusive men are easily threatened, jealous, fearful, and dependent, and masked these emotions by using intimidation and control (Hudson & McIntosh, 1981).

Unfortunately, there is one statistic that researchers do agree on: by the time a man and his violence come to the attention of the justice system, and action was taken, most men have been using violence for some time, and have established a pattern of abuse (Dobash, et. al., 2000).
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study reviewed existing data, gathered by The Gary Center, a community-based organization that offers the court-mandated Domestic Violence classes, under the Orange County Department of Probation and Family Court systems. The quantitative survey design was chosen because of 1) the sensitive subject matter, and, 2) an effort to control for possible bias that could have occurred in a qualitative design that utilized face-to-face interviews.

The quantitative design allowed for the admission of bias by the researcher; yet, gathered new information that can be infused into the existing body of knowledge in domestic violence and mental health interventions, which outweigh any bias of the reviewer.

This study examined existing data and explored differences in the levels of non-physical violence (e.g., verbal abuse and intimidation) between people currently enrolled in the court-mandated fifty-two-week D.V.
program versus those who have completed such a program. This study also examined existing data obtained from the same groups for differences between them in dependent/insecure personality traits involving romantic love.

There is a growing body of knowledge in social work that reveals there are several contributing factors involved in an incident of domestic violence (Straus, 1980; Walker, 1979). This project examined some variations of those factors.

Specifically, this study explored the following research questions: (1) Do men who are enrolled in a fifty-two (52) week court-mandated D.V. group engage in higher rates of verbal abuse and intimidation than those persons who have completed a fifty-two (52) week enrollment in the group? And (2) do men who are enrolled in a fifty-two (52) week domestic violence groups report higher dependent/insecure personality traits surrounding romantic love than those persons who have completed a fifty-two (52) week program?
Sampling

The study used existing data collected through a non-probability sampling method. The study sample consisted of two all male cohorts. The first cohort consisted of those currently in a domestic violence treatment group (n=38) at the time the data was collected. The second cohort consisted of those who completed a domestic violence treatment group (n=31) during their exit interview; thus, the total sample size n=69.

Participant bias was controlled for by the use of data collection boxes, as well as the physical absence of survey administrators and group facilitators during the completion of the questionnaires by the participants.

Each participant was informed that his answers were anonymous, confidential, and would only be used to gather information that could be useful in understanding the population served by this type of treatment intervention.

Data Collection

Men enrolled in a D.V. treatment group were given questionnaires at the beginning of their group. The Gary
Center offered the domestic violence treatment group at different times and on different days. However, all participants (n=69) were surveyed during July 1999.

The group facilitators introduced the survey administrator to the group of participants, and then left the room. The participant was informed that the completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous; and would not be matched up to their file. The participants were instructed, when finished, to place their questionnaires in a data collection box marked, survey. The survey administrator then left the room to give the participants privacy.

Men who completed a treatment group were given the questionnaire after their exit interview was completed. The exit interviewer introduced the survey administrator and left the room. The survey administrator gave the participant the questionnaire, informed him that he could refuse to participate, which in no way influenced the final report to the court, and told that the questionnaire was anonymous. Before leaving the room the survey administrator instructed the participant to give the completed questionnaire to the receptionist at the
front desk who placed it in a data collection box marked 'survey’. The participant was informed that the questionnaire would not be matched up in any way with their file. The survey administrator then left the room to give the participant privacy.

Instrumentation

Existing data from two instruments used by the Gary Center was examined. First, the Non-Physical Abuse of Partner Scale (NPAPS) is designed to measure the degree of perceived non-physical abuse that clients reported they inflicted on a spouse or partner. Fischer & Corcoran (1994) reported this scale has excellent internal consistency, with an alpha in excess of .90, and "is reported as having good content and factorial validity, as well as evidence of construct validity" (p. 152).

The Dependency/Insecurity-in-Romantic Love Scale (DIRLS) is designed to assess an individual’s perception of his dependency/insecurity with regard to a specific relationship that has a romantic nature. This scale also has an excellent internal consistency, with an alpha of
.87. Attridge, Berscheid, and Sprecher (1998) reported this scale demonstrated, "discriminate forms of construct validity" (p. 42).

Protection of Human Subjects

The examination of existing data, collected using an anonymous procedural gathering method assures the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Upon intake to the D.V. program the men signed consent forms that indicate their understanding that all testing and participation results are the property of the Gary Center. Thus, the need for an additional informed consent or debriefing statement is unnecessary.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic and descriptive characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1. More than half the respondents (59.4%) were between the ages of 26 and 45. The highest numbers of respondents (44.9%) were married.

Approximately half of the respondents (49.3%) reported their education level as high school graduate and 43.5% reported an annual income between $0 and $20,000. The largest number of respondents (43.3%) reported their occupation as construction or machine trade.

Most of the respondents (71.0%) were Christian. Less than half of the respondents (46.4%) were White, followed by Hispanic (33.3%), Asian (10.1%), Black (8.7%), and other (1.4%). Less than half of the respondents (44.9%) completed the 52 weeks of domestic violence groups in July 1999 (n = 31). Those who were enrolled in a group (n = 38), 65.7% had attended between 1 and 24 sessions.
Scores on the Non Physical Abuse of Partner Scale (NPAPS), which measured each participant’s level of verbal abuse or intimidation, ranged from .60 to 57.00, with a mean of 15.12. Scores on the Dependency/Insecurity in Romantic Love Scale, which measured dependent/insecure personality traits, ranged from -.66 to 4.5 with a mean of 2.34.

**Differences in Scores by Participants**

Independent samples t-tests were used to determine differences in level of reported non-physical abuse and dependent/insecure traits by men that completed a fifty-two (52) week treatment group versus men enrolled in the fifty-two (52) week domestic violence treatment group. A significant difference was found and is depicted in Table 2 for non-physical abuse ($t = 4.23$, $df = 30$, $p = .000$). A significant difference was found and is depicted in Table 3 for dependent/insecure personality traits ($t = 5.77$, $df = 31$, $p = .000$).

Respondents who had completed the fifty-two (52) week domestic violence group had a significantly higher level of non-physical abuse ($M = 21.43$) than did
respondents who were enrolled in the 52 weeks, (M = 10.14). However, men who completed treatment, had a significantly lower level (M = .4994) of dependent/insecure traits than those enrolled (M = 3.4900) in the 52 weeks of domestic violence groups.

Demographic Differences in Non-Physical Abuse versus Personality Traits

Independent samples t-tests were used to determine a difference in level of non-physical abuse by education (high school graduate/no high school diploma versus associate’s degree and higher) and occupation (professional, managerial, clerical, sales or service versus construction or machine trade).

A significant difference was found in the area for occupation and is presented in Table 4 (t = 3.31, df = 27, p = .002). Respondents in a professional and others occupation had a significantly higher level of non-physical abuse (M = 19.10) than did respondents in a construction/machine trade occupation (M = 9.69). No significant differences were found in the independent
samples t-tests using the same demographic categories (education and/or occupation) versus dependent/insecure personality traits.

Analysis of variance was used to determine significant differences in level of non-physical abuse and dependent/insecure personality traits by marital status and ethnicity. No significant differences were found.

Pearson’s r correlation was used to determine significant associations between level of non-physical abuse and dependent/insecure personality traits vis-à-vis age, annual income, completion, and number of sessions completed. No significant correlation was found.
TABLE 1. Demographic and Descriptive Characteristics of Respondents (N = 69)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>56+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<td>44.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single, girlfriend</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, no girlfriend</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-habitating</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
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<td>49.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree or Ph.D.</td>
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<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Income Level</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>$40,001-$60,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional, managerial</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical, sales or service</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction or machine trade</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
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<td>Atheist or agnostic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>10.1</td>
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<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed the 52 Weeks of Domestic Violence Groups</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44.9</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If No, Number of Sessions Attended (n = 38)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36.8</td>
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<td>25-37</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-51</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
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a Contained missing data.
### TABLE 2. Differences in Level of Non-Physical Abuse: Enrolled versus Completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Physical Abuse</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>21.43</td>
<td>14.15</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.000*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>10.14</td>
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* p < .05.

### TABLE 3. Differences in Level of Dependency/Insecurity Personality Traits: Enrolled versus Completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent/Insecure</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>.4994</td>
<td>.5662</td>
<td>5.771</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled</td>
<td>3.490</td>
<td>.7455</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05.
TABLE 4. Differences in Level of Non-Physical Abuse by Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Physical Abuse</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>19.10</td>
<td>13.40</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.002*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>9.69</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study examined the hypothesis that those who were enrolled in a mandated D.V. program reported higher levels of non-physical abuse (measured by the Non Physical Abuse of Partner Scale) versus those who completed a D.V. group. Also examined were self-report measures of insecure and dependent personality traits (measured by the Dependency and Insecurity in Romantic Love Scale) testing the hypothesis that men who completed a treatment program reported lower levels of dependent/insecure traits versus those enrolled in a treatment group. This chapter addresses the significant findings, conclusions of the study, implications for social work and possible questions for further study.

Significant Findings

This study found that respondents who had completed the fifty-two (52) weeks of domestic violence groups had a significantly higher level of non-physical abuse than did respondents who had not completed treatment. Conversely, the study found that men who completed the
fifty-two (52) weeks of domestic violence groups had lower levels of dependent/insecure personality traits then those enrolled in the 52 weeks. In this study, less than half of the respondents (44.9%) completed the 52 weeks of domestic violence groups (n = 31).

These findings are similar to other research. Evaluations of single-site programs within the past decade (Wexler, 1999; U.S. Department of Justice, 1996; National Violence Against Women Study, 2000) have indicated a cessation of physical violence in a substantial proportion of men who completed a court mandated treatment program (60% to 80%).

However, this same research reported a less impressive reduction in "threats, intimidation and verbal abuse" (p 22). Similarly, Dutton (1995), after studying treatment programs, the content of those programs, and recidivism, determined that a failure to assess other acts of violence that may be associated with the physical violence, such as intimidation and threats, is an inadequate range of treatment intervention.

The findings of the study indicated that men who completed the fifty-two (52) weeks of domestic violence
groups are more likely to exhibit non-physical aggression than are men who are enrolled in the 52-week domestic violence group. It is unclear whether the men who completed the fifty-two (52) weeks of domestic violence groups had a reduction in their level of physical violence; and, are thus, more apt to use non-physical violence to release feelings of anger or frustration.

Research has shown that emotional abuse is intimidating and frightening (Margolin et al., 1988) and tends to continue even when physical abuse has subsided (Gondolf & Fisher, 1987). The men in the present study may have continued their use of non-physical violence despite a possible reduction in using physical violence.

More specifically, a verbal attack may be fundamentally similar to a physical attack in that verbal aggression is intended to cause psychological pain (or is perceived as such) and physical aggression is intended to cause both physical and psychological pain (Straus & Sweet, 1992). Verbal aggression does not replace physical aggression; however, it can act as part of the
maladaptive behavioral process and is very similar to that of physical aggression in the family (Cahn & Lloyd, 1996).

Although the men who had completed the 52-week program reported a significantly higher level of non-physical violence, only a limited number of studies have examined verbal and non-physical abuse. The men who completed a D.V. treatment group reported higher levels of dependency traits, but lower levels of insecurity traits, than their enrolled counterparts. Thus, although men who completed reported higher levels of verbal abuse, the perceived "attack" may seem less threatening because of his ability to integrate treatment and develop more secure personality traits.

Several studies reported trends that when engaging in non-physical forms of domestic violence (i.e., psychological or verbal abuse) physical violence often follows (Sabourin, T. 1996; Hudson & McIntosh 1981; Straus & Sweet, 1992). Cahn & Lloyd, (1996) reported that engaging in non-physical forms of violence was found to increase the probability that physical forms of violence would take place. Similar to research on
recidivism (Dobash, Cavaghan, & Lewis, 1995) the research on verbal vis-à-vis physical abuse is conflicted (Straus, 1989).

Stets (1991) reported that when describing the most coercive episode in which individuals had participated during the previous year, 53% of the victims who experienced physical aggression reported that the physical aggression was precipitated by verbal aggression. Cahn & Lloyd (1996), reported that overt verbal hostility and passive aggression were precursors to physical aggression. It is quite possible that those who completed a study (dependent but not insecure) are able to stop at verbal hostility and avoid physical aggression because of improved self-concept resulting from insight gained in the treatment group experience. Follow-up studies could focus on this interesting area.

It could be that the men in the present study who completed the 52 weeks of domestic violence groups are reporting a higher level of non-physical violence because they are more aware of their behaviors. Clinicians have found that it often takes up to 6 months in treatment for batterers to break through the denial and minimization of
their own responsibility. Only then is it possible to begin working towards changing the underlying attitudes and traits that influence the battering behavior (Dobash et al., 2000). Therefore, the primary treatment goal of the D.V. treatment groups focused on stopping the violence, not on limiting occurrences of verbal threat or intimidation.

Although a fifty-two week treatment program sounds like an eternity, given the mental health push toward brief therapy, a year is possibly not enough time to counter the long embedded behaviors in a batter's personality. Or even remotely possible is that the treatment groups, dredging up painful memories of the past, made things worse for the batter, resulting in an increase of verbal abuse and intimidation.

This study also found that occupation had a significant effect on level of non-physical abuse. Specifically, respondents who reported their occupation in the professional/managerial sector had a significantly higher level of non-physical abuse than did respondents who reported their occupation in the construction or machine trade sector. Yet, researchers (Straus & Sweet,
1992; Gelles and Straus, 1988) reported that employment in a blue-collar job has been linked to higher rates of domestic violence.

It could be that men in a professional occupation may resort more to the use of non-physical violence when not abusing physically while men in more physical professions may be more physical, rather than verbal, in their mannerisms. The insight of men in professional occupations, because of more contact with females and exposure to corporate policies that prohibit sexual harassment, may be heightened. These men possibly are more aware of their behavior than are men in more physical occupations.

There were no significant differences in the present study in level of non-physical abuse or dependent/insecure personality traits for education, ethnicity, marital status, annual income, and age. These findings contrast published research in the area of physical violence.

Specifically for ethnicity, Wexler (1999) found that between 1993 and 1998 Blacks were victimized by intimate partners at significantly higher rates than persons of
any other race. Hampton (1991) reported Black females were found to experience intimate partner violence at a rate 35% higher than that of White females and about two and a half times the rate of women of other races.

For marital status, Straus and Gelles (1988) found individuals that were not married, but lived together, experienced physical abuse twice as often as the married persons in a relationship. In another study, divorced or separated persons were subjected to the highest rates of intimate partner victimization, followed by never-married persons (Hotaling and Sugarman, 1986).

Poverty and unemployment have been linked to higher rates of physical domestic violence (Fagan and Brown, 1994; Dutton, 1995 Straus & Gelles, 1988). However, research is yet to explore the differences in demographic variables in verbal abuse and other non-physical types of violence.

Conclusions

In this study, men who completed the 52-week program had a higher rate of non-physical violence, but a lower rate of insecurity. Although research has shown that
non-physical violence is related to physical aggression, it is unclear if because of treatment those who had completed a treatment program felt more in control of themselves with regard to physical aggression. It may be only a spurious association.

Treatment programs do not specifically target non-physical forms of violence; therefore, social workers and domestic violence abuse counselors must find and develop treatment programs that use interventions directed at curbing non-physical violence. The cessation of violence, in concert with the acceptance of responsibility for the violent behavior by the perpetrator, is the top priority of treatment; however, changes to treatment can, and must be made.

The significant finding of this study: that men who have completed a fifty-two week court mandated D.V. treatment group reported higher levels of non-physical abuse, at first glance is somewhat disturbing. It could be that as men decrease their level of physical violence, they might resort to the use of non-physical violence. Also, as treatment continues, the men may become more aware of their behavior, rather than desensitized, they
are re-sensitized to the damage non-physical violence can produce. The hypothesis that men enrolled in treatment would report higher levels of dependency and insecurity was proved and conforms to current research (Wexler 1999; Dutton 1995).

Findings are extremely important for policy. Knowing that treatment may reduce physically aggressive behaviors but not necessarily non-physically aggressive behaviors, policy makers must be aware that just because men complete treatment does not mean that they are not a threat to the safety of their families and spouses.

Another possible explanation for the surprising results is the social desirability factor. Male abusers in treatment may want to appear less abusive than they really are. Furthermore, in regards to questions pertaining to isolation of the spouse in the NPAPS, there may be cultural beliefs that the role of the female is in the home, taking care of the family, as opposed to a more egalitarian view.

Men may need additional treatment in which dependency/insecurity and non-physical aggression can be addressed. Treatment modalities and programs must begin
to incorporate components that target personality traits, to fully address the complexities involved in domestic violence.

Since a sample of convenience was used, this study cannot generalize the data. However, trends and associations evident in the data are valuable for the general body of knowledge necessary to improve and strengthen the unfortunate demand for this type of intervention in the treatment of perpetrators of domestic violence.

The social work profession has long recognized that interventions impacting the person in their environment (P-I-E) yielded lasting results. Advocates for such an approach, developed community based programs that provide domestic violence treatment groups. Though there are some obvious shortfalls in the current system, the community approach is complementary to the social work ethic of meeting the client “where they’re at.” The clients served by such programs would benefit from a system tune-up, rather than abandoning community based treatment.
The debate of compassion versus control ongoing in the social services sector today is known to be highly emotional; however, the gavel need not fall upon only one or the other. Gelles (1997) argued for a combined approach that uses individual family systems as the instrument in measuring what intervention would be best. Gelles further suggested that interventions should be targeted for individuals depending on history and severity of past abuse, the level of risk for future abuse, and the ability of all parties for self-determination.

Implications for Social Work
and Questions for Future Research

This study has several implications for social work. In this study, men who completed the 52-week program had a higher rate of non-physical violence; however, their counterparts had a higher rate of insecurity.

Yalom (1995) reported that group work is considered important in helping persons in treatment overcome their denial by hearing others acknowledge and deal with their behavior. Dutton (1995) reported that the group treatment modality is useful in breaking through the
isolation that many men experience as a result of the syndrome of abuse. However, non-physical violence must be addressed. Partner abuse (physical, verbal, and non-verbal) must be seen a societal, macro problem requiring social change beyond what individualized or group therapy might achieve (Dobash & Dobash, 1998; Dobash et al., 2000).

Future research should further investigate how treatment programs could incorporate addressing non-physical violence and insecurity issues into the treatment sessions. Questions to be answered include: what components in treatment are effective in reducing non-physical violence? What behaviors are common to insecurity that can be addressed in treatment groups? What types of men are most at risk for using non-physical violence? Are men that stop abusing physically resorting to insidious abuse, such as verbal threat or intimidation? These questions must be addressed if these men are to be helped effectively.

The advent of social awareness in all areas of domestic violence in the 1970's saw the enactment of laws aimed at reducing both child and spousal abuse (Gelles,
1997). Some of these laws empowered the police and courts in handling family/domestic violence; other laws mandated the enactment of programs in social service agencies that provided an array of interventions from women's shelters, family counseling, and perpetrator psycho-educational treatment groups.

Until very recently the federal government had failed to provide funds for programs and services. In 1994 the Violence Against Women Act not only provided funds, but also allowed for federal prosecution of crimes motivated by gender.

Social service agencies, social workers in particular, now possess the needed legal standing for advocacy in domestic violence situations, which should be instrumental in designing decisive interventions. Gelles (1997) recognized that "any program or policy designed to treat the problem of intimate violence must be capable of protecting the victim and preventing the violence if possible by strengthening the family" (p. 149).

The heartbreak that violence creates in our society is evident in the tear-streaked faces of its victims. It has become embedded in the fabric we call society. As a
nation, the United States has only begun to address the problem; yet, we may be years ahead of many countries. All humanity suffers—either directly or indirectly—because of the violence prevalent today.

Therefore, it is crucial to develop better programs, campaign against violence eagerly, and live a life worthy to be called human, among all persons, treating one another with dignity, respect, and honor.
APPENDIX A

DEPENDENCY/INSECURITY IN
ROMANTIC LOVE SCALE
Dependency/Insecurity in Romantic Love Scale

1=strongly disagree  2=mostly disagree  3=disagree
4=sightly agree      5=mostly agree    6=strongly agree

X’s presence makes any activity more enjoyable____
X is close to my ideal as a person____
I am lucky to be involved in a relationship with X____
I find myself wanting X when we are not together____
My relationship with X has given my life direction____
I spend more time thinking about my career than X____
I’d be depressed if my relationship with X ended. ____
If I couldn’t have X, I’d find a replacement_______
My relationship with X has made my life worthwhile____
I don’t really need X, but I want X____
I am very dependent upon X____
I feel very proud to know X____
I want X to confide mostly in me____
I spend a great deal of time thinking about X____
I want X to tell me “I love you.” ______
I feel very secure in my relationship with X______
X is rather mysterious. ______
I often wonder how much X really cares for me____
Sometimes, I wish I didn’t care so much for X____
X doesn’t care as much for me as do for X_____
I have great difficulty trying to figure out X_____
I have imagined conversations I would have with X____
I plan out what I want to say before talking to X____
X pays enough attention to me____
I don’t want X to have friends of the opposite sex._____
I need X more than X needs me. ____
APPENDIX B

NON-PHYSICAL ABUSE
OF PARTNER SCALE
Non Physical Abuse of Partner Scale

1 = Never 2 = Very rarely
3 = A little of the time 4 = Some of the time
5 = A good part of the time 6 = Very frequently
7 = All of the time

___ I make fun of my partner’s ability to do things.
___ I expect my partner to obey.
___ I become angry if my partner says “stop drinking”
___ I demand my partner to have sex that she does not enjoy or like.
___ I get upset if my partner’s work is not done.
___ I don’t want my partner to have any male friends.
___ I tell my partner that she is ugly and unattractive.
___ I tell my partner that she can’t manage without me.
___ I expect my partner to jump when I tell her to.
___ I insult or shame my partner in front of others.
___ I become angry if my partner disagrees with me.
___ I carefully control the money I give my partner.
___ I tell my partner that she is dumb or stupid.
___ I demand that my partner stay home.
___ I don’t want my partner to work or go to school.
___ I don’t want my partner socializing with friends.
___ I demand sex whether my partner wants it or not.
___ I scream and yell at my partner.
___ I shout and scream at my partner when I’m drinking.
___ I order my partner around.
___ I have no respect for my partner’s feelings.
___ I act like a bully and call my partner a dimwit.
___ I am rude and often frighten my partner.
REFERENCES


Sabourin, T. (1996). *The role of communication in verbal abuse between spouses.* In Family violence from a communication perspective. Cahn and Lloyd (eds.).


