Does the Treatment Fit the Crime?
Examining Whether and How Educational Intervention Programs Reflect the Lived Experiences of Women Who Perpetrate Intimate Partner Violence

By

Julianne Poon

A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Sociology

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

© Julianne Poon, December, 2018
ABSTRACT

DOES THE TREATMENT FIT THE CRIME?
EXAMINING WHETHER AND HOW EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION PROGRAMS REFLECT THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN WHO PERPETRATE INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Julianne Poon
University of Guelph, 2018

Advisor: Dr. Myrna Dawson

In Canada, the implementation of pro-charging policies and the subsequent increase in women charged for perpetrating intimate partner violence (IPV) has increased the number of women mandated to attend IPV intervention programs (Fraehlich & Ursel, 2014; Johnson & Dawson, 2011; Tutty, Babins-Wagner & Rothery, 2006; Tutty, Babins-Wagner & Rothery, 2009). Canadian researchers have only recently begun to explore this area and have acknowledged that existing programs that were originally designed to address men’s violence against their partners may not be appropriate for women who typically do not use force to gain power and control (Tutty et al., 2006). The types of IPV used by women, its severity, and its consequences are often gendered and intersect with multiple forms of oppression that inform how each woman perceives her use of force. Using Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence which theorizes that different types of IPV exist, this project examines Ontario’s Partner Assault Response (PAR) program to investigate how women interpret their own use of force and whether the program addresses their lived realities. This research draws upon participant observation of three, women-only PAR groups, as well as one-on-one interviews with 19 women participants and three PAR facilitators from a women-centred agency within a large, urban city in Ontario, Canada. Results highlight complex reasons that women engage in IPV and their diverse needs,
that are not well addressed by PAR programs designed for men. The results support Johnson’s violent resistance and situational couple violence categories, however there was no evidence of women using coercive controlling violence or separation instigated violence. There was also evidence of women who used force that was not captured within Johnson’s typology and women who were wrongfully accused, charged and court-mandated to the PAR program. The findings suggest that Johnson’s categories require further research and refinement before using it to inform criminal justice programs for women who perpetrate intimate partner violence.

*Keywords:* Intimate Partner Violence; Women’s Use of Force; Female Perpetrators; Batterer Intervention Programs
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have tried to be as brief as possible in writing this acknowledgment, however, the fact that I cannot seem to do this is evidence of how lucky I am to have such a great support system in my life. To begin, I have been so fortunate to have had the trifecta of all PhD committees. Collectively, you have provided unwavering support for me and you have done so in ways that are distinct from one another and which I wish to acknowledge below.

Dr. Myrna Dawson, if it is true that a student can only be as good as their advisor then I must have hit the jackpot because my advisor is nothing short of amazing. You had the not-so-pleasant task of telling me not what I wanted to hear, but instead, what I needed to hear. You did this with the best intentions and high expectations to the point where I found myself achieving goals that I never thought were possible. You have provided me with and continue to provide me with countless opportunities to grow professionally and for that, I am truly thankful. Perhaps more importantly, you have supported me throughout each personal milestone of my life and have cheered me on every step of the way. I cannot adequately describe my gratitude towards you, but I know that I am beyond fortunate to be able to call you my friend.

Dr. Holly Johnson, your insights and feedback have been immeasurable. You took each draft, no matter how rough it was, and provided constructive feedback that guided me in the right direction without giving me the answers. You always provided me a starting point for where to begin my search to make the task less overwhelming, and as a result, I always felt that I was moving towards a better product. Thank you for helping me grow as a researcher.

Dr. Mavis Morton, you have provided me with feedback that has always challenged me to think differently, however, I feel that I would not be doing justice to your contributions without
centring this acknowledgment on the support I received from you on a personal level. When I told you I was expecting, your advice to me was to try not to be so hard on myself if things did not always go as planned as a mother. At the time I had no idea what you meant by this; however, I understand now, and I have had returned back to this advice on countless occasions to be able to move forward and to get to this point in my journey and for that, I thank you.

I would also like to thank the late Dr. Kerry Preibisch, your contributions will always be remembered, and I am so appreciative that I had the opportunity to learn from you. To my external reviewer, Dr. Carmen Gill, and my internal/external reviewer, Dr. Paula Barata, thank you both for your insightful and constructive feedback and for making my defence truly memorable.

Never underestimate the power of a great support team and mine was hands down the best. Shelagh Daly, Janice Hicks, Dr. Vivian Shalla and my colleagues at the CSSLRV, thank you. I am so lucky to have crossed paths professionally with each of you.

To the agency where this study occurred, thank you for allowing me access to your site to conduct this important research. To the women and facilitators who participated in this study, thank you for sharing your experiences with me and for letting me be a part of your journey. I am truly moved by your stories and your strength and I will always have the utmost respect for each and every one of you.

To my friends, Amy, Ashley, Claire and Kate, thanks for hearing me out when I needed it most. Jessica, I can’t thank you enough for the endless conversations where you listened carefully and put all my worries into perspective. If you were my life coach that would be an exorbitant amount of billable hours, but thankfully, you’re my friend! Guila, we’ve got this! I can’t think of
a better friend to have gone through this experience with as we pushed each other to the finish line. I can’t wait until we are able to celebrate having the choice to go to sleep at a reasonable hour.

To my family – The Poons, Milnes and Goodalls, thank you for your patience and support throughout my many years of graduate studies. In particular, Mom, your selfless nature has helped me throughout this process and you continue to do so without ever asking for anything in return. To say that I am grateful would be an understatement of the gratitude that I feel towards you each and everyday.

To my special little guy and favourite feminist baby, Dallas – I started this journey for me, but in the end, I needed to finish for you. Reflecting on the past 2.5 years, there were far too many times where I felt the guilt of missing out on watching you grow or having to gently remind you that Mommy was busy because she was working on finishing school. Even though you were, and still are, too young to understand, you’ve been so patient. Thank you for lending your understanding throughout the most important, formative years of your life. Words cannot describe how much you mean to me.

Last, but certainly not least, Brian, you’re the best! Now you have that in writing, so you should probably tear out this page, copy it, and frame it for every room of our home. I’m pretty sure you’ve grown a few extra grey hairs from this process but you did it with such ease and kindness. There have been many sleepless nights spent thinking about what I would say to you when I got to this point and whether it would ever be enough to truly describe how thankful I am to have you in my life. You’ve made so many sacrifices, putting your own dreams and aspirations on hold because you wanted me to pursue mine. I want you to know that this has not
gone unnoticed and that achieving this milestone is as much a reflection of my hard work and
dedication as it is yours. I love you so much and I am so incredibly proud to call you my
husband. Without your love and support, none of this would have been possible.

I’m PhinisheD!!!!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................... III

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..................................................................................................... iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS .......................................................................................................... viii

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. xii

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................... xiii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ................................................................................................... xiv

LIST OF APPENDICES ......................................................................................................... xv

1: Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1: Overview of Ontario’s Partner Assault Response (PAR) Program ......................... 4

2: Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................... 8
   2.1: Family Violence Perspective .................................................................................. 8
   2.2: Feminist Perspectives ............................................................................................ 9
       Johnson’s Typology of Violence .............................................................................. 11
       Intersectional Feminism ....................................................................................... 29

3: Literature Review ............................................................................................................ 35
   3.1: The Use of Force Against Intimate Partners Among Women in the General Population 36
   3.2: Reasons for the Use of Force Among Women Charged and/or Attending IPV Intervention Programs and in the General Population ......................................................... 37
       Self-Defence ........................................................................................................... 37
       Retaliation ............................................................................................................... 40
       Inability to Get Their Partner’s Attention ............................................................... 44
       Anger ....................................................................................................................... 47
       Control ..................................................................................................................... 49

3.3: Intersecting Factors Relevant to Women’s Use of Force ........................................... 56
   Presence of Children .................................................................................................... 56
   Gender, Race and Culture ............................................................................................ 58
   Gender, Race and Class .............................................................................................. 61
   Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Immigration and Acculturation ........................................... 62
   Gender and Disability ................................................................................................. 64

3.4: Intervention Program Philosophies ............................................................................. 65

3.5: The Evolution of Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Programs ............................ 67
3.6: Intervention Programs Offered to Women Who Use Force ........................................................................ 69

Outcomes of Intervention Programs for Women: Are They Meeting Their Needs? .................. 75

3.7: Challenges and Benefits of IPV Intervention Program Content for Women ..................... 77

4: Methodology ............................................................................................................................................ 82

4.1: Conceptual Framework .................................................................................................................. 83

  Standpoint Feminism .......................................................................................................................... 83

  Constructivist Grounded Theory ..................................................................................................... 85

4.2: Reflexivity ........................................................................................................................................... 87

4.3: The Partner Assault Response Program – Program Standards ............................................. 89

4.4: Research Site .................................................................................................................................... 93

4.5: Sample .............................................................................................................................................. 94

4.6: Data Collection .................................................................................................................................. 95

  Participant Observation .................................................................................................................. 95

  Interviews ............................................................................................................................................ 97

4.7: Participant Observation Recruitment ......................................................................................... 101

4.8: Interview Recruitment .................................................................................................................. 103

4.9: Use of Technology .......................................................................................................................... 107

4.10: Data Analysis Procedures .......................................................................................................... 109

4.11: Ethical Concerns .......................................................................................................................... 115

5: Analysis Part I ....................................................................................................................................... 118

5.1: Participants Who Used Violent Resistance ............................................................................... 119

  Pre-requisite For Violent Resistance: Real Imminent Threat of Violence .................................... 121

  Control Tactic #1 – Emotional Abuse ............................................................................................ 125

  Control Tactic #2 - Coercion/Threats/Intimidation ....................................................................... 127

  Control Tactic #3 – Financial Abuse ............................................................................................... 128

  Control Tactic # 4 – Isolation ........................................................................................................... 131

  Control Tactic # 5 – Minimization/Denial/Blaming for Abuse ....................................................... 132

  Control Tactic # 6 - Male Privilege ................................................................................................. 133

  Control Tactic #7 - Using Children ................................................................................................. 134

5.2: Participants Who Used Situational Couple Violence ................................................................ 135

  SCV Characteristic #1 – Use of Force Arising From Situational Conflict in the Absence of Power and Control ...................................................... 135

  SCV Characteristic # 2 – Poor Anger Management ....................................................................... 139
SCV Characteristic # 3 – Exhibiting Emotionally Abusive Behaviour........................................... 140

5.3: Uses of Force Not Captured by Johnson’s Typology of Violence............................................ 141

Elsie ........................................................................................................................................ 142
Aurelia ...................................................................................................................................... 145
Lynne ......................................................................................................................................... 148
Rayanne .................................................................................................................................... 150

5.4: Wrongful Convictions ........................................................................................................... 151

Janine ......................................................................................................................................... 152
Sophia ......................................................................................................................................... 153
Ana............................................................................................................................................. 156
Evelin ......................................................................................................................................... 159

6: Analysis Part 2 ................................................................................................................................. 166

6.1: Research Question #2: How do IPV Intervention Programs Take Account of Women’s Lived Experiences? ........................................................................................................... 167

Effective Elements of the PAR Program in Addressing Women’s Lived Experiences ..... 167
Women’s Experiences That Remained Unaddressed or Reproduced by the PAR Program172
Identifying Service Gaps Beyond the Scope of the PAR Curriculum................................. 193

6.2: Research Question 3: What are the Perceived Challenges and Benefits for Women Who Are Mandated to Attend the PAR Program, Including Their Ability to Apply What They Have Learned to Future Incidents of IPV? ................................................................................. 199

Challenges Directly Related to the PAR Program............................................................... 199
Practical Challenges of the PAR Program............................................................................. 214
Benefits ...................................................................................................................................... 224

7: Discussion and Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 232

7.1: Research Question 1: How Do Women Charged with IPV and Enrolled in IPV Intervention Programs Perceive Their Use of Force? ................................................................. 232

Women’s Violent Resistance................................................................................................. 233
Women’s Situational Couple Violence .............................................................................. 236
Absence of Separation-Instigated Violence .................................................................... 238
Women’s Use of Force That Cannot Be Classified.............................................................. 239
Women Wrongfully Convicted of Using Force ................................................................ 245

7.2: Research Question 2: Was the Program Effective in Addressing Women’s Lived Experiences That Brought Them to the PAR Program? ................................................................. 246

Gendered Use of Force......................................................................................................... 246
Areas Reproducing Intersecting Oppressions .......................................................... 249
Pathological Violence .............................................................................................. 254

7.3: Research Question 3: What Are the Perceived Challenges and Benefits for Women Being Court-mandated to Attend the PAR Program as Well as Applying the Content to Future Instances of IPV? ................................................................. 257
    Challenges of Mandating Women to Attend a Program That Does Not Fit Their Needs ... 257
    Benefits of Mandating Women to Attend the PAR Program ................................. 260

7.4: Implications ........................................................................................................ 263
7.5: Limitations ........................................................................................................... 264
7.6: Future Research .................................................................................................... 265
7.7: Recommendations ............................................................................................... 268
7.8: Conclusion ............................................................................................................ 270

REFERENCES .............................................................................................................. 272

Appendix A: Consent to Participate in Research (Participant Observation) ................. 305
Appendix B: Interview Guide – Former PAR Participants ........................................... 309
Appendix C: Interview Guide – PAR Program Facilitators .......................................... 319
Appendix D: Pence and Paymar’s (1993) Power and Control Wheel ............................. 327
Appendix E: Research Ethics Boards – Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants ................................................................. 328
Appendix F: Consent to Participate in Research (PAR Participant Interview Consent Form) .. 329
Appendix G: Consent to Participate in Research (PAR Program Facilitator Consent Form) .... 333
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of PAR Participant Interview Sample (N=19) .................................................................................................................................................. 106

Table 5.1: Type of Force Used in Sample (N = 19) ...................................................................................................................... 118
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: NVivo Nodes for Participant Typology ..............................................111
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Batterer Intervention Program (BIP)
Children’s Aid Society (CAS)
Coercive Controlling Violence (CCV)
Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS)
Female Offender Program (FOP)
General Social Survey (GSS)
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG)
Ontario’s Domestic Violence Court (DVC)
Ontario’s Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC)
Partner Assault Response (PAR)
Research Ethics Board (REB)
Separation-Instigated Violence (SV)
Situational Couple Violence (SCV)
Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR)
Violent Resistance (VR)
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent to Participate in Research (Participant Observation) ........................................ 305
Appendix B: Interview Guide – Former PAR Participants ................................................................. 309
Appendix C: Interview Guide – PAR Program Facilitators .............................................................. 319
Appendix D: Pence and Paymar’s (1993) Power and Control Wheel ................................................. 327
Appendix E: Research Ethics Boards – Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants ............................................................................................................ 328
Appendix F: Consent to Participate in Research (PAR Participant Interview Consent Form)........ 329
Appendix G: Consent to Participate in Research (PAR Program Facilitator Consent Form) ...... 333
1: Introduction

In Canada, the implementation of pro-charging policies and the subsequent increase in women being charged for engaging in intimate partner violence (IPV) has increased the number of women being mandated to attend IPV intervention programs (Fraehlich & Ursel, 2014; Johnson & Dawson, 2011; Tutty, Babins-Wagner & Rothery, 2006; Tutty, Babins-Wagner & Rothery, 2009). This rise has continued to fuel debates between family violence and feminist researchers regarding whether gender symmetry exists in IPV. Family violence researchers argue that the unintended rise from the gender-neutral implementation of pro-charging policies reflect the true nature of IPV which was previously concealed by chivalrous social norms and structures (Straus, 1999; Felson, 2002). In contrast, feminist researchers argue that such policies ignore the context of women’s use of force which may be in response to their gendered subordination by male partners and is reinforced by patriarchal social structures, policies and practices (McPhail et al., 2007; Meier, 2015; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In an attempt to explain the differences between these perspectives, Michael P. Johnson (1995; 2008) argues that the family violence and feminist perspectives are examining different types of IPV. Johnson (1995, 2008) examines the presence of control within the four categories that make up his typology of violence – coercive controlling violence, violent resistance, situational couple violence, and separation-instigated violence.

Canadian researchers have only recently begun to explore women’s use of force and have acknowledged that existing programs that were originally designed to address men’s violence against their partners may not be appropriate for women who may not be using force to gain power and control (Tutty et al., 2006). This project draws upon the voices of a sample of women who have completed the Ontario Partner Assault Response (PAR) program to investigate
how they interpret their own use of force and whether the PAR program addresses their lived realities.

Research on women as perpetrators of IPV is a relatively new area garnering international attention (Conradi & Geffner, 2009; Johnson, 2010). Within Canada, studies examining women as perpetrators of IPV are even more limited and often rely upon quantitative methods (Poon et al., 2014; Fraehlich & Ursel, 2014; Tutty et al., 2006; Tutty et al., 2009; Ursel & Hayguard, 2008). Considering the growing yet limited research on women’s use of force, it is not surprising that research examining IPV interventions for women continues to be sparse both internationally (Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009) and within the Canadian context (Tutty et al., 2006; Tutty et al., 2009; Damant et al., 2014). Within Canada, there are only two quantitative studies that examine IPV intervention programs for women (Tutty et al., 2006; Tutty et al., 2009), and to date there is limited qualitative research available that acknowledges the importance of using an intersectional approach to understanding women’s use of force in intervention programs (Damant et al., 2014). To address this gap, this research uses qualitative methodological approaches to examine whether and how Ontario’s PAR program is able to address the lived realities of women who have been court-mandated to attend as participants.

Because the PAR curriculum was originally developed to address men’s attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards IPV, it may not reflect the perspectives of women being mandated to attend intervention programs; this research therefore is guided by the following research questions:

First, how do women charged with intimate partner violence and enrolled in the PAR intervention program perceive their use of force? Second, how does the PAR program take account of women’s lived experiences? Relatedly, to what extent does the PAR intervention program take into account forms of oppression within their lives (concerning race, culture,
immigration status, children, class)? Third, what are the perceived challenges and benefits of mandating women to attend such programs and in having them apply the curriculum to future incidents where they may potentially engage in IPV?

This research draws upon feminist epistemology or feminist “ways of knowing” (Anderson, 1995) to examine whether and how the PAR intervention program reflects women’s lived experiences so that we can be in a better position to understand how women perceive their use of force relative to the program. Intersectional feminism (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991, 1994, 1995) is used as a theoretical framework along with standpoint feminism (Comack, 2006a) and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) as methodologies. Intersectional feminism acknowledges that multiple forms of oppression including patriarchy, racism, and classism interlock to produce and maintain various inequalities which may be useful in understanding women’s lived experiences with violence (Collins, 2000). As a methodological approach, standpoint feminism is used to gather the voices of women to reveal how the criminal justice system’s interpretation of their use of force may maintain their subordination within their intimate relationships and within broader society by wrongfully criminalizing their actions (Comack, 2006a). Constructivist grounded theory is also incorporated into the methodology to examine the relevance of Johnson’s IPV typology (Kelly & Johnson, 2008) with the goal of engaging in theory building if the research reveals that there is a need to further differentiate our understanding of the contexts in which women use force in their intimate relationships.¹

¹ The term force rather than violence is used throughout this research as Erin House (n.d.) and Nancy Worcester (2002) indicate that:

According to Webster’s Dictionary, violence is defined as “rough or injurious physical force,” “an unjust or unwarranted exertion of force and power.” Thus, violence can be defined as a type of force, used unjustly, with the intention of causing injury. Force itself is descriptive of the use of physical strength to accomplish a task—but does not imply the same degree of wrong-doing or harmful intent. (p. 2)
This study is relevant and timely as the Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee\(^2\) recommended in its 2011 report that gender-specific intervention programs be developed to address the unique issues faced by women perpetrators of IPV (Ontario DVDRC, 2012). This study also has national and international relevance since the increase in women being charged has sparked debates over how to conceptualize women’s use of force compared to men’s in order to appropriately address it and this is discussed in detail in the theoretical chapter to follow (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Dragiewicz & DeKeseredy, 2012; Dutton, 2012; Johnson, 2010; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2010; Straus, 2009). Considering the ongoing debate and the limited research that focuses on IPV intervention programs for women who use force, this has inevitably left many practitioners and policy makers grappling over how to respond (Johnson, 2010; Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009; Dowd, 2001; Dasgupta, 2002). This research, therefore, is critical for informing criminal justice professionals and the academic community in developing best practices for program interventions for women who use force in their intimate relationships.

First, a brief overview of Ontario’s PAR program standards is described below. These standards are used to inform all PAR programs across all jurisdictions within the province, including the women-only program site that informs the current study.

1.1: Overview of Ontario’s Partner Assault Response (PAR) Program

The PAR program is a component of Ontario’s Domestic Violence Court (DVC) Initiative and is funded by the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG), Ontario Victim’s Services. The Ministry of the Attorney General provides program standards for all providers to

\(^2\) Ontario’s Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) was established in 2003. The committee consists of experts who assist the Office of the Chief Coroner by reviewing cases of domestic violence resulting in death for the purpose of making recommendations to prevent deaths in similar circumstances from occurring. DVDRC reviews are conducted after all criminal justice proceedings have been completed (Ontario DVDRC, 2014).
follow to ensure that there is uniform service delivery across the province. The PAR program is a specialized community-based group education/counselling program. It is court-ordered to offenders through the DVC program’s Early Intervention or Coordinated Prosecution stream, as part of a peace bond, probation, or parole order. In order to be eligible to be referred to the program, the offender must be: (1) 18 years of age or older; (2) charged with IPV and ordered by the court to attend the PAR program as a condition of their bail, conditional sentence, probation, or Section 810 peace bond; (3) convicted, plead guilty or accepted responsibility for engaging in a crime involving IPV, or convicted of a non-IPV offence and identified as being abusive or controlling in their intimate relationships by a supervising Probation or Parole Officer (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014).

The objective of the PAR program is to increase the offender’s understanding of IPV. This includes increasing awareness of their own triggers/warning signs of abuse and providing strategies and skills that will assist them to live without violence with the aim of decreasing the likelihood that the offender will reoffend. The principles that PAR providers must follow when delivering the program include the belief that IPV is a crime and acting abusively is a choice. Therefore, the offender is solely responsible for their behaviour which should not be viewed as an anger management problem (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014).

Individual PAR providers determine client fees on a sliding scale. Clients cannot be turned away from the program or discharged by the provider if they are unable to pay a fee. However, upon establishing the agreed upon fee at intake, offenders are required to follow through with their commitment to pay, or alternatively, they may have their finances reassessed by the provider. Failure to pay the fee could result in being discharged from the program and consequently violating their bail, probation or parole terms thereby placing them at risk of
imprisonment - the same sanction they were trying to avoid when they agreed to attend the PAR program (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014).

The program occurs during 12 weekly sessions that are each two hours in length. Unless the program is provided on a one-on-one basis, it consists of two facilitators and 15 to 20 participants. The program standards recommend that the facilitation be carried out by one male and one female to demonstrate shared respect. However, the site where the research was conducted uses two female facilitators because it is an entirely women-run agency and providing women facilitators increases the safety and security of all its clients. The Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General (2014) provides standardized topics to be discussed in every PAR program across the province as outlined in three pages within the PAR Program Standards. Topic descriptions vary in length between two sentences to half a page and include: Domestic violence – defining abuse; how beliefs and attitudes affect behaviour; the effects of abuse on children, partners and self; understanding triggers/warning signs; the impact of substance abuse; healthy relationships; respectful communication; dealing with conflict; and responsibility and accountability. The details of the topics in the PAR Program Standards are summarized in the methodology chapter.

This section has provided an introduction relating to the problem, gaps, research questions, and methodology of the research project along with a short overview of the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General’s (2014) PAR Program Standards. Chapter Two lays out the theoretical framework for this study, namely intersectionality and Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence, while Chapter Three provides a comprehensive review of the literature to date. Chapter Four presents the methodological approaches used in this research including standpoint feminism and constructivist grounded theory. It also discusses reflexivity, the research site and sample,
data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, the use of technology, and ethical concerns.

Chapter Five provides the analysis for the first research question: how do women charged with IPV and enrolled in the PAR intervention program perceive their use of force? Chapter Six provides the analysis of the remaining research questions: how do IPV intervention programs take account of women’s lived experiences? Relatedly, to what extent does the PAR intervention program take into account other forms of oppression within their lives (concerning race, culture, immigration status, children, class)? And lastly, what are the perceived challenges and benefits of mandating women to attend such programs and in having them apply the curriculum to future incidents where they may potentially engage in IPV? A discussion of the findings, implications, limitations, future research, program and policy implications and concluding thoughts are presented in Chapter Seven.
2: Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks used to guide the study, namely, intersectional feminism as well as Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence which are used to examine whether educational intervention programs reflect the lived experiences of women who perpetrate intimate partner violence (IPV). Although the study is not guided by the family violence perspective (Straus, 1999), the arguments raised and resulting controversy generated from this theoretical position are relevant to the discussion and are examined first, followed by Johnson’s typology of violence and lastly, intersectional feminism.

2.1: Family Violence Perspective

The family violence perspective views all acts of violence, including IPV, as serious crimes that require equal treatment under the law (Straus, 1999). They argue that IPV is mutual and gender-neutral rather than gender-specific and advocate for research that incorporates all incidents of physical abuse to provide a “true” picture of family violence. Research that supports the family violence perspective tends to draw upon the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) which focuses on measuring frequency rather than severity and produces findings that suggest women perpetrate equal or higher rates of IPV compared to men (Meier, 2015; Straus, 1999; Felson, 2002). This research has been used to advocate for “formal equality” which seeks to address individuals who use IPV in a gender-neutral manner by using pro-charging policies to encourage police to lay charges when there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an assault occurred (Poon et al, 2014; Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General, 2000:7). Since pro-charging policies have come into effect, there has been a disproportionate increase in women charged and subsequently enrolled in court-mandated IPV intervention programs within some

From a family violence perspective, this reflects the criminal justice system’s willingness to acknowledge that women can and do perpetrate violence which was previously ignored due to social norms and structures that promoted chivalry based on the presumption that all women were victims rather than perpetrators of violence (Straus, 1999). Family violence researchers believe that conditions are favourable for women to conceal their IPV because they traditionally occupy the domestic sphere where matters are kept private (Straus, 1999; Felson, 2002). Also, social roles assume that women are primarily victims of IPV since they are more likely to suffer injuries which may distract from any legal or moral crimes they may have committed during the course of being injured (Straus, 1999; Felson, 2002). They believe these factors previously promoted women’s violence within the family since they were not being held accountable until the implementation of pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies that resulted in an unintended increase in women being charged (Carney, Buttrell, Dutton, 2007; Straus, 1999). Family violence advocates support women being mandated to attend IPV intervention programs as they perceive their physical actions against a male partner to be equally in need of behavioural modification regardless of the context in which it occurs. These criminal justice ramifications for women in abusive relationships have incited controversy with those who identify with feminist frameworks as discussed below.

2.2: Feminist Perspectives

Feminist researchers argue that women’s use of force stems from male oppression over women which is supported by patriarchal social structures by a broad range of social control
policies and practices (McPhail et al., 2007). These social structures stratify and reinforce men’s power and women’s subordination (McPhail et al., 2007; Meier, 2015; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Men have traditionally had access to a variety of public domains that women have been excluded from and this, in turn, has elevated men’s social status while impeding women from successfully confronting the structures that subordinate them in everyday life (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Not only do these social structures support women’s subordinate position within their intimate relationships and broader society, but it may also promote circumstances where women resort to force against their male partners due to a lack of alternatives (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). However, women who use force may be treated more punitively because the criminal justice system reflects broader societal views that perceive their use of force as a violation of prescribed gender roles and a disruption of the social order (Poon, Dawson & Morton, 2014; Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Although it is acknowledged that some women do perpetrate violence, feminists assert that the context of their use of force must be taken into consideration since some women may act in response to their subordination by an abusive male partner (Miller & Meloy, 2006; Pollack et al., 2005; Dobash & Dobash, 2004). The feminist paradigm cautions against formal equality through the “gender-neutral” treatment of women who are not similarly situated compared to men in IPV. Women may not be motivated to use force in the same way as men, nor may the consequences that result from the violence be equivalent (Hirschel & Buzawa, 2002). Ignoring this point only further subordinates abused women who are subjected to “neutral” pro-charging policies and, subsequently, neutral criminal justice responses that require them to attend IPV intervention programs - both of which were originally designed to protect women by holding violent men accountable. In contrast, this perspective argues in favour of a substantive approach
to equality where it is recognized that to attain equal standing in society sometimes individuals must be treated differently (Butler, 2013). The context in which women’s use of force occurs and the consequences that follow may be starkly different from men. Charging women and mandating them to attend intervention programs that treat them as perpetrators or batterers of IPV may be inappropriate and counterproductive to reducing the violence in their lives.

**Johnson’s Typology of Violence**

More recently, Michael P. Johnson (1995; 2008) put forth his typology of violence as a solution to the gender symmetry debate and to better understand women’s use of force in intimate relationships. For Johnson (1995; 2008), the typology of violence acknowledges the legitimacy of both family violence and feminist paradigms which he believes have been measuring different types of IPV. Johnson (2008) places control at the centre of the examination in his discussions regarding IPV typologies by emphasizing different patterns of control when intimate partners use violence. He also argues that it is necessary to examine control in the context in which the violence is embedded. While there have been evolving variations of Johnson’s (1995; 2008) typology of IPV, the current study examines the four more recent categories – *coercive controlling violence, violent resistance, situational couple violence,* and *separation-instigated violence* and each are discussed in detail below.

**Coercive Controlling Violence**

First, Johnson (2008) states that *coercive controlling violence* (CCV) is a long-term pattern of behaviour used by the perpetrator to exert general control over a non-controlling partner. This form of violence is usually what the general public understands to be IPV and is
typically what is meant when discussing *wife beating* and *spousal abuse* (Johnson & Leone, 2005). It is most often encountered by police, emergency room personnel and shelter workers (Johnson, 2008). Incidents of violence should not be examined in isolation since it may be part of a *pattern* of control and can only be identified through the perpetrator using multiple control tactics over their partner throughout the relationship (Johnson, 2008; Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014). Using intimidation, the perpetrator must be convincing in their willingness and ability to carry out threats should the victim refuse to abide by direct or indirect demands (Zorza, 2011). The perpetrator may monitor the victim’s whereabouts and blame her for causing the violence while stripping away all financial and social support systems that were once available to the victim. Together, this erodes the victim’s self-esteem, willingness, and ability to resist until they simply concede to the perpetrator’s authority (Johnson, 2008; Zorza, 2011).

Although Johnson (2008) acknowledges that both men and women can use this type of violence in heterosexual relationships, this violence is embedded in patriarchy since the vast majority of coercive-controlling perpetrators are men who harbour negative attitudes towards women alongside their acceptance of traditional sex roles within the family (Johnson, 1995; 2008; Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014). However, ongoing research continues to debate this point (Hines & Douglas, 2010). For instance, Miller (2005) used qualitative interviews and participant observation with women enrolled in an intervention program and found that none of the sample could be characterized as coercive controlling batterers. In contrast, Hines and Douglas (2010) relied on survey data using the CTS2 and found that male help-seekers reported their female partners using patterns of violence and control that could be characterized as CCV.

According to Johnson (2008), while there are similarities among perpetrators of CCV, differences exist which form the basis of the two subcategories of violence, namely *dependent*
and *antisocial coercive controllers*. Among the similarities, CCV perpetrators engage in a high degree of IPV using comprehensive patterns of control over their victims and generally view violence as acceptable behaviour. They have low self-control and hold negative attitudes towards women which is solidified by their acceptance of traditional sex roles within the family (Johnson, 2008). Examining the differences, *dependent coercive controllers* have high emotional dependency towards their partner and exhibit extreme jealousy and controlling behaviour within the intimate relationship. Despite their willingness to use violence towards their partner, coercive controlling perpetrators are not exceptionally violent outside of their intimate relationship. Instead, it is their preoccupation with their partner that motivates their desire to maintain control over the victim (Johnson, 2008). In contrast, *antisocial coercive controllers* display violent tendencies generally, as well as within their intimate relationships. Rather than obsessive jealousy and dependency towards their partner fueling their need for control, it is their desire for all things to go their way that drives them to maintain control within and outside their intimate relationship. With this in mind, antisocial coercive controllers will make use of any methods available to them to attain control in all facets of their lives (Johnson, 2008).

Coercive controlling violence, alongside feminist understandings of patriarchal power and control, formed the basis IPV intervention programs which were first developed in Duluth, Minnesota and from which the Duluth Model received its name (Pence & Paymar, 1993). The Duluth Model draws upon the Power and Control Wheel which was informed though battered women’s experiences as *victims* of male CCV but is now being used to guide intervention programs that treat women as *perpetrators* even though their actions may not reflect coercive control or battering behaviour (Osthoff, 2002). Therefore, understanding the type of violence that the Power and Control Wheel represents is relevant to this study for two reasons: First, the
Power and Control Wheel informs Ontario’s PAR program and, therefore, it is necessary to understand how this affects women PAR participants. Women PAR participants are expected to understand how their own use of force occurred in relation to the Power and Control Wheel which was originally designed to address male battering behaviour and may not be equipped to adequately address the various lived realities of women who have used violence. Second, the Power and Control Wheel directly informs Johnson’s (2008) understanding of CCV which is a part of his typology of violence. Therefore, this model is relevant when examining the suitability of Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence as it has had a significant influence in informing criminal justice programs and practices across the Western world including those that serve female perpetrators.

The general pattern of power and control within coercive controlling relationships is the basis for the Power and Control Wheel model which was developed based on years of testimony by battered women in Duluth, Minnesota (Johnson, 2008). In this model, power and control is embedded through forms of coercion and threats; intimidation; emotional abuse; isolation; minimizing; denying and blaming; use of children; affirming male privilege; and economic abuse (Kelly & Johnson, 2008: 478-479). According to Johnson (2008), coercive controlling violence does not necessarily involve the use of all tactics within the Power and Control Wheel, rather, the abuser may use those that are most effective to their circumstance. Abusers who use coercive controlling strategies may not have to rely upon a high degree of violence to ensure compliance by victims; however, the violence tends to be more recurrent and severe with men being the most frequent perpetrators within heterosexual relationships (Johnson, 2006). This research draws upon Johnson’s (2008) conceptualization of CCV as model using the tactics present in the Power and Control Wheel, which are discussed in greater detail below.
First, a perpetrator of CCV may deprive their victim of financial stability by removing economic resources thereby weakening her ability to resist control. This can occur in various ways, for instance, by forbidding the victim to obtain employment or by making it difficult to maintain employment by creating circumstances that result in the victim being fired. The perpetrator may require the victim to immediately hand over her pay cheque while withholding access to bank accounts and forcing her to ask for money to buy household necessities while requiring proof of all of their expenditures. This feeds into the second control tactic, exercising male privilege, whereby all decisions, whether rational or not, are justified under the premise that the perpetrator is the man and the victim learns to accept that she must abide by his rules in private and in public without challenging his authority. Third, the perpetrator may use children to exercise control over the victim by manipulating the children into agreeing with his decisions to minimize conflict or demanding that the children participate in his demeaning acts towards the victim. Further, threats to the children’s safety and custody and access may be used to coerce the victim into compliance (Strega & Janzen, 2013; Strega, Krane, Carlton, 2013).

Isolation is the fourth tactic and is used to diminish support systems and to weaken the victim’s ability to leave the violent relationship and may include acting inappropriately, monitoring or blocking all forms of communication, or intentionally causing rifts among the victim’s social network making it difficult to maintain relationships. The perpetrator becomes the only means of support by which the fifth tactic, emotional abuse, can be exercised. The perpetrator can lower the victim’s self-esteem by making them believe that they need the perpetrator to survive thereby weakening the will to resist and minimizing, denying and blaming the victim for the abuse. Intimidation is the sixth tactic whereby the perpetrator may use indirect or less severe forms of abuse to demonstrate what they are capable of doing to the victim should
she refuse to comply with his demands. Threats and coercion involve direct warnings to the victim’s safety such as holding a weapon against the victim or the children (Johnson, 2008).

The perpetrator may initially make clear rules for the victim to follow; however, as the frequency and severity of the violence increases, so too does the perpetrator’s vagueness and inconsistent expectations making it impossible for the victim to strategize about how best to avoid an assault (Johnson, 2008). These tactics form the basis of how Johnson theorizes coercive control which is used in this research to identify similar cases and is discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter. Below provides a description of Johnson’s (2008) second category in his typology of violence, namely violent resistance which occurs in response to coercive controlling violence.

**Violent Resistance**

Johnson’s (2006) second category of violence, *violent resistance* (VR), occurs as a reaction to an immediate assault from a coercive controlling partner. Such actions are instinctual to protect oneself from an oncoming attack or as an effort to get the batterer to stop the abuse (Zorza, 2011). The key element to this classification is that the violent resistor does not exhibit signs of controlling behaviour, but instead, is involved with a violent and controlling partner. In heterosexual relationships, VR is frequently perpetrated by women, is often ineffective, and instead typically exacerbates the assault by their male partner (Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Zorza, 2011). Motives for VR may vary, including: to put an end to the oncoming attack; to condemn the batterer’s actions by threatening to inflict harm if it continues; to escape; or to retaliate or seek retribution against the abuse. Johnson (2008:53) notes that the latter motive which is characterized as “frustration response behaviour” in Miller’s (2005) study may be more
appropriately classified as situational couple violence in some accounts, adding to the
complexity of identifying certain cases of violence under the proper category.

According to Johnson (2008), to understand the violent resistor’s use of force as a means
to escape, we must understand gender as a social institution. Gender as an institution is derived
from cross-cultural practices and beliefs embedded within social structures that reinforce how
individuals conduct themselves (Lorber & Farrell, 1991). Gender exists at all levels of society
and various institutionalized practices reinforce women’s subordinate position including in their
intimate relationships which has severe consequences for those with coercive controlling
partners (Johnson, 2008). Not only are men typically more physically capable of exerting CCV
over women, but they are also more willing to do so because of societal beliefs tolerate and
justify men’s power over women which is further supported by larger institutions (Johnson,
2008).

At a broader level, gender as an institution has a direct effect on the amount of resources
available to women to escape a coercive controlling partner without resorting to VR. For
instance, societal expectations regarding childrearing responsibilities are further substantiated by
gender wage gaps that make most women the obvious choice to stay home and care for children
which adds to their subordinate position as they become economically dependent on their abuser
(DeRiviere, 2014). Collectively, the culture of masculinity that supports women’s subordination
and the criminal justice system’s approach of treating patterns of CCV as though it were
incident-based situational couple violence by removing the larger context of abuse, reinforces the
lack of options available to abused women. Perceiving their situation to be detrimental to their
safety and security and having no realistic alternatives to the violence, abused women may resort
to VR to cope or escape the abuse altogether (Johnson, 2008).
Situational Couple Violence

Third, *situational couple violence* (SCV) is a highly controversial category within Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence since it is difficult to identify as it lacks any sort of pattern and some have argued it has been used to capture any violence that is not CCV (Meier, 2015). This category tends to be perpetrated by both men and women and is not motivated by misogynistic attitudes or the need to exert power and control in the relationship (Johnson, 2008). Rather, this form of IPV represents relationships marked by conflict which can escalate to one partner assaulting the other but neither is controlling. Often attributed to the type of violence examined by the family violence perspective, SCV centres upon understanding conflict as opposed to control (which is the focal point among CCV and VR). While all couples experience conflict, some may experience it more often, thereby creating more opportunities for violence (Johnson, 2008). Thus, SCV is less likely to increase over time and more likely to come to an end once the relationship is over compared to CCV (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Although motivations for using SCV will differ because it is rooted in specific situational contexts, generally, the couple disagrees about an issue that becomes an unresolved point of contention within the relationship and this leads to violence.

Situational Couple Violence varies in frequency and severity in that it may fluctuate from an isolated incident that causes an individual to become violent but immediately regretful and never have it happen again. In contrast, some SCV may be chronic throughout the relationship (Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014). In terms of severity, it can vary from minor acts that do not instill fear (often a slight push or slap) to serious incidents that result in homicide (Johnson, 2008). It is Johnson’s (2008) belief that SCV can be resolved through couples counselling. However, he
advocates for safety planning since in some circumstances SCV can be fatal, although he does not discuss how this can be accurately assessed (Zorza, 2011).

According to Johnson (2008), SCV is the most common form of IPV and is best identified using research that draws upon the family violence perspective using general survey data to produce findings that support gender symmetry in IPV (Bradbury, Rogge, & Lawrence, 2001; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Steinmetz, 1986; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). As noted previously, this perspective asserts that all families experience conflict which may sometimes result in violence and that tends to be overlooked because some social and cultural norms treat violence as acceptable under certain contexts (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Johnson, Leone and Xu (2014) warn that family violence research that appears to support gender symmetry claims among those who use SCV are misleading. They argue that research in support of gender symmetry tends to rely upon narrow measures that simply count the prevalence of individual acts. Instead, they assert that other survey measures including the actions used, the physical injuries sustained, how often incidents occur, and the amount of fear that results from the violence suggest that SCV is not symmetrical among men and women (Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014).

It is difficult to identify a specific cause and effect pattern or feature that demarcates SCV from Johnson’s other forms of IPV. For Johnson (2008), the variability in SCV is, in and of itself, its most common characteristic. For some experiencing SCV, the causes of conflict may be embedded in long-term sources of stress outside of the couple’s control that affect the quality of their relationship. For example, financial instability stemming from unemployment may create opportunity for situational conflict to arise which could then raise the risk of violence to occur. In other instances, SCV may be the result of a mental health issue which may trigger conflict
within the relationship and violent reactions to it. It can also arise from a poor communication
dynamic rather than the shortcomings of one partner (Johnson, 2008). The large discrepancies in
the causes and consequences of SCV require more exploration by researchers before any
assertions can be made with confidence (Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014).

Given that there is no identifiable pattern that helps us understand a common cause for
SCV, it is not surprising that the effects that result from such violence are also varied. While
some couples do not experience any immediate or long-term physical or mental health concerns
stemming from these incidents, others may suffer serious harms either in the short term or over a
prolonged period (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Likewise, the presence of SCV may lead some
couples to re-evaluate their relationship and part ways; however, for other couples, it may have
no impact on the relationship length or state (Johnson, 2008). Thus, SCV features a broad scope
of relationship conflicts which could arguably result in other types of IPV being miscategorised
into this group, a contentious issue that will be discussed later in this chapter. Below is the final

Separation-Instigated Violence

Finally, separation-instigated violence (SV) tends to occur symmetrically among men
and women in relationships with no history of abuse, fear or control where violence is triggered
by a separation (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Although SV was originally included as a distinct
pattern of violence (Kelly & Johnson, 2008), recently, it has been identified as a sub-type of
SCV (Hardesty, Haselschwerdt & Johnson, 2012; Wangmann, 2011). Separation-instigated
violence is typically perpetrated by the partner who has been abandoned in the relationship and
can occur due to an embarrassing or traumatic event that takes place during a separation.
Examples of circumstances that may trigger SV include: arriving home to a partner who has moved out, children being taken away without the parent’s consent, being served divorce papers in public (which may be particularly humiliating for professionals or public officials who have a reputation to uphold), being accused of committing child or sexual abuse, or discovering a partner committing adultery (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). These traumatic events may cause the partner to lose control and lash out at the partner who has embarrassed them.

Separation-instigated violence typically occurs at the beginning of, or at some point during, the separation, is usually limited to one or two incidents, and does not occur after the separation (Wangmann, 2011). The violence can vary from minor to more serious actions such as damaging their partner’s property (important family heirlooms or vehicles), or wielding a weapon in front of their partner. Because the actions appear to be momentary lapses in psychological control and are otherwise uncharacteristic of the perpetrator, they are likely to accept responsibility for their actions and comply with formal protection orders or conditions placed upon them, thereby making it doubtful that another incident will occur (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Although there is no pre-existing fear within the relationship, incidents of SV can lead to the victim (and children) becoming fearful towards the perpetrator (Kelly & Johnson, 2008).

Less attention has been given to the conceptualization and theoretical discussions regarding SV compared to Johnson’s other categories of violence and, as a result, there are a number of matters that remain unresolved. First, the parameters of SV fail to take account of the possibility that relationships where the physical abuse begins at separation may have been fraught with a history of emotional abuse (Dalton, 1999; Wangmann, 2011). The victim’s determination to leave may prompt the perpetrator to become physically aggressive in an attempt to maintain the last piece of control in circumstances that are increasingly beyond their control.
Because Johnson overlooks this, those who refer to his typologies may make potentially flawed assessments which may cause them to ignore the need for proper program support for the perpetrator and adequate safety planning for the victim. Further, Johnson characterizes SV as typically a one-off exception to the perpetrator’s otherwise normal behaviour (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). However, separation is known to heighten the risk of intimate partner homicide when other factors are involved which is not how Johnson characterizes SV, and therefore, experts need to search for whether other risks are present before making a finding of SV (Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, 2014).

Another limitation of this category is the focus on the cause and effects of the perpetrator’s actions and neglect of whether the victim used violence or control within the relationship (as well as throughout the separation and during the incidents of SV). Ignoring the role of the victim leading up to SV is problematic since it is relevant to understanding the pre-existing dynamics of the relationship within the context of how the violence occurred. Furthermore, Johnson avoids discussing whether SV is perpetrated equally across genders and whether victims of SV typically respond with methods of control to challenge, defend, engage in mutual violence, or kill the perpetrator (Howard-Bostic, 2011). Given the various limitations within the category of SV and other categories more generally, what follows is a discussion relating to the controversy surrounding Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence.

**Controversy Surrounding Johnson’s Typology of Violence**

Johnson’s typology of violence has generated a substantial amount of debate and controversy as it is increasingly being used to inform Westernized family court and criminal justice practices and programs which has implications for women living with violence (Meier,
2015; Zorza, 2011; Wangmann, 2011). These concerns are relevant as this research may further illuminate potential problems that need to be more carefully considered if we are to modify the typologies in a manner that better addresses the lived experiences of the women who are charged with using force against intimate partners.

Johnson’s typology has been criticized on various grounds that it perpetuates general misconceptions about violence between intimates. For Stark (2006), Johnson emphasizes physical assault rather than recognizing that low level threats and assaults are often used in coercive control and are effective enough to ensure compliance. Further, Johnson views “control” as an act or behaviour that occurs alongside violence rather than recognizing it as a political structure that supports male social power and is omnipresent in the lives of individual women (Stark, 2006). This behaviourism also results in Johnson overlooking the difference between “fights” and “assault” which Stark (2006) argues have very different motives, dynamics, and consequences. As Stark (2006) sees it, the former is used to advance one’s position in an argument and the latter is used to punish, subjugate and control a partner rather than settle a dispute.

Further, Johnson has relied upon general population surveys to inform his typology which is problematic because such data provides limited information thereby undercounting the most serious forms of IPV, including CCV and lacks the contextual information needed to understand the relationship dynamics which has continued to be a critique of the CTS (Gondolf, 2014). In particular, the range of physical and non-physical abuse present, as well as the perpetrator’s antisocial behaviour and proclivity to engage in criminal activities is absent from the data used to inform the typology (Carlson & Jones, 2010; Wangmann, 2011). These data are needed to inform the type of intervention needed to address Johnson’s (2008) anti-social
coercive controllers whom he describes as being generally violent including in their intimate relationships without exhibiting signs of jealousy towards their partner. If this is correct, then their desire for control stems from wanting all things in their life to go their way and likely requires a much different form of intervention that responds to their broad desire for control.

Next, Johnson’s claim that SCV occurs far more frequently than CCV inadvertently adds to claims made by proponents of the family violence perspective that IPV is mutual rather than gendered and, therefore, should be commonly viewed as conflict stemming from communication rather than power and control (Meier, 2015). When this occurs, this once again trivializes the seriousness of the violence making it appear as normal conflict experienced by all couples at some point in time. If Johnson’s account of the frequency of CCV and SCV is correct, then we should expect to see this reflected among the sample of women mandated to attend the PAR program in this study. However, if not accurate, then as Meier (2015) argues, Johnson’s statements about of his typology of violence only feed into the misperception that IPV is infrequent, perpetrated equally by men and women, and often minor. Such beliefs can be used as evidence to justify adapting programs such as PAR in a misinformed and potentially harmful manner.

Johnson’s claims about the frequency of SCV and CCV contribute to the next criticism of his differentiation in IPV, namely the misclassification of violence among those who use his typology to make assessments of risk in the field. Johnson (2008) and others (Pence & Dasgupta, 2006) have noted this concern, encouraging experts to err on the side of caution by always engaging in safety planning and by assuming that all violence is CCV unless shown otherwise. The risk of a practitioner making an incorrect assessment could have grave consequences for those involved since it is common practice for those working in the justice system to focus on
specific incidents which can minimize larger patterns of violence and control in the relationship (Pence & Dasgupta, 2006; Wangmann, 2011). Experts in the field have advocated for those making risk assessments to do so with caution until there are better tools to make more confident evaluations on battering behaviour (Pence & Dasgupta, 2006). Concerns have been raised that Johnson’s typology may prematurely misguide professionals who may use it to classify some women as using SCV rather than VR. This in turn, contributes to the belief that IPV is symmetrical and as such, women and men are equally in need of IPV intervention programming and that women should be addressed as perpetrators rather than victims of violence.

Although Johnson’s typology of violence has gained traction within the criminal and family law discourse which have used it to inform case decisions and policies, it has been criticized for the difficulties it presents when transforming theory into practice. For instance, there is no reliable screening tool for practitioners to be able to make consistent assessments on the types of violence being used on a case by case basis (Derrington et al., 2010:9; Johnston Roseby & Kuehnle, 2009, p. 317). To complicate the matter, there are also disputes regarding how unique each category is from one another and, therefore, where to draw distinct boundaries to be able to identify one pattern from the next (Wangmann, 2011). Still, some argue that identifying distinct limits for each type of perpetrator is not possible since there may be great variability within each category (VerSteegh & Dalton, 2008; Johnston, Roseby & Kuehnle, 2009; Wangmann, 2011).

Another practical concern is who is deemed qualified to make assessments since the categories may be vague and unclear, even among experts in the field of IPV. Further, distinguishing the type of violence that exists in an intimate relationship is not an easy task considering that detecting IPV alone is difficult even among experienced professionals.
Thus, the task of training someone to be able to make proper typological assessments does not seem feasible if the typology itself is unclear. This is an extremely difficult task to accomplish with potentially grave results if done incorrectly.

The simplicity of verifying the pattern of violence and the degree of risk based on only four categories is undoubtedly appealing. However, these practical concerns remain unresolved, highlighting the need to proceed with caution when using typologies to inform treatment programs for women charged with IPV. In other words, while typologies may be helpful to some extent in being able to provide better informed program curriculum that recognizes that not all IPV is the same, it does not acknowledge underlying societal contexts and it would be reckless to assume that all cases will fit neatly into one of the four patterns of violence. To do so will inevitably place women whose situations deviate from the norm at risk of future harm (Bancroft, 1998; Wangmann, 2008; 2011). Therefore, more research relating to how women view their own use of force against intimate partners is needed before we can identify how best to modify intervention programming to address their gendered use of force, which is a task that this research intends to undertake to contribute to limited knowledge in the field.

**Methodological Concerns**

Johnson’s typologies have faced heavy criticism for its methodological concerns surrounding how violence and control is measured. First, Johnson identifies CCV as existing in a relationship if physical violence is accompanied by three or more control tactics (Johnson & Leone, 2005; Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014). He uses the presence of physical violence as a distinct variable to be added to at least three other measures of control instead of conceptualizing CCV as derived from a combination of violent acts that reinforce one another resulting in all-encompassing control over the victim (Wangmann, 2011). Treating control as a separate variable
all on its own could put those in violent relationships at risk of being incorrectly categorized since the physical actions are taken out of context. For example, Johnson (2008) draws upon existing survey data that uses the CTS to recognize control in part by the respondent identifying that there are threats occurring in the absence or presence of an action. Thus, a woman who responds that she has threatened to leave her partner is coded as using a controlling feature in the relationship even if it is due to her partner abusing their children since the meaning behind the threat is not considered.

In other writings, Johnson and his colleagues identify CCV as the presence of physical violence along with three to five measures of control (see Johnson & Leone, 2005; Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014). By Johnson’s definition, CCV is defined primarily by the effects of the perpetrator having control through the use of physical force rather than extreme non-physical control (Wangmann, 2011). However, requiring physical violence to be present ignores the very reality that relationships with CCV are characteristically marked by high levels of non-physical control where the perpetrator does not need to rely upon physical violence to exert a high degree of control over the victim (Anderson, 2008). Therefore, those who exhibit only severe non-physical control and no physical violence will fall short of meeting Johnson’s definition of CCV.

More research is needed to assess the suitability of Johnson’s typology of violence considering these concerns, along with the reality that the family court system in Canada and other Westernized countries have expressed interest in using these typologies to inform custody arrangements which could signal that the criminal justice system may follow suit (Wangmann, 2011). Deeming those who exhibit non-physical CCV as if they are anything but a perpetrator of CCV is dangerous at worst, inappropriate at best. Considering that coercive controlling behaviours are amongst the ten highest risk factors for intimate partner homicide, and fatal
incidents have indeed occurred without any known history of physical violence (Johnson, Eriksson, Mazerolle & Wortley, 2017; Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee, 2012, 2014), critics of Johnson’s CCV argue that using these typologies to make risk assessments can have potentially fatal consequences (Wangmann, 2011; VerSteegh & Dalton, 2008; DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2009). Given these criticisms, it is clear that more research is needed to understand the suitability of Johnson’s typology of violence if it is going to continue to be relied upon to inform criminal justice programs. This study aims to add to the limited knowledge of IPV differentiation by listening to the voices of women who have attended Ontario’s PAR program to understand how they perceived their use of force relative to Johnson’s typology.

Irrespective of the criticisms, examining typology differentiation is valuable as it adds a critical element to understanding the intricacies that exist in IPV and this may produce a number of important insights: If there are a high number of women in IPV intervention programs that use defensive force, this can support feminist advocacy by providing further evidence of how such social systems perpetuate or reinforce violence against women. Further, focusing on IPV differentiation can provide greater insight into the categories of IPV that currently require more clarity, namely bidirectional or situational couple violence (Mennicke, 2018; Johnson, 2008). By investigating typology differentiation, it may be possible to more accurately understand the types of violence used by women and men which can assist in identification as well as improve our ability to provide more effective service delivery to prevent reoccurring incidents of IPV. It can also offer after the fact responses and supports that correspond with the reasons behind women’s use of force (Mennicke, 2018; Kelly & Johnson, 2008).
This study will contribute to research on women’s use of force in IPV and intervention approaches by testing Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) proposed typology to determine its relevance. Doing so will add to the growing body of research used to understand whether the existing typologies are suitable in informing criminal justice programs for women and if necessary, whether they can be adapted to better serve women who are mandated to attend these programs.

**Intersectional Feminism**

Contemporary critical feminists have taken the analysis of contextualizing women’s use of force further by bringing attention to the ways in which gendered subordination is interwoven with other systems of oppression that are present in the lives of individual women, including race and class (Carastathis, 2014; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Crenshaw, 1994). From this lens, each woman’s experience with oppression overlaps at various sites that are constantly fluctuating; therefore, identifying gender as the sole source of their oppression is not sufficient to capture reasons for their use of force (Crenshaw, 1994). Instead, it is necessary to adopt an intersectional approach when examining women’s use of force (Carastathis, 2014; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Crenshaw, 1994) which is discussed in greater detail below as the guiding theoretical framework for this research.

Intersectional feminism goes beyond viewing gender as the primary source of inequality by identifying how different sources of oppression may flow from and feed off one another to create a unique “constellation of power relationships that produce unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for individuals and groups positioned within them” (Collins & Chepp, 2013: 3). Its roots can be traced back to radical feminism which in its early stages, theorized patriarchy as the sole form of oppression (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007) and Black
feminism which critiqued the former for its single categorical framework that not only did not represent the experiences of Black women but also silenced them (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989). More recently, critical feminists including contemporary radical feminists have recognized that violence against women and men may be influenced by multiple factors (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007; INCITE!, 2003). Over time, radical feminism has evolved as a theoretical framework that now aligns itself with intersectional feminism, the perspective used to guide this research (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007; INCITE!, 2003).

Intersectional feminism opposes the essentialist belief that all women are alike and therefore face similar oppression while cautioning against identifying a primary theoretical perspective that can account for all women’s experiences with violence (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2002). Identity categories are not seen as individual characteristics and each woman’s experience with violence cannot be understood exclusively by viewing gender oppression as a monolithic experience, just as each person of colour will not experience racism and other forms of racial oppression in the same way (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1989). Therefore, intersectional feminism acknowledges the numerous dimensions that influence women’s use of force including class, race, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, citizenship, and age resulting in a multitude of experiences that characterize the violence in their lives (Razack, 1998; Siltanen & Doucet, 2008).

When viewed in this manner, this perspective ultimately changes how social problems are identified, experienced, and appreciated to understand women’s diverse lived experiences with social inequality (Dill & Zinn, 1996; Collins, 1998; Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1981). For Collins (2000), intersectionality operates within matrices of domination that are established from micro and macro-level power structures and interconnected systems of oppression. When these systems of oppression converge and interlock with historically and socially situated power structures, this
produces distinct identities, social realities and lived experiences that reflect the social, historical and cultural contexts in which we live (Bernard, 2013; Bograd, 1999; Damant et al., 2014; Mosher, 1998; Collins, 2000). Therefore, it is inappropriate to view IPV as a uniform experience and instead, each individual’s experience is best understood as unique with various meanings behind each woman’s use of force (Bernard, 2013; Bograd, 1999). If each woman’s experience with IPV is distinct, then so too are the personal and social implications of using force which will depend on each woman’s social location and sources of oppression. We can then begin to appreciate how structured power relations such as patriarchy, classism, racism and heterosexism may intersect at various points to create a unique constellation of experiences that diversely affect women who experience violence and who are criminalized for IPV (Collins, 1998; Damant et al., 2014). Collectively, these factors will also determine whether escape and safety can realistically be attained within each woman’s circumstance and at what cost (Messing, Ward-Lasher, Thaller & Bagwell-Gray, 2015; Sokoloff, 2008; Bogard, 1999).

Intersectional feminism views power as functioning within each woman’s identity categories which is then strengthened by broader systems and structures (Damant et al., 2014). Women who resort to using force may be responding to the intersecting oppressions that reinforce their lack of power in both their intimate relationships and broader society. This lack of power is strengthened at the systemic and structural level when women are charged with IPV by the way criminal justice polices are created and implemented. Such policies may reinforce the domination of women in disproportionate ways depending on the axis of oppressions present in their lives. The presence of certain intersecting oppressions may compel some women more than others to plead guilty due to lack of alternatives in order to be diverted to an intervention program which is less punitive than possibly being incarcerated. However, such programs force
women to accept responsibility for the violence and encourage them to modify their behaviour irrespective of whether they believe doing so will change their circumstances given the intersecting oppressions they face in their lives. Instead, this provides another angle for the male partner to dominate over the woman who must navigate through various oppressions in her life while complying with the program otherwise she risks breaching her conditions with the criminal justice system (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2002).

As intersectionality has gained increasing recognition as a perspective, a primary criticism often centres on it being a moving target that is difficult to operationalize. Critics take issue with what they believe is an overemphasis on acknowledging differences that are so specific it threatens the ability of groups to unify which ultimately weakens efforts to resist oppression (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2002). However, Crenshaw (1995) provides a critical rebuttal to this claim asserting that:

To say that a category such as race or gender is socially constructed is not to say that that category has no significance in our world. On the contrary, a large and continuing project for subordinated people - and indeed, one of the projects for which postmodern theories have been very helpful - is thinking about the way in which power has clustered around certain categories and is exercised against others. This project attempts to unveil the processes of subordination and the various ways in which those processes are experienced by people who are subordinated and people who are privileged by them (p. 375).

Thus, for Crenshaw, the social construction of categories of oppression are indeed important as it furthers our understanding of the practices that allow power to gather around these specific groups, including gender and race, and operate to subordinate some to the benefit of others. The section below discusses how this intersectional framework will be used to inform the current study.
Intersectional Feminism in the Current Study

Crenshaw’s (1991; 1995) explanation of how intersectionality can uncover different processes of subordination is relevant to the research as it may assist in appreciating that the women in this study are united by their criminalized experiences with IPV while recognizing that their criminalization is uniquely influenced by their individual characteristics and social positions. Examining women criminalized for engaging in IPV will provide insight into the uniqueness of their perceived experiences with using force against their partner and their subsequent perceptions relating to the suitability of the PAR program. By recognizing similarities within differences, the findings from this research can then be used to advocate for a more streamlined approach to the PAR program to better address the different needs of women who have used violence against intimate partners.

For the purposes of this study, then, intersectionality can be used as an investigative tool into the impacts and consequences of: (1) prevailing discussions regarding IPV and women, and (2) policies and intervention practices geared towards addressing women’s use of force in intimate relationships (CRI-VIFF, 2011). Using intersectionality as a framework, we can begin to analyze how women mandated to attend the PAR program perceive their interactions with the partner they were charged with using force against. This perspective is also helpful in analyzing the level of receptiveness towards the PAR program by women participants from diverse backgrounds. Although IPV is a common thread shared amongst women attending the PAR program, as discussed previously, each woman is situated differently based on their experiences with oppression. Yet, the PAR program content is informed and maintained at the structural level by the criminal justice system’s predominant understanding of IPV which is male-based. Drawing upon an intersectional framework provides an opportunity to explore whether tensions
exist between the PAR program addressing IPV as a monolithic experience and women’s diverse lived realities with violence. This research can then be used to explore how we can reform criminal justice programs and practices at the structural level to acknowledge women’s criminalization of IPV in a way that is better suited to address their diverse needs at an individual level.

This chapter has outlined the theoretical foundation used to frame this study. Intersectional feminism will draw upon the shared criminalized experiences of women who have engaged in IPV while acknowledging that they are individually situated to interpret their own use of force which is based on the unique oppressions they face that intersect with gender. Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence provides the basis for understanding IPV differentiation and is useful for understanding the various types of force women use which is appropriate for this study in examining whether and how educational intervention programs are able to adequately address their diverse lived experiences with violence. Next, a comprehensive review of the literature on women’s use of force in intimate relationships is presented below.
3: Literature Review

Women who are mandated to attend intimate partner violence (IPV) intervention programs are a “grossly understudied” population; only more recently have researchers started to examine women’s underlying reasons for engaging in IPV (Hien & Hien, 1998: 421; Stuart et al., 2006: 377; Wald & Muldoon, 2007). This study focuses on women’s experiences with IPV when they are labelled by the criminal justice system as perpetrators and examines whether and how they feel one of Ontario’s Partner Assault Response (PAR) intervention programs are able to address their realities. It is guided by three main research questions. First, how do women charged with IPV and enrolled in the PAR intervention program perceive their use of force? Second, how do IPV intervention programs address women’s lived experiences? Relatedly, to what extent does the PAR intervention program address other forms of oppression within their lives (concerning race, culture, immigration status, children, class)? Third, what are the perceived challenges and benefits of mandating women to attend such programs and in having them apply the curriculum to future incidents where they may potentially engage in IPV?

The section below provides a synthesis of the limited research to date concerning women’s use of force against intimate partners. First, it examines previous research relating to women’s reasons for using force among the general population and those charged and/or attending IPV intervention programs. Next, this chapter discusses the current state of the literature relating to whether intervention programs are able to address women’s experiences without reproducing various forms of oppression in their lives. Lastly, the chapter presents prior research findings relating to the challenges and drawbacks that women may have in applying intervention curriculum to reduce the potential that they will use force in their intimate relationships moving forward.
3.1: The Use of Force Against Intimate Partners Among Women in the General Population

The Canadian General Social Survey (GSS) and Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR) examine the types of threats and physical acts of violence that women commonly use against men in the context of intimate relationships. The GSS is a random sample survey of over 30,000 Canadians aged 15 and older. The 2014 GSS reported that six percent (6%) of men who were in dating relationships in the previous five years reported being subjected to limited contact with their friends or family, name calling, or threats; and, three percent (3%) of men reported that they had been physically abused by their partner (Statistics Canada, 2016: 7). When examining spousal violence, four percent (4%) of men reported being victims over the previous five-year period (Statistics Canada, 2016: 3). Examining the most serious forms of victimizations among spouses, 16% of men identified that they had been sexually assaulted, beaten, choked or threatened with a gun or knife (although Statistics Canada notes that this should be used with caution) and over 30 percent (30%) of male spouses reported being pushed, grabbed, shoved or slapped (Statistics Canada, 2016: 7). However, it should be noted that in both the aforementioned categories, female victims reported higher rates which reached statistical significance (Statistics Canada, 2016: 7). The largest category of victimization reported among male spouses was being kicked, bitten, hit or hit with something (35%) and this was three and a half times more likely to occur to them than women (10%). According to the 2016 UCR survey where more than 80 percent (80%) of victims are women and includes only police reported IPV, it was more common for male victims than female victims to report physical assault (87% versus 74%), including major (22% versus 13%) and common (65% versus 61%) physical assault than females (Statistics Canada, 2018: 57). Incidents involving male victims were nearly twice as likely to involve weapons compared to the females (23% versus 12%), with a knife or similar piercing or
cutting object being the most common type of weapon present (37% male versus 28% female) in cases involving male victims (Statistics Canada, 2018: 57).

3.2: Reasons for the Use of Force Among Women Charged and/or Attending IPV Intervention Programs and in the General Population

Women who have been charged by the police and/or mandated to attend IPV intervention programs have expressed and described various reasons for engaging in IPV (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010) and their explanations frequently overlap with those provided by women in the general population (Neal & Edwards, 2017). Given the strong overlap between women involved in the criminal justice system and those in the general population, coupled with men rarely reporting women who use force, with 76 percent of male victims stating that they had not reported the violence to the police compared to 64 percent of women (Statistics Canada, 2016: 10), the literature review below combines both populations to present the diverse reasons women use force. It is crucial to understand these reasons if there is a desire to design programs both within and outside the criminal justice system that are effective in addressing their heterogeneous needs. The literature review below is organized into five main reasons presented in order of most frequently cited among studies and include self-defence (24), retaliation (19), inability to gain their partner’s attention (9), anger (8), and control (6), definitions of which are expanded upon below.

Self-Defence

Studies have indicated that women who engage in IPV frequently acted within the context of self-defence – either in response to a specific incident or broader ongoing victimization within
the relationship with their male partner (Mennicke, 2018; Larance & Miller, 2016; Hamberger & Guse, 2005; Hamberger et al., 1994; Kernsmith, 2005a; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Seamans et al., 2007; Stuart et al., 2006; Swan & Snow, 2003; Ward & Muldoon, 2007; Pollack et al., 2005; Ross, 2011; Poon et al., 2014; Babcock, Millar & Siard, 2003; DeKeseredy et al., 1997; Fiebert & Gonzalez, 1997; Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd & Sebastian, 1991; Foshee, Bauman, Linder, Rice & Wilcher, 2007; Kernsmith & Tolman, 2011; Leisring, 2012; Makepeace, 1986; Saunders, 1986; Shorey, Meltzer & Cornelius, 2010; Carrado et al., 1996). Although there are some discrepancies in defining the term, generally, these studies describe self-defence as a response used to prevent physical injury from being perpetrated against them or their children by their male partner (Miller & Meloy, 2006; Seamans, et al, 2007; Ward & Muldoon, 2007). For example, Swan and Snow (2003) assessed the reasons given by 95 women who had used physical force in the previous six months against a male partner and were either court-mandated to attend an IPV intervention program or were seeking services from a health clinic, family court or shelter. Reasons for using force were organized on a scale measuring self-defence, control, or getting even at their partner. Swan and Snow (2003) examined four categories consisting of victims (the partner used more physical violence and coercion compared to the woman), abused aggressors (the woman used more physical violence and coercion compared to their partner), women in mixed-female coercive violence (the woman’s coercion was equal to, or greater than her partner, but her partner was equally or more violent), and mixed-male coercive relationships (the partner was more coercive, but the woman’s violence was equal or greater than her partner’s violence). They found that within all these categories, the victims reported that their use of force occurred most often for the purposes of self-defence (Swan & Snow, 2003).
Another dimension to consider when understanding women’s self-defence tactics is that they may defend themselves by using weapons such as nearby household items to try to level the playing field against their partner’s size and strength (Poon et al., 2014; Melton & Sillito, 2012; Comack et al., 2000). Ignoring the context in which the woman used an object could result in some women facing more serious weapons-related charges (Comack et al., 2000). For example, Pollack, Green and Allspach’s (2005) qualitative analysis examined in-depth interviews with 19 women charged, either dually or solely, with IPV in Toronto. One woman was charged with “assault with a weapon” for hitting her partner with a phone that she was trying to retrieve while he was pushing her away to stop her from calling for help. Larance and Miller (2016) examined 208 descriptions by women of their arrest and subsequent court-mandated participation in intervention programs and found that 61 had acted in self-defence. The researchers argued that the only difference between women charged and court-mandated to intervention programming and women who had not been charged but had voluntarily sought out victim support services was the quality of the investigation conducted by officers at the scene.

Charging women for actions that occur in the context of self-defence has a number of implications on their lives. Being charged as the perpetrator of IPV changes women’s status in the eyes of the law where they are no longer eligible to receive victim services even though they may have used force in self-defence (Pollack, et al., 2005; Larance & Rousson 2015; Larance & Miller, 2016). Next, the immediate and ongoing impact of being charged and required to take time off work may result in loss of income and/or employment resulting in financial strain (Dichter, 2013). Being charged for defensive actions may operate in such a manner that it reinforces power and control by violent men over the lives of these women thereby lessening the effect of pro-charging policies to protect those that it intended to serve (Coker, 2001; Pollack,
Women may feel confused and reluctant to seek assistance in the future thereby reinforcing male privilege in society by supporting the belief that women should remain passive to men’s violence. Women in Pollack et al.’s (2005) study echoed these concerns expressing uncertainty and resentment towards the gender-neutral interpretation of IPV with many of them indicating that they would refrain from defending themselves in the future out of fear they would be charged again (Pollack et al., 2005). Finally, mothers who are charged even though they may have acted in defence of themselves or their children may be disadvantaged in family law proceedings and may risk losing custody of their children as they are now viewed as the violent parent (Dichter, 2013; Coker, 2001). These instances illustrate the complexity in understanding women’s reasons for using force in self-defence, since it is often viewed as perpetration rather than a response to ongoing abuse by a male partner (Hamberger, 1997). Kelly and Westmarland (2016) argue this point further by drawing parallels between the incident-based approach used by the criminal justice system and narratives from abusive men. Both groups view the violence as episodic which is used to minimize and justify the abuse in ways that are treated as separate from systems of gender, power and control, that women may be responding to when acting in self-defence (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016).

**Retaliation**

Women may also resort to using physical aggression in a retaliatory manner in response to their mistreatment by a male partner (Hamberger et al., 1994; Kernsmith, 2005a; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Swan & Snow, 2003; Ward & Muldoon, 2007; Conradi et al., 2009; Ross, 2011; Swan, Gambone, Caldwell, Sullivan & Snow, 2008; DeKeseredy et al., 1997; Fiebert & Gonzalez, 1997; Flemke & Allen, 2008; Follingstad et al., 1991; Foshee et al., 2007; Kernsmith
Reasons for retaliation may vary, but include: retaliating because their partner hit them first; acting on feelings of emotional harm; or to punish their partner for a previous or current perceived wrongdoing against them (Swan et al., 2008; Stuart et al., 2006; Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd, & Sebastian, 1991; Hamberger et al., 1997; Kernsmith, 2005a).

Researchers have noted that while both men and women may use physical force in order to retaliate against their partner (Barnett et al., 1997), women’s reasons for doing so may be different from men’s as women tend to report retaliating in response to being emotionally hurt (Follingstad et al., 1991; Hamberger et al., 1997). One study found men to have character features including borderline personality traits that were connected to their use of retaliation, while women’s retaliation often occurred because of situational features including responding to partners’ efforts to control them (Ross, 2011). Kernsmith’s (2005a) study examined the reasons and context of force among 125 men (53%) and women (47%) who were enrolled in IPV intervention programs. Using a 19-item modified Perceived Behavioural Control Scale and measuring responses on a five-point, Likert-type scale, retaliation for emotional harm was the leading reason for women (42%) who had used force against their partner followed by self-defence (29%) and expressing anger (29%) (Kernsmith, 2005a: 177). Kernsmith (2005a) also found that women were more likely than men to use violence as a response to previous instances of abuse, to report using force to get back at their partner or to punish him, and were more likely to report doing so out of a desire to retaliate against previous abuse rather than to gain power and control (Kernsmith, 2005a: 179). Overall, Kernsmith (2005a) argues that while these findings provide support that some women use force out of revenge against prior abuse, they may also be
responding to their partner’s abuse and, therefore, it should not be assumed that they are always the primary aggressor.

Other studies indicate that women’s retaliation is more complex than simply responding to their current male partner’s aggression. Women’s retaliation may be triggered by other considerations such as emotional and sexual harm they have experienced throughout their lives (Kernsmith, 2005a, 2005b; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Conradi et al., 2009). For example, Miller and Meloy’s (2006) participant observation of 95 women in IPV intervention programs revealed that one participant’s retaliatory actions stemmed from a previous 16-year marriage to a man whose emotional abuse was often followed with sexual and physical abuse. When her new boyfriend began displaying emotionally-abusive behaviours, it triggered the woman’s recollection of the events that typically followed from her previous relationship and she retaliated by hitting him (Miller & Meloy, 2006). Considering that women experience various types of sexual abuse in IPV (Johnson & Dawson, 2011), this highlights the importance of understanding the gendered reasons for using IPV since women may retaliate in response to their prior or current victimization rather than the desire for power and control that is typically more characteristic of male battering behaviour (Osthoff, 2002; Miller & Meloy, 2006).

It is important to note that women’s actions, defensive or retaliatory, are at times difficult to decipher from one another. Some women who respond to their partner’s IPV by using force in an attempt to reduce further harm to herself could be identified as acting in self-defence both within the legal scope\(^3\) and more broadly (Miller & Meloy, 2006; Seamans et al., 2007; Ward &

---

\(^3\) Although there are gender biases that exist in meeting the conditions for self-defence which are discussed later in this chapter, the legal requirements for self-defence are said to be met under the *Criminal Code of Canada* if:

**Defence — use or threat of force**

34 (1) A person is not guilty of an offence if

(a) they believe on reasonable grounds that force is being used against them or another person or that a threat of force is being made against them or another person;

---

42
Muldoon, 2007; Wimberly, 2007). In other instances, women may use force to maintain a sense of self-preservation as they do not wish to embody traits attributed to being victimized (Seamans et al, 2007; Wimberly, 2007; Bair-Merritt et al., 2010; Howard-Bostic, 2014). Thus, their actions do not add up to the legal definition of self-defence even though their intentions may be to preserve their emotional health and wellbeing (Wimberly, 2007; Bair-Merritt et al., 2010).

Identifying acts of retaliation becomes even more complicated when considering how to address women who react to emotional, but not physical abuse, in situations where her partner has verbally threatened to physically harm her (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010; Kernsmith, 2005a). Again, some may argue that these circumstances do not meet the definition of self-defence and, as such, should be identified as retaliation because emotional abuse is not a direct threat to one’s physical safety (Kernsmith, 2005a).

Concerns surrounding the lack of legal recognition towards women’s defensive and retaliatory actions in IPV are connected to arguments regarding gender biases that exist in the law and the limited successful application of remedies that were originally intended to account

(b) the act that constitutes the offence is committed for the purpose of defending or protecting themselves or the other person from that use or threat of force; and
(c) the act committed is reasonable in the circumstances.

Factors
(2) In determining whether the act committed is reasonable in the circumstances, the court shall consider the relevant circumstances of the person, the other parties and the act, including, but not limited to, the following factors:
(a) the nature of the force or threat;
(b) the extent to which the use of force was imminent and whether there were other means available to respond to the potential use of force;
(c) the person’s role in the incident;
(d) whether any party to the incident used or threatened to use a weapon;
(e) the size, age, gender and physical capabilities of the parties to the incident;
(f) the nature, duration and history of any relationship between the parties to the incident, including any prior use or threat of force and the nature of that force or threat;
(f.1) any history of interaction or communication between the parties to the incident;
(g) the nature and proportionality of the person’s response to the use or threat of force; and
(h) whether the act committed was in response to a use or threat of force that the person knew was lawful.
R.S., 1985, c. C-46, s. 34; 1992, c. 1, s. 60(F); 2012, c. 9, s. 2.
for their gendered realities. The 1993 *Lavallée* decision sought to recognize that women’s experiences using self-defence may not have previously fit the legal standards of acting “under reasonable apprehension of death or grievous bodily harm” and brought about the legal recognition of “battered women’s syndrome” (Sheehy, 2013: 116). However, since the Supreme Court of Canada’s ruling, the successful application of this defence by women in similar cases has been limited, due in part to the difficulties women face in attempting to use this legal defence. Commentators of this legal defence such as Sheehy (2013) have argued that the battered women’s defence was supposed to legally recognize that women’s perceptions may not have aligned with traditional views of what is considered a “reasonable” belief that death and bodily harm would occur. This is because this legal test is based on what a “reasonable man” would do in a context similar to a bar brawl. However, since legally recognizing this defence, there has been an unintended shift in how the law is applied. More specifically, there has been an increasing trend towards engaging in plea bargaining of manslaughter in exchange for more lenient sentences, even in cases where there was a reasonable prospect of acquittal using the battered women’s defence (Sheehy, 2013). This serves as a broad example of the gender biases that exist in the law and its application of strategies that would have otherwise recognized women’s gendered experiences with using force in self-defence or retaliation.

**Inability to Get Their Partner’s Attention**

Some women may resort to the use force as a tactic to gain their partner’s attention (Hamberger et al., 1994; Hamberger, 1997; Hamberger, Lohr, Bonge, Tolin, 1997; Seamans et al., 2007; Stuart et al., 2006; Fiebert & Gonzalez, 1997; Leisring, 2012; Olson & Lloyd, 2005; Shorey et al., 2010). According to Olson and Lloyd (2005), “withdraw-demand” occurs when
women become increasingly impatient toward their disengaged male partner which compels them to use force in an effort to be heard and seen. Labelling this dynamic as “withdraw-demand” alters the view that women who use force in frustration are primarily responsible for the breakdown in communication. Instead, it recognizes that men are agents of their own behaviour and bear some responsibility for the relationship dynamic they have assisted in creating (Olson & Lloyd, 2005). Nevertheless, using force to get their partner’s attention may result in formal charges being laid against women and girls who have violated their prescribed gender roles by acting out as a coping mechanism rather than remaining passively frustrated (Campbell, 1993; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013).

Women who initiate force out of frustration towards a withdrawn partner may not perceive themselves to be perpetrators especially if their partners respond using asymmetrical force. However, they may have difficulties persuading police who may be inclined to treat them as the primary aggressor due to their role as the instigator. Importantly, some women may have a nuanced understanding of what it means to be the instigator (the person that initiates the first physical act) versus the perpetrator (the primary aggressor) of violence. This may lead some women to concede to being the former based on the assumption that they will not be treated as the latter by the criminal justice system. However, their assumptions many not translate to reality since the criminal justice system’s formal investigations tend to be incident- rather than context-based, in addition to the goal-oriented nature of police work (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016; Bayley, 1986) alongside pro-charging policies that require charges to be laid where there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an offence occurred (Miller, 2001; Poon et al., 2014). This is despite the fact that the implementation of pro-charging policies were originally intended to address the lack of charges being laid in cases of men abusing women (Poon et al.,
Thus, officers may justify charging women in these incidents because (a) they are required to lay a charge against one of the individuals involved, and (b) because the woman perceives herself to be the instigator of violence (but not necessarily the primary aggressor which is an important distinction since the criminal justice system tends to overlook these differences). Rather than placing an emphasis on her needing to be heard and feeling compelled to use force because of her partner’s withdrawal style, police may simply charge her without any consideration for the background context in which it transpired (Olson & Lloyd, 2005). Although it can be argued that charges are warranted against women who act on frustrations towards withdrawn, nonviolent male partners, nevertheless, the inability to gain their partner’s attention should be recognized as a reason why some women may engage in IPV.

Seamans et al. (2007) conducted 13 structured interviews with women charged and attending IPV intervention programs and found the most common motivator for their use of force was their desire to be heard. Specifically, nine (69%) of the women resorted to force after their attempts to communicate their concerns to their partner had failed or, alternatively, their partner had attempted to leave during the argument (Seamans et al., 2007: 61). Under these circumstances, women reported feeling ignored because of their partner’s unwillingness to communicate with them. Men’s strategies of avoidance and neglect often invoked feelings of unworthiness and frustration among women thereby provoking some to use force in a desperate attempt to get through to their partner (Seamans et al., 2007). Although using force as a method to prompt communication may not be excusable under the law, it serves as a reason for understanding their actions as some women may go to great lengths to approach the subject in a more constructive manner without success (Olson & Lloyd, 2005; Bair-Merritt et al., 2010).
Anger

The role of anger may be important to consider when examining women’s use of force against intimate partners. First, to distinguish between acting out to gain their partner’s attention versus acting out in anger, women who use force as a response to the former may be acting on their frustration and vulnerability within the relationship whereas force that is rooted in anger may be more generalized in the meanings behind their actions. Anger has been found to be a predictor of violence among women exhibiting an “angry self-concept” meaning that they either perceive themselves to be a mean person in general or have difficulties controlling their temperament in everyday situations (Giordano, Millhollin, Cernkovich, Pugh & Rudolph, 1999; Foshee et al., 2007; Kernsmith, 2005a; Makepeace, 1986). Thus, women who identify themselves as such are more likely to use force against their partners than women who are less angry (Swan, Gambone, Fields Sullivan & Snow, 2005; Giordano et al., 1999).

Examining the different ways that individuals approach anger may also help to provide some insight into understanding how some groups of women act in violent relationships and the subsequent impact it may have on their health. First, anger-control is displayed by those who keep their composure when angry; second, those who exhibit anger-inward do so by suppressing their feelings and can lead to intensely harbored resentment, but do not express this verbally or physically; and finally, anger-outward is directed towards others and their environment (Swan et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2003). Those who exhibit high levels of anger-out frequently do so by expressing their feelings externally which can include physically assaulting others around them. Consequently, women who keep their anger in may be more prone to exhibiting signs of depression in contrast to women who exhibit anger-out possibly taking measures to break away from their partner (Spielberger, Reheiser & Sydeman, 1995; Swan et al., 2003; Swan et al., 2005;
Foa et al., 2000). Nevertheless, research has found that women who resort to anger either inwardly or outwardly may have greater risk of exhibiting signs of post-traumatic stress disorder compared to women who exhibit anger to the degree that they are characterized under the anger-control group (Swan et al., 2003).

Similarly, women who have experienced abuse as a child may also be affected in terms of the level of anger that transitions with them into adulthood and how they address these negative feelings. Anger is one of the most frequent emotional outcomes present among women who experience sexual abuse as a child as they may initially attempt to cope with this trauma by suppressing these feelings (Briere, 1992; Swan et al., 2005). Experiencing physical, sexual and emotional abuse as a child may also result in the onset of adult depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms (Swan et al., 2005; Widom, 1999). Further, research indicates that women’s experiences of childhood abuse may be highly correlated or predictive of their use of force against their partners and of their revictimization (Swan et al., 2005; Hamberger & Potente, 1994; Leisring et al., 1999; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Neidig, & Thorn, 1995; Siegel, 2000). Thus, women may redirect their feelings of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, trauma from childhood physical or sexual abuse, or their desire to separate into anger. Attempts to suppress these emotions and traumatic experiences may result in an explosive episode among those who hold their anger in, or alternatively, frequent incidents of violence among those who express anger out.

When examining women charged or enrolled in IPV intervention programs, research suggests that anger is a common motivating factor (Hamberger & Guse, 2005; Hamberger et al., 1994; Kernsmith, 2005a; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Seamans et al., 2007; Stuart et al., 2006; Swan
& Snow, 2003; Ward & Muldoon, 2007). For example, Stuart et al. (2006) surveyed 87 women enrolled in IPV intervention programs and included 29 reasons for engaging in IPV. Their results showed that anger (39.4%) was the primary factor for their use of force, followed by their partner provoking or pushing them over the edge (38.9%), and self-defence or to protect themselves (38.7%) (Stuart et al., 2006). Further, a qualitative study by Ward and Muldoon (2007) used content analysis to examine incident reports of 43 women written by intake counsellors. The study’s findings suggested that when women used force out of anger, it was often the result of their partner’s non-compliance, deception, lack of respect or disagreement. However, it should be noted, that while some women may have used force because they were angry towards their partners, it was seldom used in an effort to terrorize them in contrast to men who tend to resort to violence out of anger as part of a larger effort to coercively achieve control (Ward & Muldoon, 2007). Furthermore, instead of the violence functioning as a physical expression and release of the woman’s anger to resolve these feelings, it often appeared to be counterproductive, escalating the violence to her detriment (Ward & Muldoon, 2007). Ultimately, understanding the role of anger may be crucial for addressing women’s use of force in intimate relationships since harbouring feelings of resentment is a precursor to anger that has been associated with impeding treatment efforts (Swan et al., 2003; Foa et al., 2000).

Control

Coercive control can be understood as the entrapment of the victim through forms of abuse that are not necessarily physical and is achieved through various means including: degradation, isolation, intimidation, threats and emotional abuse and is distinct from general control since the

---

4 It is recognized that both women and men may engage in IPV due to anger; however, for the purposes of this study, I will be focusing on women only rather than a comparison.
former is supported through social structures that support men’s dominance over women. Through the support of gendered domestic expectations, men exert ongoing coercive control tactics over the victim’s sexuality, personal relationships with friends and family, resources including money, food, or transportation; and controlling other daily routines such as shopping, cleaning and going to and from school or employment (Stark, 2007; Stark, 2012; Swan et al., 2008; Poon et al., 2014). It is necessary for the perpetrator to make credible threats in order to ensure the victim’s submission and may include physical and sexual intimidation while isolating them from their social networks and micromanaging their daily routines (Stark, 2006; Swan et al., 2008). These control tactics constrain the liberty and autonomy of the victim but may not necessarily amount to a criminal offense even though it has been suggested that its presence may be a predictor of women using force in self-defence (Swan & Snow, 2003).

Although research comparing or rating women’s reasons for using force has found that some women perpetrate IPV out of a desire to exert general control⁵ (as they do not have the support of social structures or patriarchal ideology to exert coercive control), these studies have yet to report this as the primary reason (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010). Further, women’s attempts to intimidate, terrorize and isolate their partner through the use of threats and physical force do not have the same impact as their male counterparts (Hamberger & Larsen, 2015). Research examining gender and IPV using large national surveys provide further support for this point. Using data obtained from the GSS, Ansara and Hindin (2010) found that women in their sample were subjected to severe and frequent patterns of coercive control that resulted in high degrees of fear and injury which was not captured within their male sample. Further, using the Crime

⁵ The definition of “control” may differ depending on how the author(s) who are cited throughout the literature review conceptualize the term, therefore, some may be referring to “general control” whereas others may be referring to “coercive control”.
Survey for England and Wales, Myhill (2015) concluded that women were significantly more likely to be victims of coercive control than males thereby supporting the position that such violence is highly gendered.

Although fewer women may report using force in an effort to control their partner, nevertheless, research has found that some women do acknowledge this as one of their reasons for engaging in IPV although the findings are mixed (Mennicke, 2018; Hamberger et al., 1994; Seamans et al., 2007; Stuart et al., 2006; Swan & Snow, 2003; Ward & Muldoon, 2007). For example, Swan and Snow (2003) used the Motivations for Violence four-point scale to measure violent behaviours including control. Control as a reason for violence was captured with the question, “How often do you threaten to use violence to make your partner do the things you want him to do?” and 38 percent of women in their sample had reported doing so. In contrast, Miller’s (2006) qualitative study reported that none of the 95 women who were observed while attending IPV intervention programs could be classified as using Johnson’s (1995, 2000) definition of coercive controlling violence; however, it is important to note that the author did not report whether women were directly asked to self-identify their use of force.6

Given that there is no clear consensus about women’s use of control in intimate relationships, some researchers have highlighted a number of serious limitations that may stem from the definitions and measurement of coercive control and caution the interpretation of such findings. Importantly, they argue that there is a tendency to operationalize coercive control as a separate item to be measured which can then be added to other distinct forms of violence, rather than an all-encompassing system with a range of actions that may interact with one another to result in the dominance of one partner over the other (Wangmann, 2011; Ansara & Hindin,

---

6 Swan and Snow’s (2003) measure of “control” compared to Miller’s (2006) may differ which may be one explanation of the differences in the findings on control when comparing the two studies.
As an example, in the study by Swan and Snow (2003), controlling behaviour was treated as a distinct item without consideration of the context in which it occurred or its impact which may help to explain the lack of agreement among research findings.

To further illustrate this point, Hamberger (1997) interviewed 52 women charged for engaging in IPV and found that only two of the women reported using force to “get one up” by asserting authority and having the upper hand in the relationship in an effort to control their partner. However, upon further inquiry, one of the two women who had initially identified her actions as occurring to “get one up” on her partner indicated that, in actuality, she had done so as a protective tactic to prevent her male partner from abusing her further (Hamberger, 1997). In other words, had Hamberger’s (1997) study relied solely upon the itemization of control similar to the CTS rather than examining the context in which control occurred, the woman’s actions would have been misinterpreted as a desire to exert control over the relationship rather than a measure of counter-control against her partner. This highlights the difficulties that may exist when identifying the presence of coercive control in research as there is a potential for certain behaviours to be misrepresented as control being the primary concern for the female perpetrator rather than the need to ensure her immediate safety.

Similarly, other research studies have measured the presence of coercive control by creating a benchmark number of controlling behaviours that is needed in order to acknowledge its presence within the relationship. For example, Johnson’s (2008) previous work has recognized CCV in circumstances where physical violence exists in addition to the presence of at least three (Johnson & Leone, 2005) or five (Johnson, Leone, Xu, 2014) other controlling behaviours. Although Johnson (2008) acknowledges that such violence is more commonly perpetrated by men rather than women, the method in which he operationalizes CCV does not
distinguish between any gender-specific identifiers of coercive control or its outcomes. This may be problematic since research has found that men typically instill more fear among their partners and, thus, men may be more successful than women in their attempts to exert control (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Hamberger & Guse, 2005; Dasgupta, 2002). To illustrate this point, if a woman were to respond to her partner’s infidelity by using physical violence towards him, calling him names, shouting at him, provoking arguments, monitoring his whereabouts (to know if he is continuing to see the other woman), and trying to limit his contact with family and friends (which could include the other woman), then CCV is considered present regardless of whether she is successful in her attempts to control her partner. This is because the woman’s control tactics along with the presence of physical violence quantitatively meet Johnson’s minimum requirements for coercive control to exist; however, it lacks the qualitative context needed to identify whether it represented several unsuccessful attempts to address her partner’s infidelity which would have highlighted the absence of control. In contrast, if a man prevents his partner from knowing about or having access to the family income and insists on knowing where she is at all times, this does not meet Johnson’s definition of CCV because it falls short of the quantitative requirement that three to five measures of control along with physical violence be present, even if his partner agrees to these demands (Johnson & Leone, 2005; Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014).

As noted by Swan and Snow (2002), even when women exhibit high levels of violence towards their partner, they still do not benefit from the power structures that reinforce patriarchy and allow coercive controlling men to dominate over their female victims. Measuring CCV in this manner relies on the presumption that all controlling behaviours should be given equal weight even when some tactics are used sporadically over a favored tactic which may generate
more control than the conglomeration of other intermittent strategies (Frye et al., 2006). Further, it could be argued that the presence of any one of the control tactics should be enough to raise concern rather than relying on whether three or more controlling behaviours exist (Frye et al., 2006).

In addition to examining the suitability of Johnson’s categories that make up his typology of violence, researchers have begun to examine the role of nonviolent control in IPV among same-sex couples (Frankland & Brown, 2014) and heterosexual couples (Mennicke, 2018). These studies have found support for Johnson’s typology of violence as well as the expansion of the typology. Specifically, Frankland and Brown (2014) found support for the addition of a nonviolent control category where controlling behaviours are used by one partner in the absence of physical violence. Similarly, Mennicke (2018) found evidence to create three control related categories: first, unidirectional control in which one partner relies upon a number of control behaviours without resorting to violence; second, bidirectional control that captures couples where both individuals use high levels of controlling behaviours in the absence of violence; and lastly, control resistance which is represented by couples where one partner is controlling and violent, while the other exerts control in the absence of using physical violence (Mennicke, 2018). However, again it should be noted that Frankland and Brown (2014) examined same-sex couples whereas Mennicke (2018) examined heterosexual relationships but did not attempt to separate findings by gender. Therefore, research on the suitability of control-only categories is partial, and as a whole, there is much more to understand when examining women’s reasons for using force in relation to their desire for control.

This section has reviewed the literature relating to the use of force among women in the general population and, more specifically, reasons for using force among women who have been
charged and/or court mandated to attend IPV intervention programs. Below is a review of the current state of the literature relating to what is known about IPV intervention programs for women, specifically the extent to which women’s lived experiences are addressed by such programs or operate to reproduce oppression in their lives.

Understanding the context in which women engage in IPV alongside intersecting oppressions is crucial for designing curriculum that is suited to address the violence in their lives. Reflecting upon the relevant circumstances behind women’s actions as well as ideological and institutional support (or lack thereof) provides insight into the context and criminalization of their gendered use of force. Legal reforms such as pro-charging and the battered women’s defence were achieved through the lobbying efforts of feminists who advocated for the criminal justice system to view men’s violence and control in intimate relationships as stemming from male domination that maintained female subordination (Houston, 2014). Although this was initially an achievement among the feminist movement to address violence against women as a serious social and political problem, these criminal justice responses have been implemented in a way that they often do not benefit the women they were intended to protect (Poon et al., 2014). Pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies are often applied in a manner that de-contextualizes women’s use of force and, as discussed previously, the application of the battered woman’s defence has had limited success to the point that many women who could use this defence choose not to when weighing the potential outcome of receiving harsher penalties if the court refuses this defence (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Dasgupta, 2002; Conradi & Geffner, 2009; Sheehy, 2013). Therefore, these responses are limited in their ability to address women’s needs but instead, reinforces their subordinate position as they are now tied up in the criminal justice system as a perpetrator which presents numerous complications to their everyday lives.
3.3: Intersecting Factors Relevant to Women’s Use of Force

Gender is amongst a multitude of factors that intersect making each woman’s experience with IPV unique and raising questions regarding the suitability of using standardized curriculum to address their diverse experiences (Dill & Zinn, 1996; Collins, 1998; Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1981). The presence of children, race/ethnicity/culture, class, immigration status, sexual orientation, and disability are crucial to consider since the presence of one or a combination of these factors may play a role in women’s use of force against their partners and in which criminal justice and social service agencies respond.

Presence of Children

Mothers may engage in IPV to protect their children as research suggests that children of mothers who are victims of IPV are at an increased risk of being physically and sexually abused by the same male perpetrator (Dasgupta, 2002; Swan et al., 2008; Edleson, 1999; McCloskey et al., 1995; Pollack et al., 2005). Melton and Sillito’s (2012) quantitative component to their mixed methods study examined 815 police reports of IPV and found that mothers charged for IPV more frequently threatened their male partner if she believed he had acted in a manner that would harm their children. This was not the case for any of the male perpetrators in their sample (16 percent of females made threats relating to the protection of their children compared to none of the men) (Melton & Sillito, 2012: 1102). The authors concluded that the presence of children may prompt women to use or threaten to use force in a way that is not reflected among men and, thus, this may be an important avenue to explore to modify intervention program curriculum with the goal of addressing the unique needs of mothers involved in IPV.
Navigating through the criminal justice system complicates the lived experiences of mothers who may plead guilty in exchange for enrolling in a diversion program so that they may return home and intervene against further child abuse (Pollack et al., 2005). However, doing so may complicate the systems of power in the lives of mothers since it may increase their vulnerability towards their partner who may use her criminal record as leverage to take the children away (Pollack et al., 2005; Miller, 2005). For example, Larance and Rousson (2015) reported that one woman in their study temporarily lost custody of her child because her partner used her participation in the intervention program to substantiate his claim that she was an unfit mother. Opting to plead guilty in exchange for leniency through a diversion program may be short-sighted since this may result in more intrusive scrutiny by child welfare agencies such as the Children’s Aid Society (CAS), who may remove the children from their mother’s care if there are future incidents of violence (Pollack et al., 2005). Traditionally, the CAS held the abusive or neglectful caregiver responsible for their actions. However, with the introduction of “failure-to-protect” policies, the CAS now also holds the non-offending caregiver accountable for their failure to put an end to the offending partner’s child abuse (Strega et al., 2013). Thus, the CAS expects abused mothers to control their abuser’s actions or leave the relationship, otherwise they are at risk having the children removed from their care (DeVoe & Smith, 2003; Kantor & Little, 2003; Strega & Janzen, 2013). These expectations exist without any consideration for the gender and class realities of these women who are oftentimes financially dependent on their abuser to provide basic necessities, in addition to the fact that leaving does not ensure that her children will be safe (Strega & Janzen, 2013).

Further, the CAS’s expectation that mothers monitor and control their abuser’s actions is in direct conflict with the criminal justice system’s IPV intervention program philosophy that
encourages participants to relinquish any controlling behaviours towards their intimate partner. Similarly, abused mothers may also face demands from the family court system that orders them to facilitate custody and access but may conflict with instructions from the CAS to restrict the male abuser’s access to the children (Strega & Janzen, 2013). Failure to adhere to these orders could threaten the woman’s own access to her children and such practices transform victimized women into unfit parents who are not acting in the best interests of their children. Meanwhile, intervention program staff have a legal obligation to report child abuse and therefore, being mandated to attend and participate in the group sessions provides greater opportunity for women to disclose child abuse, placing them at risk of losing their children due to their perceived failure to protect. As such, it is important to examine the extent to which IPV intervention programs address women’s concerns relating to the well-being of their children, whether the role of children contributed to their use of force, and to what extent the program reproduces women’s inequality that are unique to women with children.

**Gender, Race and Culture**

Research examining intersections of race and culture as it relates to women’s lived experiences with using force has been mixed. While some studies indicate women may be influenced to use force in part by racial, ethnic, or cultural considerations (Swan & Snow, 2006; Caetano et al., 2004), other research suggests similarities among women across diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds pertaining to their reasons for using force and how they responded to intervention programming (Kernsmith, 2005a; Carney & Buttell, 2006). In support of the latter, Carney and Buttell (2006) conducted a secondary analysis of pre-treatment and post-treatment assessments of 59 women who had completed an IPV intervention program and found that Black
and White participants demonstrated similar levels of change in terms of being less passive-aggressive, less controlling, and being less inclined to engage in abusive behaviour. Carney and Buttell (2006) concluded that because racial differences were not associated with the effectiveness of the program, the focus should not be on addressing racial considerations, but rather, on providing programs that are aligned with addressing the particular subtypes of violence that individual women describe themselves as engaging in. Similar results producing a lack of racial differences have been noted in Gondolf’s (2007) research examining Black men in IPV intervention programs that incorporate a cultural element compared to programs comprised of mixed racial groups. Gondolf (2007) found no significant differences in recidivism over a 12-month period, however, there were improvements in program completion among Black men in cultural intervention groups (Gondolf, 2008). Gondolf (2007; 2008) suggests that it may be beneficial to offer culturally-focused programs to improve completion rates and these programs should be offered by community-based agencies that have ties to local supports rather than agencies that are closely tied to the criminal justice system. Although Gondolf’s (2007; 2008) research draws cultural comparisons to samples of men in intervention programs, the findings suggest that research on women mandated to similar programs may benefit from examining the role of culture as discussed below.

Some researchers argue that racial and cultural considerations may be central to understanding the unique reasons that lead to certain groups of women using force against their partner. For instance, Black women may face a variety of cultural impediments to seeking alternatives to the violence in their lives. They may face pressure to adhere to the culture of silence rather than seek assistance from a system that has historically oppressed them since doing so may reinforce racist beliefs that relationships between Black men and women are
dysfunctional (Few & Bell-Scott, 2002), and that Black men are inherently violent (Swan & Snow, 2006). Furthermore, they may be compelled to adhere to the cultural stereotype of the “strong independent women” rather than a victim of violence which may be further intensified by their sense of responsibility to keep their family and community intact (Richie, 1995; Swan & Snow, 2006). These cultural expectations may uniquely compel Black women in violent relationships to forgo calling on the police for assistance and instead use force to defend themselves against their partner (Swan & Snow, 2006).

Alternatively, some researchers have noted that gender roles in Black families may not be as firmly entrenched in traditional expectations as they are in families of other ethnicities (Campbell & Gary, 1998; West & Rose, 2000; Swan & Snow, 2002; Swan et al., 2005). More equitable gender role expectations alongside the cultural expectation that Black women are tough and independent may result in these women having a more equal balance of power within the relationship and this may affect their propensity to use force in response to an abusive male partner (Swan & Snow, 2002; Swan et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2006; Miller, 2001; West, Kantor & Jasinski, 1998; West & Rose, 2000). For example, one African American woman in Moss et al.’s (1997) qualitative study reflected upon her decision to refrain from using force in response to her partner’s abuse believing that she “had not lived up to her birthright… ‘My image of African American women was that they stood up for themselves.’” (p. 448). Creating program curriculum that recognizes the racial and cultural nuances and barriers to resolving relationship conflict may be central in addressing IPV among women of colour.
Gender, Race and Class

Gender and race may also interact with class to shape women’s experiences with IPV. The threat of living in poverty may pose greater concerns relative to living in an abusive situation because of the multiple consequences that can arise from leaving the abuse including unemployment, homelessness, lack of suitable childcare, and lack of transportation (Acevedo, 2000; Swan & Snow, 2006). Class may have a unique impact on Black women. Black couples may be more egalitarian than those of other races in terms of women being the primary financial provider due to the disenfranchisement of Black men who experience racism in the public sphere (Hampton, Oliver & Magarian, 2003; Swan & Snow, 2006). However, this may result in marginalized Black men engaging in IPV to compensate for their inability to attain traditional forms of manhood, thus increasing the necessity for Black women to fight back (Hampton, et. al., 2003; Oliver, 2003). Alternatively, being financially independent may empower Black women to be less accepting of abuse and they may be more likely to hit back (Swan & Snow, 2002; Hampton et al., 1989). Still, some researchers theorize that Black, middle-class women may remain in violent relationships because they perceive a lack of eligible Black middle-class men and fear that they will not be able to find another suitable partner of a similar background (Bell & Mattis, 2000; Swan & Snow, 2006). Thus, there are various degrees of intersecting factors involved when examining the use of force by Black women and this underscores the need for curriculum that is informed by these racial and cultural nuances to address their specific needs and reduce the violence in their lives.
Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Immigration and Acculturation

The role of race/ethnicity may intersect with immigration and acculturation creating unique experiences for certain groups of women involved in IPV. Immigration and acculturation factors may affect Hispanic and Latino women’s experiences with IPV differently both outside and within their ethnic origin. For instance, a study of 124 English- and Spanish-speaking women used the Violence Index\(^7\) to rate their use of force on a six-point scale (Tower & Fernandez, 2008). It was found that the Spanish-speaking women were less likely to use intimidation, physical and emotional abuse, minimizing and/or blaming tactics, and were less likely to leave the relationship or seek assistance compared to English-speaking women (Tower & Fernandez, 2008).

Similarly, the lack of proficiency in English, coupled with systemic racism and having an unclear immigration status may also leave certain women more vulnerable to abuse in their relationships compared to women who do not have these issues present in their lives (Han, 2009; Swan & Snow, 2006; Pollack et al., 2005; Brownridge & Halli 2002). Immigrant women also face unique barriers related to their newcomer status making them vulnerable to abuse by their partner which may push them to use force rather than risk engaging with authorities who could order deportation (Swan & Snow, 2006; Pollack et al., 2005). For instance, one study found that

---

\(^7\) Tower and Fernandez (2008) describe the Violence Index as:
a comprehensive assessment of the various types of battering behaviours over the course of the relationship, conceptualized in the Violence and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1993), including physical violence, for example “pushing” or “scratching with nails” (15 items); sexual abuse, for example, “imposed use of pornography” (10 items); intimidation, for example, “abusing pets” (10 items); emotional abuse, for example, “name calling” (8 items); isolation, for example, “controlling what they do,” (11 items); minimizing, denying, and blaming, for example, “making light of abuse” (6 items); male privilege and/or entitlement, for example, “making all the big decisions” (5 items); economic abuse, for example “preventing from getting a job” (8 items); coercion and threats, for example, “making threats to leave” (9 items), and stalking, for example, “timing activities” (10 items). Each subscale has an “other” category, as therapists observe that control tactics continue to take new forms. Clients are asked to rate violent behaviours used by herself and her partner on a 6-point scale ranging from never to everyday (p. 27).
although police had received high frequencies of calls from Latina women seeking assistance, many did not wish to pursue charges citing deportation concerns (Maciak, Guzman, Santiago, Villaboos & Israel, 1999). Another study found that Latinas were more likely to reach out for assistance to address the violence if they had a higher proficiency in English (West, Kantor & Jasinski, 1998).

Some women who have landed immigrant status may be reluctant to seek assistance because their partner may use their newcomer status, language barriers, or their lack of knowledge about the system to convince them otherwise (Swan & Snow, 2006; Pollack et al., 2005). Having limited informal social networks may discourage immigrant women from seeking formal assistance out of fear that they may face further isolation and stigma from their cultural communities (Han, 2009; Swan & Snow, 2006; Roy, 2012). For example, West et al. (1998) found that Mexican women were less likely to seek help from support networks compared to Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Anglo women and this was attributed to isolation resulting from recent immigration (Swan & Snow, 2006). Finally, women’s use of force may stem from issues relating to immigration and the subsequent level of acculturation they face, meaning the degree to which they adapt to their new cultural surroundings. Caetano et al. (2004) examined 387 Latino couples residing in the United States at low, medium and high stages of acculturation and compared rates of IPV using the CTS. The findings indicate that IPV by women was highest among couples who fell under the medium level of acculturation which Caetano et al. (2004) attributes to the cultural changes in gender-role expectations within the relationship. This highlights the importance of addressing conflicting gender-role expectations alongside racial, cultural and immigrant status considerations since research examining cultural
competency in IPV interventions is lacking, despite the influence it may have on some women’s use of force (Bennett & Williams, 2001).

**Gender and Disability**

Intersections between gender and disability are relevant when examining women’s use of force in IPV since women living with disabilities have the added challenge of competing with ableism and patriarchy as sources of oppression in their lives. There is an assumption that women living with a disability should tolerate violence in their intimate relationships since they have limited alternatives to the abuse and their limited options are further complicated by other intersecting oppressions that may compound their experiences (e.g. race, citizenship status, class, age, etc.) (Ballan & Freyer, 2012). Research indicates that women who are disabled and exposed to IPV tend to be younger, less likely to be married and have lower incomes compared to those who are able-bodied (Barrett, O’Day, Roche & Carlson, 2009; Ballan & Freyer, 2012). Disabled women are disproportionately more likely to be of a lower socio-economic status relative to the rest of the population (Hassouneh-Philips, McNeff, Powers & Curry, 2005; Ballan & Freyer, 2012). Women with physical disabilities may use force to fight back even though it is oftentimes ineffective because of physical limitations and the potential implications of leaving the violent relationship (Smith, 2008; Ballan & Freyer, 2012). Women with disabilities face complications when leaving an abusive situation since they are more likely to lack adequate financial support to do so, in addition to other intersecting barriers such as the lack of a personal caretaker or mobility limitations. The absence of a caretaker can differentially affect mothers who are seeking custody to protect their children from the abuser but cannot meet the physical demands needed to
care for a child without some assistance from an able-bodied individual (Beck-Massey, 1999; Ballan & Freyer, 2012).

Women with psychiatric disabilities face a unique set of challenges when confronted with IPV. Ballan and Freyer (2012) argue that there is a common stigma that women with psychiatric disabilities are inherently violent and this may be used to justify the assumption that they are the perpetrator due to their histories of mental illness. This has serious implications since Ehrensaft, Moffitt, and Caspi (2006) found that IPV was more likely to contribute to a mental health decline among women, but not men, thereby placing these women in a position to be viewed as the primary aggressor by assuming that her mental state was central to her role in the violence. Those who assume this is true may expect that women with psychiatric disabilities will benefit from intervention programs that treat them as batterers rather than victims, thereby contradicting the type of assistance that may be needed to put an end to the violence. Thus, living with IPV has distinct meanings and consequences for women with disabilities who may feel entrapped by their circumstances with no other viable alternatives but to defend themselves and are subsequently mandated to IPV intervention programs that do little to acknowledge, let alone address, their specific needs.

3.4: Intervention Program Philosophies

The ability for IPV intervention programs to address women’s lived experiences with violence may be dependent on the types of violence that women are involved in and each individual program’s philosophy towards its participants (e.g. anger management, power and control). Some programs may use a strict gender-neutral approach while others may unofficially lean towards a gender-neutral approach that is victim-centered even though its participants are
formally considered perpetrators by the criminal justice system (Miller, Gregory & Iovanni, 2005). Still, other programs may avoid identifying participants as victims or offenders. Instead, they may place an emphasis on holding participants accountable for their verbal and physical actions, urging women to confront the choices in their behaviour that resulted in their charges, and also prompting them to discuss how to address conflict in their intimate relationships (Miller, Gregory & Iovanni, 2005). Nevertheless, the lack of a uniform philosophy among programs, the differing contexts in which women use force, and the one-size-fits-all approach to addressing IPV within the same program may present difficulties in achieving the desired outcome of reducing the violence in the lives of women who are mandated to attend.

Being required to attend IPV intervention programs without accounting for the gendered context in which women’s force may occur in may reproduce patriarchal power relations since women are now open to broader forms of social control either directly or indirectly (Chesney-Lind, 2006). Women who enroll in intervention programs are bound by the bail, probation and parole restrictions along with the intervention program requirements that operate in such a way that it supports male power while furthering women’s subordination (Chesney-Lind, 2006). Women are required to take responsibility by pleading guilty in order to enroll in such programs and to avoid the possibility of receiving a custodial sentence. Generally, this guilty plea is required irrespective of whether the women perceived their actions to be reasonable given the circumstances in which it transpired (Miller & Meloy, 2006). When this occurs, it sends a message to women that using force in any context is not justified since the general perception of a ‘real’ victim is one who does not violate the gender and victim stereotypes and who does not commit assault under any circumstances as this would infringe on societal expectations that view females as delicate, submissive and helpless (Miller & Meloy, 2006; Dasgupta, 2002).
3.5: The Evolution of Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Programs

In order to appreciate the shift in intervention philosophies over time, it is necessary to present the evolution of such programs and the context in which they were developed to gain a better understanding where we are in the current state. In 1982, a motion by the Canadian House of Commons adopted a policy directive requiring the Royal Canadian Mounted Police under federal jurisdiction, followed by the all police forces across provincial jurisdictions to lay charges in all circumstances of wife assault irrespective of the wishes of the victim where the “facts and circumstances warranted action” (Jaffe et al., 1986: 38; Faubert & Hinch, 1996). Prosecution policies ensued, encouraging Crown Attorneys to investigate all such cases of wife assault (MacLeod, 1987: 82). Criminal justice responses to domestic violence continued to develop due ongoing lobbying and advocacy by feminists and women’s advocates as well as the expansion of coordinating committees dedicated to ending violence against women in the late 1980s (Holmes, 2015; Gill & Ruff, 2010).

In 1997, the Domestic Violence Court (DVC) program was created in Toronto which was organized with Coordinated Prosecution and Early Intervention streams, expanding to six additional sites in the following year (Holmes, 2015). During this period, best practices for intervention with men who had used violence against their partner were changing. The emphasis was on re-educating men through batterer intervention programs, the most notable being Pence and Paymar’s (1986) Duluth Model from Minnesota USA that viewed men’s violence as deliberate actions that reinforced their power and control over the intimate relationship. By 1999, many community-based intervention program agencies began observing a shift towards male groups who were increasingly angry and uncooperative (Holmes, 2015). This could be attributed to the fact that there was a shift from voluntary participants to almost all participants being court-
mandated to attend the program; many men maintained that they did not identify with the program’s use of the Duluth Model, meaning that they believed their lived experiences did not reflect using tactics indicative of batterers as laid out in the Power and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1986; Holmes, 2015).

The DVC program expanded by 2004 to all criminal courts in Ontario (Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario, 2000: 5-2). It was to include the Partner Assault Response (PAR) intervention program which continued to draw comparisons to batterer intervention programs such as the Duluth Model that were being widely used in the United States (Holmes, 2015; Dankwort & Austin, 1999). However, this one-size-fits-all approach used by the DVC has raised questions about the need to differentiate between the types of force used as exemplified by Johnson’s typology of violence, so that interventions can be tailored to respond accordingly (Holmes, 2015; Johnson, 1995; 2008). This is of particular relevance to the current research since the implementation of pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies appear to have increased the number of women being mandated to PAR programs even though its design intended to capture a starkly different group of perpetrators. With that said, the use of force by women indicates that they also require some form of support, counselling and resources that are tailored to address their lived realities with the goal of providing them with the skills to live violence-free (Holmes, 2015). Nevertheless, the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General (2014) provides the standards for the PAR program and continues to use gender-neutral language in its overarching guide which will be discussed in greater detail in the Methodology chapter (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014).
3.6: Intervention Programs Offered to Women Who Use Force

Existing literature that describes intervention programs designed to address women’s use of force is limited; therefore, the current review presents information on seven programs with available descriptions of its philosophical approach and a general outline of its main components within the sessions. Two of the programs were based in Canada (Responsible Choices for Women based in Calgary, Alberta and the Mutual Aid Group Program for Women Who Use Violence, based in Quebec); four in the United States (RENEW based in Washtenaw County, Michigan; Vista based in Morris County, New Jersey; Female Offender Program or FOP with the jurisdiction unidentified; the Domestic Abuse Centre Batterer Intervention Program or BIP located in Columbia, South Carolina); and one in the United Kingdom (WAVE). Available research suggests that most programs that are designed for women are informed by a feminist perspective – that is that power and control are viewed as central to addressing intimate partner violence and include the BIP (Carney & Buttell, 2004, 2006), FOP (Miller & Meloy, 2006), Responsible Choices for Women (Tutty, Babin-Wagner & Rothery, 2006), and WAVE (Walker, 2013); followed by the Ecological Nested Model that informed Vista (Larance, Hoffman-Ruzicka & Shivas, 2009); and an intersectional feminist analysis of women’s violence that informed the Mutual Aid Group Program for Women Who Use Violence (Damant et al., 2014); and lastly a gender-responsive, trauma-informed support and intervention by RENEW (Larance & Rousson, 2015). Although almost all required that women did not use defensive force in the situation that led them to join the program, most made mention of women having histories of victimization at some point. It was not clear whether the BIP required participants to have used non-defensive violence.
In terms of outline, structure and content, the programs varied considerably. The BIP curriculum appeared to be the least modified as it reflected the common model that was created with male batterers in mind; it was the same program that was provided to those who took the male batterer program (Carney & Buttell, 2004, 2006). The program centred upon anger management and developing skills, and included components that confronted the participants, educated them on the significance of honesty and accepting responsibility in order to succeed at the program goals, and provided a modified form of rational emotive therapy (Carney & Buttell, 2004, 2006). The psychoeducation curriculum included having the women share the incident that lead to their referral to the program and helping the participants to recognize their behaviour as problematic by breaking down their defence mechanisms. Discussions regarding roadblocks including the minimization, denial and blaming of others were discussed and then women were asked to retell their experiences using what they had learned. The cycle of violence and alternatives to power and control were examined. Sessions also discussed traditional beliefs about sex-role stereotypes that were commonly found in batterers to begin to challenge and modify these beliefs. Participants also learned about how irrational thinking could lead to violence and were given self-talk strategies. The sessions then focused on improving the participants’ interpersonal skills by teaching them about assertiveness and healthy communication. The program also provided a discussion about the generational cycle of violence and the effects of children witnessing violence. Participants were also taught skills relating to negotiating in their intimate relationships and they were required to partake in role-playing and practicing the skills learned throughout the group (Carney & Buttrell, 2004, 2006).

In the FOP, women were held accountable for their actions by making evident that they had options and choices in the way they responded in the incident that resulted in their arrest.
(Miller & Meloy, 2006). The goal of the program was to have women understand and change their existing behaviours or patterns to bring about change in their relationships. However, it was up to the women to determine whether they identified themselves as either the victim or offender, since this was not a focal point in the curriculum. The FOP curriculum was comprised of group discussions, videos, worksheets, homework and roleplaying (Miller & Meloy, 2006).

Similarly, the Responsible Choices for Women Program utilized roleplaying, videos, worksheets, and homework assignments. Its goal was to “assist women who are abusive in intimate relationships to become violent free” (Tutty et al., 2006: 343). It used unstructured psychotherapeutic as well as structured psychoeducational elements using social learning and cognitive behavioural therapy that incorporated cognitive restructuring, techniques to cope with stress and encourage relaxation, communication skill development, and approaches to addressing sex-role socialization (Tutty et al., 2006). Topics included: decreasing all forms of abusive behaviour; accepting responsibility for one’s behaviour; increasing self esteem; increasing assertive behaviour; improving family relations; decreasing stress; increasing empathy towards those who have been impacted by abusive behaviour; and assisting parents to cease physically abusing their children (Tutty et al., 2006: 343).

The WAVE curriculum modified areas of the Duluth Model including the Power and Control Wheel and Equality Wheel so that the program could be more gender-specific (Walker, 2013). WAVE’s curriculum focused on providing women with a greater understanding of the possible sources from where their violence stemmed. This would assist women in understanding more about themselves, followed by giving them strategies and techniques for the future so that they could manage their violent behaviours, however, there was no other specific detailed breakdown of the curriculum available (Walker, 2013).
RENEW emphasized the importance of understanding the broader context of women’s use of force which is unique from male batterers in order to provide gender responsive intervention that is effective to their realities (Larance & Rousson, 2015). It used a Euro-American/Judeo-Christian cultural framework that emphasized forgiveness and healing. It provided services to women who reported having histories of survivorship but had not sought out traditional supports and services that address domestic violence since some women do not view themselves as victims or survivors (Larance & Rousson, 2015). There was a primary emphasis on the “anger umbrella” as a conceptual model for change, which was used to help the women understand that anger often encapsulates multiple emotions, which when explored, can ultimately lead to self-acceptance, forgiveness and healing. Similarly, the Vista program emphasized healing and acknowledged that women may have histories of survivorship from domestic violence and often come from diverse lived realities (Larance, Hoffman-Ruzicka & Shivas, 2009). The program promoted accountability among women for their behaviour and emphasized personal choice. It aimed to be gender-responsive by focusing on the needs of women who may have been grappling with their own feelings of embarrassment and guilt for engaging in force as well as unaddressed survivorship histories (Larance, Hoffman-Ruzicka & Shivas, 2009). Specifically, it used the Ecological Nested Model in each session so that women could examine their perceived choices while simultaneously increasing their understanding how their experiences were influenced by family, institutions, community, and society. The Vista program held the view that irrespective of whether women were survivors of domestic violence, engaging in the use of force against a partner endangered themselves and others around them and therefore, services needed to educate women about the dynamics of such violence while informing them of the skills necessary to increase their personal safety (Larance, Hoffman-Ruzicka & Shivas, 2009).
Finally, the Mutual Aid Group Program for Women Who Use Violence was made available to both mandated and non-mandated women participants and was accessible to all women regardless of whether they used force against their partner or child (Damant et al., 2014). The program used intersectional feminism in the form of a mutual aid group with the goal for the program to “help women find alternatives to the use of violence” and consisted of three modules (Damant et al., 2014: 207). The first module examined violence by attempting to understand it, explore non-violent options, and then promote the need for safe and secure conditions (Damant et al., 2014). Module 2 focused on socialization with an emphasis on gender oppression by aiming to uncover sex-role stereotypes, explore the impact of socialization on women’s lives, and assist women linking how their socialization impacted their violence (Damant et al., 2014). Module three focused on life conditions, examining how other areas of oppression may feed and flow from gender oppression in which violence may have ensued by examining how these conditions impacted their lives to empower their living conditions by promoting a sense of support and unity within the group (Damant et al., 2014).

Overall, there is considerable variability among the intervention programs for women including, its curriculum and module structure, and approach to service delivery, group formats, and the facilitator’s role. Nevertheless, all of the programs addressed aspects accountability, responsibility, personal choice and increasing self-awareness in relationships, albeit to varying degrees. Furthermore, it appeared that while the programs broadly aimed at providing participants with information to allow them to make changes to live violence-free, the approach appeared to differ substantially depending on each program’s philosophy and goals. For example, programs such as the BIP (Carney & Buttell, 2004, 2006), FOP (Miller & Meloy, 2006), and Responsible Choices for Women (Tutty et al., 2014) appeared to have non-existent or
limited acknowledgement for the role of gender in IPV and focused solely on the participant’s abusive behaviour as the catalyst for producing change in their relationships. In contrast, programs such as Vista (Larance, Hoffman-Ruzicka & Shivas, 2009), RENEW (Larance & Rousson, 2015), and the Mutual Aid Group Program for Women Who Use Violence (Damant et al., 2014) acknowledged the need to respond to gender and other forms of oppression to support women living violence-free and identified clear strategic goals that aligned with this program’s philosophy.

The level of recognition in addressing women’s use of force using curriculum that was gender-responsive also reflected the amount of detail that was provided in terms of program goals. For instance, the BIP program was based on the same curriculum designed for male batterers and no information was available in Carney and Buttell’s (2004, 2006) studies that explicitly discussed the program goals. In contrast, programs that delivered gender-responsive curriculum such as Vista (Larance, Hoffman-Ruzicka & Shivas, 2009), RENEW (Larance & Rousson, 2015), and the Mutual Aid Group Program for Women Who Use Violence (Damant et al., 2014) appeared to be more transparent in providing detailed goals. Such objectives encouraged participants to be self-reflective towards the broader influences and implications of their gender socialization in order to work towards making choices that would empower them in the future. Therefore, this goal-oriented detail could be an indication of the level of thought that has gone into creating curriculum that attempts to reduce women’s recidivism by addressing their needs in a holistic manner. While this section provided an overview of the types of intervention programs that have been made available to women who have used force, below discusses what is known about the outcomes of such programs for women.
Outcomes of Intervention Programs for Women: Are They Meeting Their Needs?

Although the intervention programs discussed above provide varying degrees of information regarding its goals and organization of the curriculum, only three of the programs examined outcomes and feedback and therefore, a discussion on whether these programs address women’s use of force is limited. First, Carney and Buttell (2004; 2006) evaluated the BIP program in two separate studies. The first study evaluated the program for its effectiveness on female batterers and found that upon completing the program, women’s passive-aggressiveness decreased and they were less likely to use force against their partner (Carney & Buttell, 2004). The second study examined the role of race in the BIP program to see if there were differences among Black and White women who completed it. The findings indicated that both groups of women were less passive-aggressive and controlling, and exhibited a decreased tendency to use force upon completing the program (Carney & Buttell, 2006). Overall, Carney and Buttell (2004; 2006) argue that these findings suggest that using general batterer intervention program curriculum is suitable for women in general as well as those from different racial backgrounds.

Second, the Responsible Choices for Women Program conducted an initial quantitative evaluation examining women who successfully completed the program relative to those who did not. The findings indicate that women who completed the program demonstrated improvements in the areas of non-physical forms of abuse towards their partner, clinical stress, generalized contentment, self-esteem and assertiveness compared to those who dropped out (Tutty et al., 2006). However, it should be noted that the quantitative nature of these studies were not positioned to determine whether the curriculum adequately addressed women’s lived experiences, including any intersecting oppressions that may have played a role in their use of force, if at all.
Finally, Walker (2013) examined seven qualitative semi-structured interviews with women who completed the WAVE program. Women who had completed the program expressed the belief that they had improved upon their ability to control their feelings and actions and also, they were more attuned to the behaviours and thoughts that were typical precursors to their use of force. With that said, although many of the women spoke about the program assisting them in relinquishing the desire for power and control, they often made contradictory statements that suggested that they continued to blame their male partner for provoking them to use of force. As a result, Walker (2013) concluded that some women lacked self-awareness towards their true feelings about whether they exerted any power and control within their intimate relationships. Women were critical of the fact that their partners were not required to also make changes to their violent behaviour, nor were they required to attend an intervention program, which they believed was necessary since they perceived their male partners to be undermining their efforts to change (Walker, 2013). Thus, they believed that changes needed to occur from both themselves and their partners to see true improvements in their relationships (Walker, 2013).

At the very least, research evaluating IPV intervention programs for women suggests that some behavioural improvements can be seen including women being less passive-aggressive (Carney & Buttell, 2004, 2006), more assertive (Tutty et al., 2014), and more and attune to how to control their feelings (Walker, 2013). The limited research demonstrates that there is much more to understand in terms of whether and how intervention programs for women are suited to address the unique needs of those who use force. In acknowledging this gap, Damant et al. (2014) noted that they were undergoing a formal evaluation of the Mutual Aid Group Program for Women Who Use Violence program and the findings have yet to be shared with the rest of the research community. Therefore, the current state of the field requires an examination into
women’s use of force in intimate relationships and whether and how gender alongside other intersecting oppressions are addressed in interventions in a manner that addresses their lived experiences.

3.7: Challenges and Benefits of IPV Intervention Program Content for Women

As indicated previously, most IPV intervention programs for women are based on those originally designed to confront male battering behaviours including their use of violence to exert power and control (Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009; Osthoff, 2002). Facilitators are increasingly expected to apply their expertise about male battering behaviour to women who have histories of victimization but have been court-ordered to attend such programs as perpetrators (Larance & Miller, 2016; Larance, 2006; Pence & Dasgupta, 2006). This has created challenges for those facilitators who are not necessarily female, but may view themselves as “women’s advocates” and as such, must balance their personal values with the conflicting role as a “batterer intervention program facilitator” (Larance & Miller, 2006). On one hand, acting as a women’s advocate requires that they “do-no-harm” to women with histories of victimization who have been court-mandated to the program. On the other hand, they are expected to facilitate curriculum that often contradicts their woman-centered values and, depending on the values of the agency, some programs may do little to acknowledge women who have gendered histories of victimization (for example, see Carney & Buttell, 2006).

Next, if women’s use of force occurs primarily in response to their subordination and victimization, then addressing issues of power and control may be inappropriate at best and dangerous at worst. For example, Kernsmith (2005b) examined the behaviours and beliefs of men and women enrolled in IPV intervention programs commonly designed for male
perpetrators to determine how well the model predicted violent behaviour. Survey responses from 28 women were assessed using a combined Psychological Maltreatment of Women Scale (Tolman, 1999) and a modified CTS (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) and results showed no significant relationship between women’s beliefs about the acceptability of their use of force and their decision to use force against their partner. Therefore, focusing on changing women’s beliefs may be ineffective as the women in the sample did not view their actions as socially acceptable since, unlike for men, there is a lack of social support for women’s use of force. This illustrates the need to critically examine the larger social, political and legal context in which women resort to IPV. Instead, Kernsmith (2005b) suggests approaching women’s accountability in a manner that recognizes their use of self-defence, revenge and retaliatory actions. Incorporating safety planning may also be necessary to decrease future incidents of IPV. This may, in turn, reduce the likelihood of women being inappropriately charged or using violence in the first place, although it should be noted that this once again places the responsibility on women (Kernsmith, 2005b). However, Kernsmith’s (2005b) findings should be taken with caution as it is the only study that examines the relationship between women’s general beliefs about engaging in IPV relative to their own use of force. Therefore, more research is needed before conclusions can be made with confidence. Furthermore, it is essential that gender-specific programming is designed to address other areas that may intersect with women’s use of force as discussed previously. More specifically, such programs should discuss mental health and substance abuse concerns when addressing women’s use of force against an intimate partner and, if appropriate, intensive treatment and supervision should follow since the presence of these issues may heighten the risk of these women engaging in lethal violence (Ontario DVDRC, 2012).
As Osthoff (2002) argues “No one who is not a batterer should ever be required to attend a batterers’ intervention program...These programs are for batterers; they are not for anyone who has ever been arrested for hitting their partner” (p. 1356). While not all programs for women are rooted in the Duluth Model, it is important to recognize that this model continues to be used in some capacity in some jurisdictions, and therefore, this may have consequences for women who do not use force to assert coercive control but rather may have various reasons to engage in IPV (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010; Holmes, 2015; Pence & Paymar, 1993). For instance, one woman in Miller and Meloy’s (2006) study who had a long history of being victimized by her partner was mandated to attend IPV treatment after biting him in self-defence because she was being strangled and could barely breathe. She was noted as saying “Since I know how he can get, I shouldn’t be running my mouth. I have a problem with my mouth...I should know better.” (Miller & Meloy, 2006: 103). Although the facilitator’s response addressed the potential lethal consequences of being choked (Miller & Meloy, 2006), this is an example of one of the difficulties in addressing women as a homogenous group of batterers as it may imply that the woman is to blame for defending herself in a potentially-fatal situation while overlooking the reality that using force or violence is distinct from battering. Women who have been abused but are compelled to internalize the program’s values by accepting responsibility may place themselves in grave danger in the future if they perceive enduring the abuse as a better alternative to seeking the assistance of the criminal justice system which considers them batterers (Miller et al., 2005).

Despite the challenges raised, IPV intervention programs can be beneficial to women who use force against intimate partners and may require the additional support in a group setting with other women who also share similar experiences. The program sessions allow women the
opportunity to discuss their experiences with IPV within a safe environment and with others who can relate to them thereby reducing feelings of stigma (Walker, 2013). Although it is not ideal because the effect on the women is criminalization, court-mandated intervention programs can provide these women with social support networks and services that they may not have otherwise pursued (Bowen, 2010; Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Walker, 2013). Facilitators and other participants can provide women with information on agencies, advocates and resources including assisting with safety planning which could be helpful for responding to, or avoiding future violence or threats from intimate partners (Miller & Meloy, 2006). Even though the path for learning about these services results in criminalization, connecting women to supports in the community will increase options to using force and potentially help them avoid future encounters with the criminal justice system (Osthoff, 2002; Swan & Sullivan, 2009).

Although being charged and mandated to participate in IPV intervention programs may provide some positive opportunities for these women, it is important to recognize the potential negative consequences that this intervention may have in their lives. More specifically, these women may face the possible involvement of CAS, have difficulties obtaining employment in the future, and may experience a shift in status as a victim who previously had access to victim services, to a perpetrator and everything that comes along with this standing.

To summarize, women in general have various reasons for engaging in IPV and research suggests that those charged and/or mandated to attend IPV intervention programs typically do so out of self-defence, to gain their partner’s attention, anger, and to a lesser extent, the wish for control over a particular situation. As discussed previously, while there have been attempts to create intervention programs for women that are gender-responsive to their needs, some programs for women continue to rely upon curriculum originally intended to address male
battering behaviours which have been modified to appear “gender-neutral”. Such programs address IPV using a one-size-fits-all group intervention approach which is not gender-responsive, let alone informed by other intersecting axis of oppression. This is problematic since the research suggests that the ways in which women use force against intimate partners are uniquely influenced by factors such as the presence of children, race, ethnicity, culture, class, immigration status and disability. Numerous challenges may arise when court-mandating women to attend IPV intervention programs that do not acknowledge their complex and lifelong experiences with violent victimization. The most problematic challenge may be that it indirectly suggests that acting in self-defence is, in fact, a form of abuse and that women should refrain from defending themselves in future incidents of oncoming violence (Miller & Meloy, 2006). Despite the challenges, women who are required to attend IPV intervention programs can benefit from receiving the knowledge, resources and support needed to leave the violent relationship if, and when, she is ready to do so (Bowen, 2010; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Walker, 2013).

This chapter has discussed the current state of the literature as it relates to reasons for using force amongst women charged or attending IPV intervention programs, the extent to which such programs are able to address their lived experiences as opposed to reinforcing the control that exists in their lives, and the benefits and challenges of applying learned strategies to future incidents of IPV. Next, the methodology and methods used to guide this study will be discussed.
4: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological decisions made for this research which examines women’s perceptions of their use of force that resulted in mandated participation in the Partner Assault Response (PAR) program, and examines how the program responds to their lived experiences, to determine the challenges and benefits of current programming. Qualitative methods are used to address these research goals because they are able to generate data on the meanings and intricacies of behaviour that has been criminalized (Dantzker & Hunter, 2006). This is necessary for understanding how women PAR participants perceive their use of force in relation to the objectives of the program. The current study is grounded in feminist epistemology as it seeks to challenge the androcentric bias of mainstream knowledge by producing research that is grounded in “women’s experiences” and “ways of knowing” (Anderson, 1995). This study engages in the use of triangulation by using semi-structured interviews with PAR participants and facilitators along with participant observation of PAR groups from one agency. Studies that use triangulation combine multiple methods and perspectives with the goal of providing greater rigour, breadth, intricacy and depth to the investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Methodological triangulation does not seek to validate one particular point of view, but it may reveal multiple interpretations of the issue (Denzin, 2017; Cain & Finch, 1981; Seale, 1999). Using triangulation is beneficial for this qualitative study because multiple methods encourage thicker and richer data collection and can reveal inconsistencies that may otherwise have been overlooked (Johnson et al., 2007).
4.1: Conceptual Framework

This study draws upon tenets from standpoint feminism as a methodology and constructivist grounded theory. This conceptual framework is discussed below.

Standpoint Feminism

Standpoint feminism as a methodology draws upon women’s voices at the margins of social order to make sense of their experiences from their location in society (Comack, 2006a; Minaker, 2001; Hartsock, 1998). According to Dorothy Smith (1987), objective knowledge cannot exist since it is always derived from a particular standpoint that contains some form of bias and therefore, knowledge derived from mainstream sociology cannot be objective. Rather, the aim of standpoint feminism is to explain women’s lived experiences as it is influenced within the wider nexus of the “ruling relations”, an “extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations that are textually mediated, that connect and organize our everyday lives – the corporations, government bureaucracies, academic and professional discourses, mass media, and the complex of relations that interconnect them” (Smith, 2005:10). Commonly held assumptions about positivist sociology being objective have been exposed by the standpoints of women and other marginalized groups as false. Mainstream sociology is falsely considered “objective” since it is created within broader political social systems and structures of these complex relations that are then dispersed through male-centred channels such as the media and government institutions (Smith, 1990).

Smith (1990) calls for knowledge that begins with each woman’s everyday world to understand the daily social relations they face from where they are situated. In doing so, standpoint feminism can reveal the social organization and social relationships that are hidden in each woman’s world but with which continue to govern and permeate it. By examining the everyday
lives of women, standpoint feminism can help to reveal how women interpret their own world and how this might diverge from the understandings of the dominant androcentric worldview of which the criminal justice system is a part (Hartsock, 1998; Harding, 2004). It can also provide a clearer understanding of the decisions that some women make within the constrained conditions of their lives. Standpoint feminism may also uncover the diversity of women’s experiences with IPV and their subsequent criminalization in relation to how other areas of inequality may intersect to produce diverse experiences and viewpoints (Maidment, 2006; Comack, 2006b). Standpoint feminism brings together those partial views to reveal the shared connections with oppression that women face despite their diverse differences. Using standpoint feminism allows women to speak their unique truths while identifying similarities among the oppressive forces that govern their lives. Women can then use this knowledge to raise consciousness and to collaborate with one another with the goal of transforming and liberating themselves from the oppressive conditions in which they live (Harding, 2004; Haraway, 1988). In other words, standpoint feminism is helpful for revealing the ways in which women may be uniquely, yet similarly, oppressed resulting in their use of force against intimate partners and consequently, their criminalization. With this knowledge, women can then engage in consciousness raising by challenging attitudes towards violence against women at the societal level and by advocating at the structural level for recognition that women may use force as a gendered response to their own victimization.

Women PAR participants can offer a unique standpoint which has the potential to help inform social and criminal justice policymakers. Exploring women’s standpoints is suitable for this research as it may challenge the ways in which the ruling relations, including those who work within criminal justice system, have interpreted women’s use of force against intimate partners as offensive rather than defensive. It may also reveal how their lives have been organized by social
relations among institutions and structures that operate to favour and conceal male dominance over women, knowledge that is essential for challenging practices that are well-established (Smith, 1987; Harding, 2004; Maidment, 2006). For example, from the standpoint of “the ruling relations” (Smith, 1987), including those who work within the criminal justice system, women’s use of force is typically viewed as unlawful thereby warranting treatment as perpetrators within the PAR program. However, gathering the standpoint of women PAR participants may expose whether their actions were in response to their gendered subordination thereby contradicting the dominant position that views their behaviour as unlawful. This raises the question of whether their treatment as perpetrators simply reinforces their subordinate position in society. Using standpoint feminism can help to facilitate an understanding of how women as PAR participants view their use of force which may be shaped, not only by gender, but by other inequalities including race/ethnicity, culture and immigration status. Only then is it possible to identify the various ways in which these inequalities place women in differently-situated social locations and how this may produce diverse reasons for IPV as well as varied opinions of how the PAR program has responded to their lived experiences.

**Constructivist Grounded Theory**

By eliciting women’s standpoints about their use of force and the PAR curriculum, this research also incorporates elements of constructivist grounded theory as a methodology. Originally rooted in positivism, classical grounded theory encourages researchers to separate themselves from the research site and process while seeking explanations to make more accurate predictions (Charmaz, 2008). It assumes that there are symbolic meanings hidden within objects and interactions and once uncovered by this method, we can provide more precise accounts of what is
occurring. In contrast, constructivist grounded theory moves beyond the classical method by encouraging researchers to be cognizant of how their perspectives, positions, practices and research situation are relative to the findings and it promotes reflexivity during the research process (Charmaz, 2008). Further, it encourages researchers to be innovative in interpreting how individual worlds are socially constructed by recognizing that data and theories are created through the mutual interactions occurring between the researcher and the participants as well as amongst the participants themselves (Charmaz, 2000; 2003; 2006). As a result, it is argued that the findings which are produced using this methodology reflect a shared reality (Charmaz, 2003; Breckenridge et al., 2012). Constructivist grounded theory adopts the position that multiple realities exist thereby seeking an interpretive understanding of each participant’s world (Charmaz, 2003; 2006; Martin, 2006). It allows for a feminist analysis of the way in which structures operate to influence gendered actions in IPV while simultaneously exploring the meanings for each individual woman and how these are shaped by her cultural and social location and how they influence her actions (Allen, 2011; Charmaz, 2005). Constructivist grounded theory is appropriate for this study in potentially revealing how patriarchal and other structures of oppression have influenced women’s choices to use force against their male partners leading to their participation in intervention programs.

Constructivist grounded theory is suitable for exploring the meanings and reasons behind women’s use of force as well as how other inequalities produce distinct realities through which each woman must negotiate. For example, it is positioned to recognize the distinct interpretations of racialized women who may understand their use of force as occurring in part, due to cultural expectations that frown upon police intervention and hesitation among women to call for help based on firsthand experience with institutionalised racism. Ultimately, constructivist grounded theory is beneficial in testing the suitability of Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) typology of IPV.
Therefore, while this research is deductive in the sense that it tests the typology of violence, it takes an inductive approach to theory building by being open to generating new typologies that are more reflective of women’s multiple experiences with IPV.

Considering the centrality of sharing women’s voices and interpretations, both standpoint feminism and constructivist grounded theory value research that is highly reflexive (Letherby, 2003; Allen, 2011). The section below discusses the reflexive nature of the project.

### 4.2: Reflexivity

Reflexivity encourages researchers to reflect on their own social position based on personal characteristics such as gender, class and race, and how it may affect the nature of their relationships with research participants (Edwards, 1990; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). McCorkel and Myers (2003) note that the researcher’s privileged identity may be influential in the research process in subtle and intricate ways. It may manifest itself in assumptions made within the field and in relationships that exists between the researcher and the participants. Standpoint feminists have drawn attention to positions of privilege among researchers and how this can inadvertently produce research that reinforces the dominant narratives rather than working towards the emancipation of its participants (McCorkel & Myers, 2003). In this case, I identify myself as a Westernized, Asian woman from a middle-class background who is fluent in English and as a graduate student with no criminal record. In contrast, the women participants have been criminalized and many were from diverse backgrounds with little similarity to my own. Furthermore, the participants were mandated to attend every PAR program session, on time, while actively participating and demonstrating their knowledge of the curriculum irrespective of any personal circumstances that may have made it difficult for them to do so. On the other hand, I was free to observe as much or
as little of the program without being expected to learn the material, participate, or modify my attitudes or behaviour. Because of the disproportionate power dynamic I enjoy as a researcher, it was important that I engaged in constant reflexivity.

Although standpoint feminism provides the methodological tools to give the respondents a ‘voice’, it also provides researchers with a space to be reflexive of their own role and the research itself. Jorgenson (2011) notes that we need to be mindful of participants’ reactions to us as researchers as well as to their desire or reluctance to contribute to the investigation as this is one way of discovering unspoken territory which can be used to gain a more contextualized appreciation of their lives. In other words, I should be reflexive not only throughout my interactions with participants who are determined to share their experiences with me, but also with those who appear to be hesitant as this too can be informative. One way of doing this is to document my interactions throughout the research in a journal and to refer back to it to make sense of my experiences (see Thurston, 2010). Mauthner and Doucet (2003) caution that researchers need to also be reflexive about how they choose to understand the data and how pre-conceived beliefs and positions may affect the approach adopted for the data analysis. Oftentimes researchers make claims that the ‘voices’ in the study speak for themselves in an effort to simplify how research participants are being represented (Reinharz, 1992; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). This is done without acknowledging decisions that the researcher makes throughout the research process including which excerpts should be used and how best to interpret the voices based on these excerpts. As the researcher for this study, it was my role to examine the conversations and reactions that took place during interviews and group sessions with participants to present an *interpretation* of the results. In other words, through my role as researcher, I filtered the experiences and lived realities of those who were being researched when presenting the findings.
4.3: The Partner Assault Response Program – Program Standards

The PAR program occurs during 12 weekly sessions that are each two-hours in length and consists of two facilitators and 15 to 20 participants. While it is recommended by MAG’s program standards that one male and one female facilitate the sessions to demonstrate shared respect, the site where the research was conducted is an entirely women-run agency, using two female facilitators to increase the safety and security of all its clients. A placement student in social work provides further support to the agency’s PAR groups, and if necessary, the student assists in the facilitation of the program. All three programs observed at the agency consisted of 20 women at the initial session, and each group was observed as having one woman who required an interpreter. The provider determines whether the program follows open enrollment or closed enrollment, with this agency using the latter method. PAR providers are also responsible for ensuring that language interpreter services are provided to offenders who would otherwise be unable to partake in the program (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014).

Clients are expected to meet the program requirements and expectations. A verbal warning will be given if clients fail to complete the assigned homework without a reasonable excuse, are late to the session without justification, or are disruptive in the group. Written warnings are given if the client does not submit completed homework more than once without a reasonable explanation, is late to more than one session without justification, is disruptive on more than one occasion, discloses that they engaged in threats or assault to the victim/partner, attends the program while under the influence, is absent from a session without a reasonable justification or proper notification, or, refuses to pay the fee that was agreed upon at intake. The client will be discharged from the program if they fail to comply after a written warning has been issued (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014).
The Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General (2014) provides nine standardized topics to be discussed in every PAR program across the province as outlined in three pages within the PAR Program Standards. Topic descriptions varying in length between two sentences to half a page and include: Domestic Violence – defining abuse; how beliefs and attitudes affect behaviour; the effects of abuse on children, partners and self; understanding triggers/warning signs; the impact of substance abuse; healthy relationships; respectful communication; dealing with conflict; and responsibility and accountability. The details of the topics in the PAR Program Standards 2014/2015 are summarized below and include:

1. Domestic Violence – Defining Abuse

   Physical, emotional, financial, psychological and sexual abuse are discussed as control tactics that are used against the victim. The myth that abuse is a “loss of control” will be dismantled to help the offender recognize that their conduct is deliberate, and therefore, the responsibility rests solely on themselves to change their abusive behaviour.

   Discussions relating to sexual abuse and violence cover distinctions between consent and non-consent; recognizing that sexual violence can occur at various levels, stages and lengths of relationships; and healthy approaches to meeting sexual desires.

2. How Beliefs and Attitudes Affect Behaviour

   The program discusses how domestic violence are connected to the offender’s beliefs which stem from their family of origin, religious and cultural beliefs, and childhood encounters and are used to rationalize or excuse their conduct.

3. The Effects of Abuse on Children, Partners and Self

   The PAR program will explore the negative short and long term effects of the violence from the victim’s perspective. Offenders will challenge their behaviour by thinking
about healthy ways to satisfy their needs and the needs of their partner through compromise and perspective taking. Positive parenting skills will be discussed and practiced using role playing or self-talk. A discussion on experiences within the family will explore the topic of intergenerational violence.

4. Understanding Triggers/Warning Signs
A discussion on the triggers and warning signs that pre-emptively signal abusive behaviour and alternatives to the violence will occur.

5. The Impact of Substance Abuse
The program explores substance abuse as a leading risk factor to domestic violence including how it impacts cognitive and physical performance and self-restraint, and undermines one’s ability to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner. Discussions will cover how substance abuse is used to excuse abuse and offenders will assess how their own use is impacting other aspects of their lives. Alternatives will be explored including substance abuse programs.

6. Healthy Relationships
The program will discuss what healthy relationships look like using the Equality Wheel (Pence and Paymar, 1993). The advantages to developing healthy relationships will be discussed followed by an opportunity to recognize and apply each characteristic within the Equality Wheel to their lives.

7. Respectful Communication
Offenders will discuss and practice non-controlling ways to communicate with their partner which include listening to their partner’s needs and responding in a respectful manner.
8. Dealing with Conflict

Conflict is defined along with the various approaches to it while acknowledging that it occurs in all relationships. Individual responsibility is promoted and offenders will learn and practice how to deal with conflict in an appropriate manner.

9. Responsibility and Accountability

Offenders will discuss the control tactics within the Power and Control Wheel while emphasizing their responsibility and accountability for future violence. They will develop a formal plan that focuses on their thinking and behaviour, and areas for personal change to prevent future domestic violence in their relationships (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014: 20-22).8

The facilitators and agency have flexibility to determine which themes/issues to place a greater emphasis on. Each session must be comprised of an educational component on IPV; coping skills relating to the topic that are either discussed or practiced; and a skill building component (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014). The agency requires that the participants share their incident including their actions and behaviour, as well as the impact with the group during the first two sessions. The agency’s curriculum also begins each session with a quote that is discussed in relation to the weekly topic. Although each of the agency’s PAR sessions have some form of discussion as well as group work and/or individual exercises that all participants are required to partake in, a large portion of the weekly sessions are spent reading the material handouts provided.

---

8 In addition to the program topics, the PAR standards manual provides information regarding the prerequisites, processes and procedures of the program for the agencies to follow (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014).
4.4: Research Site

Toronto was selected as the site for the study because it has a large multicultural population and six community agencies that offer heterosexual, women-only PAR programs that are English-Canadian as well as ethno-specific. Thus, Toronto was well situated to offer a diverse sample of women of various age, racial, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. This was necessary because the research literature indicates that women’s experiences and motivations for using force may be varied and affected by other locations of social inequality (Caetano et al., 2004; Han, 2009; Pollack et al., 2005; Swan & Snow, 2006). Although there are limited PAR programs offered in other languages by other agencies, the participants in this study were selected from this particular agency which offered services in English to participants who came from various ethno-cultural backgrounds. Although the research site currently offers the only English-Canadian heterosexual women’s PAR program that is English speaking within Toronto, each group could accommodate one non-English speaking participant to attend alongside an interpreter. The interpreter provided simultaneous translation services both orally and written. Therefore, the agency’s PAR program is geared towards English-speaking women, however, it will accept women into the program who do not speak English if an interpreter is provided by MAG.

---

9 The six community agencies that offer heterosexual, women-only PAR programs are Abrigo, Chinese Family Services, Costi Immigrant Services, Elizabeth Fry Toronto, Native Child and Family Services, and Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services.

10 Although the sample for this study was diverse, it was largely English speaking only as the agency’s PAR program curriculum is offered in English.

11 The name of the agency has been removed and is hereafter referred to as “the agency”.

12 The Ministry of the Attorney General contracts out its interpreters from MCIS Language Services. MCIS provides services to clients in a variety of languages and each interpreter is required abide by their confidentiality agreement with MCIS as part of the terms of their employment. For the purposes of providing services to the agency, MCIS interpreters must be female because the agency is a women-only organization.
4.5: Sample

This research relied upon purposive sampling comprised of women PAR participants and program facilitators involved in heterosexual, women-only PAR programs in Toronto, Ontario. Purposive sampling seeks out individuals that meet a particular criterion for the study with the goal of gaining a more detailed understanding of the specific population that may be difficult to access (Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004; Palys, 1997). A purposive sampling frame was appropriate for this research because PAR participants and facilitators were the only individuals in a position to provide insights into their perceptions of the reasons behind women engaging in IPV and the program’s ability to respond to their lived experiences. Purposive sampling was also deemed appropriate because the goal for this study was to gain a better understanding of whether and how PAR programs addressed women’s lived experiences with IPV; therefore, the women could be accessed only through their enrollment in the program as there was no pre-existing sampling frame available.

A decision was made to focus on women’s heterosexual IPV rather than IPV in lesbian relationships for three reasons. First, it helped to capture gender dynamics in relation to how men’s violence reinforced women’s inequality in intimate relationships which could also be strengthened by patriarchal, racist and classist social institutions that operate to subordinate women. Second, studies suggest that women often use force in response to their own victimization by men with whom they are intimately involved and again, examining heterosexual relationships would assist in capturing this dynamic (Barnett et al, 1997; Hamberger & Guse, 2002; Hamberger et al, 1994; Kernsmith, 2005a). Third, it would have been difficult to recruit lesbian women since this population tends to be limited in PAR programs. Thus, focusing upon women who were involved in heterosexual IPV was essential for drawing out the gender role
dynamics including instances where women may have reacted by using force against their male partners as a response to their own victimization.

Careful consideration was used when determining how many interviews would be suitable for this study as the goal was to gather as much rich data as possible while being cognizant of both the time and financial limitations. Adler and Adler (2012) suggest that given their time constraints, graduate students should aim for a sample size of around 30 interviews and should supplement this modest number by engaging in participant observation. Adler and Adler (2012) also assert that inductive research with difficult-to-access populations may use smaller sample sizes of up to 12 interviews while still being able to gain valuable insights. This study sample met both guidelines. The researcher conducted 20 in-depth interviews with women PAR participants in addition to three PAR facilitators; however, one interview was excluded from the findings due to the lack of participant’s responses to the interview questions which thereby made it difficult to include in the analyses. The 22 in-depth interviews with women PAR participants and facilitators were supplemented by participant observation of three 12-week, women-only PAR groups. Details regarding the data collection process are outlined below.

4.6: Data Collection

The next section will expand upon the data collection procedures. Participant observation is discussed first followed by the use of interviews for the study.

Participant Observation

The first stage of this research included participant observation of three, 12-week women-only PAR programs run by a women-centred agency serving women at risk of being in conflict.
with the criminal justice system. Participant observation was chosen because, according to Guest et. al. (2012), it is useful for gaining an insider’s view into the context in which human behaviour occurs. It was well suited to the research because it allowed for observation of the facilitators’ ability to teach the curriculum as well as their interactions with the women. Engaging in participant observation also facilitated the goal of testing the applicability of Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) typology of IPV relative to the context and types of force women reported using in this study.

Each PAR group was a closed cohort which meant that the researcher observed the facilitators teaching the curriculum to the same group of women. Having a closed cohort enhanced the ability to follow any behavioural changes that occurred throughout each 12-week program whereas an open-ended group would have made it difficult to track whether participants were actively learning relative to how close they were to completing the program. For example, in the closed cohorts, women arrived at the first session often guarded with negative assumptions that the content would be highly punitive. However, as the weekly sessions continued and the women started to get comfortable with the facilitators and their peers, many became more receptive towards learning about how the content could be useful in examining the underlying reasons for their use of force against their partners.

My range of involvement in each group was situated between an “observer as participant” with participants being aware of my purpose from the beginning and having a more formal connection (Cargan, 2007), to “active membership” where I participated in the same introduction and activities as participants to build trust but still maintained my researcher identity allowing me to occasionally refrain from participating (Neuman et al., 2004). I participated while being cognizant of the time constraints within each weekly, two-hour session as well as the potential
consequence of taking up too much “air space” from the women who were court mandated to attend and were receiving a pass/fail evaluation by facilitators based on their ability to actively participate.

While at the sessions, I documented conversations, observations, experiences and perceptions that were useful to the research (Guest et al., 2012). My handwritten field notes did not contain any identifying information and, as such, observations involving women who had initially consented but did not complete the program were included in the analysis as their contributions were not identifiable and none of these women revoked their consent prior to dropping out of the program. These notes were typed into NVivo10 in preparation for the analysis stage discussed later in this chapter.

Interviews

The second phase of data collection focused on developing and refining the interview questions to ensure that they were communicated in an effective manner to the participants. First, a draft interview guide was created based on research literature regarding women’s use of force in intimate relationships to inform the questions. Next, the dissertation committee comprised of experts in the field of IPV and qualitative methods reviewed the draft questions and provided feedback. After incorporating these changes, a manager/gatekeeper from the agency provided input by reviewing, modifying, and adding questions to the guide. Upon receiving this feedback, modifications were made to the interview guide and sent back to the agency’s manager/gatekeeper to review to ensure that the changes were satisfactory. Upon receiving their approval of the changes, the dissertation committee had a final opportunity to review the guide which was then submitted as an appendix to the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University
of Guelph. According to Turner (2010), creating effective interview questions is a crucial component to produce interview responses that contain quality data. Questions should be open-ended, use neutral language to minimize any influence in the respondent’s answers, asked in succession, and worded in a careful manner that is culturally sensitive towards the participants (Turner, 2010; Hermanowicz, 2002).

Pilot testing is an important element in preparing for the interview stage because it can help to identify weaknesses or areas to be improved upon in the interview guide for the final study (Turner, 2010). Upon receiving REB approval for the study, two women from the participant observation group were recruited to participate in further developing the interview questionnaire and to pilot test the questionnaire. These women were selected to be part of the pilot phase based on their availability and also, because they expressed reservations about participating in the final interview stage but were open and willing to participate in the pilot phase. Gaining their assistance helped ensure that the language was sensitive to their level of comprehension and was also considerate towards the participants’ vulnerability and reluctance in sharing their experiences with IPV. Engaging in this dialogue with the women was beneficial for resolving decisions about the questionnaire that had yet been decided. The aim was to be sensitive towards the women being interviewed by being non-judgmental and cognizant of the context of their actions while still using everyday language in the interview. With this in mind, we were unsure of whether to use the term “female perpetrators”, “criminalized women”, “women’s violence” or “women’s use of force” when wording the questions. The women that participated in this stage of the study expressed that “women’s use of force” was the clearest, accurate, and sensitive terminology for the interview questions. Although it was the intention for this stage to occur in the format of a focus group, due to unforeseen circumstances, one woman was unable to attend
on the date scheduled for the focus group and the pilot testing of the interview questionnaire was conducted in a one-on-one setting.

The researcher also recruited one facilitator affiliated with another program run by the agency to participate in the development of the PAR facilitator interview questionnaire on a different occasion. Having the facilitator participate in the development of the questionnaire furthered the collaborative process since this was the second agency representative that participated in the review. This process was beneficial as the facilitator raised the need to ask questions relating to specific intersecting areas of oppression and contextual factors that had not been considered in the previous drafts but were important to incorporate into both the woman PAR participant and PAR facilitator interviews (e.g. socio-economic status, substance dependency, mental health, physical disability, sexual orientation). Overall, this stage allowed for the participatory development of interview questions by incorporating the voices of those to be studied in the construction of the questions (Appendix B for Final PAR Participant Interview Guide; Appendix C for Final PAR Program Facilitator Interview Guide).

Next, Hermanowicz (2002) emphasizes the importance of conducting a pilot ahead of time to ensure that the interview questions are organized and presented in a manner that draws out detailed, meaningful and relevant information and addresses the research questions. Thus, the third stage of the research project involved piloting the interview questions to gather feedback and finalize the questions. While it was the intent of the researcher to draw upon the same group of women to pilot test the questionnaire, the participant who assisted in the development of the questions was unable to do so due to changes in her schedule and, as such, the pilot test phase of the PAR participant interview guide was conducted one-on-one with the participant who was previously unable to attend the focus group. One benefit from this unintended arrangement was
that the researcher could more clearly identify the strengths and weaknesses of the questionnaire during the pilot test because the woman who attended had no previous knowledge of the questions that were being asked in the interview. Therefore, it allowed the researcher another opportunity to rework the guide which likely would not have been as thorough if the woman had attended the focus group. Due to the small number of facilitators at the agency with limited availability, the PAR facilitator pilot test was conducted with the same facilitator who helped create the interview questions.

Fourth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty women who were current or former PAR participants, as well as three PAR facilitators recruited from the agency; however, one interview with a former PAR participant was excluded from the final sample due to the lack of information provided in the interview (N = 22). Interviews were, on average, about 1.5 hours in length. Conducting semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to ask questions that focus on matters and experiences that the research is aimed at addressing while remaining flexible enough to allow for questions to develop as the discussion progresses (Guest et al., 2012). Considering the benefits of using standpoint feminism as a methodology, these semi-structured interviews allowed women to share their perceptions of their use of force. Conducting interviews also provided women with the opportunity to discuss whether they felt the program was able to respond effectively to their prior victimization, any retaliatory actions, any desire for power and control, or other reasons or objectives for using force. In addition to interviewing women PAR participants, this study also interviewed three program facilitators to gain their perspectives regarding the suitability of the program in addressing women’s use of force. Facilitator interviews focused on the type of force they perceived women PAR participants had used, the objectives of the program and whether and how they felt it addressed women’s lived
experiences, the extent to which they felt the program reproduced patriarchal, racist and classist power relations, and any other implications or potential benefits for women who were mandated to attend. A detailed breakdown of the sample characteristics is provided further below in this section.

4.7: Participant Observation Recruitment

For the participant observation stage of the study, I gained access to recruit women PAR participants and facilitators through a manager at the agency who acted as a gatekeeper. At the first session, I introduced myself as a graduate student researcher, explained the purpose of the study, informed them of my intentions to be an observer-researcher within the group, and described the risks, benefits, and procedures to ensure confidentiality. I answered questions about the study before asking the women to sign the participant observation consent form if they were interested in participating (Appendix A). I refrained from taking notes on the twelve women who declined to participate in the observation stage of the study and these women were made aware of this. I continuously took steps throughout the participant observation stage to ensure participants were made aware of their rights by making myself available to answer questions and reiterating their rights as participants throughout the 12-week duration of each group. The women and facilitators were offered a twenty-dollar grocery store gift card at the end of the 12-week session for their participation in the observation phase of the study.

While it was my original plan to recruit one group for participant observation, I quickly realized the value of rapport building, not only to secure one-on-one interviews with women, but also to build trust with each participant to encourage a more open discussion at the interview phase (Neuman, et al., 2004). Upon arriving at the first session of the first cohort, the atmosphere
appeared to be tense between the women and facilitators as well as amongst the women themselves. Many of the women later admitted that upon entering the program, they did not identify themselves as the stereotypical female perpetrator of IPV which they assumed would be reflected in the composition of the rest of the group. Thus, they arrived with preconceived assumptions that they did not have anything in common with their peers which created an atmosphere of apprehensiveness at the first session. These feelings appeared to be amplified when they were made aware that a researcher would be present and would be requesting their participation in a study relating to a highly-sensitive part of their lives. This made recruitment for participant observation difficult because the women were already generally nervous and suspicious. Upon observing this, I anticipated that my original plan to recruit former PAR participants whom I had never met for one-on-one interviews would be equally, if not more difficult. My feelings were validated by the PAR facilitators who I felt were knowledgeable and experienced in determining how best to approach the women.

After speaking with my advisor and gatekeeper, we decided it would be best if I attended three PAR groups to engage in participant observation and build rapport with the women to hopefully fulfill my goal of completing 20 interviews. I engaged in participant observation of three, 12-week PAR groups that occurred over six consecutive months in 2015. In total, the participant observation sample was comprised of four facilitators and 48 women although five women from this sample were discharged due to lack of attendance and did not complete the program. The final sample was 43.

---

Specific dates where participant observation occurred have been removed to ensure that the participants remain unidentifiable for this phase of the study.
4.8: Interview Recruitment

As indicated above, the sample of women and facilitators who were interviewed were recruited from the participant observation phase of the study. Women and facilitators who agreed to participate in a one-on-one interview were given another twenty-dollar grocery store gift card for their participation in this aspect of the study. Recruiting from those with whom I engaged in participant observation was beneficial as it allowed me to build a stronger rapport for the interview. From my perspective as a researcher, establishing rapport was essential since the women often appeared guarded when discussing the violence in their lives and this was amplified by negative experiences with the criminal justice system. Building a strong rapport was important for facilitating a more open discussion at the interview. Upon introducing myself and the study during the first session of each group, the women were made aware of my intention to invite them to participate in one-on-one interviews at a later date.

The interviews were conducted over a three-month period in 2015. The women were given the choice of where the interview occurred including on the premise of the agency, at a library, coffee shop, or over the telephone. Efforts were made throughout every stage of the interviews to remind women that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to engage in the research process to their personal level of comfort and to refuse to answer questions or withdraw at any time. The initial intention was to interview participants who had completed the PAR program to obtain their perspectives about its appropriateness in its entirety and the challenges and benefits they encountered when applying the content to their lives. However, I later decided to interview women who had completed week nine and onwards for largely pragmatic reasons. For example, some women who had initially expressed an interest in

---

14 Again, specific dates are not given to ensure the confidentiality of participants in the study.

103
being interviewed decided that, upon completing the program, they no longer wished to participate in an interview because they wanted to move on. Alternatively, some women expressed a desire to be interviewed immediately prior to attending the weekly PAR session because this was the most convenient time in their schedules with other commitments in their lives (e.g. court dates, work schedules, childcare responsibilities, travelling from out of town, etc). Thus, conducting interviews with women who had completed the majority of the weekly sessions ensured that they had a grasp of what the program content had to offer, had sufficient opportunity to apply some of the skills they had learned in the previous weeks, and were likely to complete the entire program since they had already invested a substantial amount of time attending the mandatory weekly sessions.

Program facilitators from the PAR group were also recruited for one-on-one interviews. The facilitators also were made aware of my intentions to recruit them for an interview at the outset of participant observation. Interviews took place in 2015, after both the participant observation and one-on-one interviews with PAR participants were complete. This gave me sufficient time to build a relationship with each facilitator, gain a better understanding of how the PAR program operated, and gather a broader spectrum of women’s perspectives of the program which I felt gave me a better understanding of the issues that facilitators may (or may not) have been aware of. Because the facilitators were participating in an interview related to their employment and this could affect their level of comfort in responding to the questions, they were given the option of being interviewed on the agency’s premises or offsite. Further, unlike the women PAR participant interviewees which were each assigned a pseudonym, due to the small number of facilitators being interviewed, individual pseudonyms were not assigned. Rather, all
responses from the facilitators were identified as “Facilitator” in the analyses chapters to protect their identities when responding to the interview questions.

The final interviews for the entire sample comprised of women PAR participants and PAR facilitators occurred either in person (N=19) or by phone (N=3). From the final sample of women PAR participants interviewed (N=19), the average age was 36.8 years. The socio-demographic breakdown of the sample is presented in Table 4.1. The final sample is comprised of women who self-identified as Caucasian (N=7), women of colour (N=8), Aboriginal (N=2), and mixed race (N=2). Eight women were born in Canada and the remaining 11 were born outside of Canada. Examining marital status, the “single or dating” category comprised the largest number of women in the sample (N=7) followed by those “legally married and not separated” (N=2), “common-law and not separated” (N=3), and “separated common-law” (N=3). “Separated but still legally married” (N=2), and “divorced” (N=2) categories comprised of the least number of women. In terms of employment status, leading the sample were women who reported being employed either full-time or part-time, followed by two categories of women who were receiving government assistance through Ontario Works (OW)/Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and those who were unemployed and not looking for work for various reasons. The remaining group, unemployed and looking for work, represented the smallest employment status category.

The general framework of the interviews reflected Hermanowicz’s (2002) guidelines. The interview began with an overview of the project, the potential risks involved in their participation and counselling service information, along with information about interviewees’ rights, informed consent and voluntary participation. Next, introductory questions that were nonthreatening were

---

15 Some categories have been collapsed due to low numbers to ensure the participants are not identifiable.
Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of PAR Participant Interview Sample (N=19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women of Colour</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birthplace</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in Canada</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single or Dating</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legally Married (not separated)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated, but Legally Married</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common-Law (not separated)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated Common-Law</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed (Full-Time or Part-Time)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OW/ODSP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed, looking for work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed, not looking for work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some categories have been collapsed due to low numbers to ensure that participants are not identifiable. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

asked as a warm up including “It’s not unusual for couples to argue at times and these arguments may lead to bigger disagreements which may or may not become physical. If you and your partner in this case ever had disagreements, how did it start and what was it about?” More sensitive questions were gradually placed in the middle of the interview. Women were asked to share the experience that led them to enroll in the program as well as their perspective on the larger relationship dynamic that existed between themselves and their male partner. For example, “Can you share the events that led to you being charged or arrested by police?” Finally, the interview ended by asking non-threatening questions for the respondent to answer including “Now that you have finished the PAR program, what advice would you give to women who are
enrolling as new participants?” These questions were designed to be relatively easy for the women to answer since it was about themselves and this was intentional so that the interview would wrap up on a positive note for the women (see Appendix B for Final PAR Participant Interview Guide).

Given the sensitive nature of the interviews and the vulnerability of the participants, all interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder with file encryption capabilities to maximize security measures. However, the presence of an audio-recording device can raise concerns for some participants irrespective of the precautions taken. Efforts were made to communicate to the participants that their level of comfort in responding to the questions remained the utmost priority and that they had the right to cease recording at any point throughout the interview. There were no participants who chose to terminate the interview nor did any express discomfort in being audio recorded although the interviewer provided each participant with the alternative of having handwritten notes taken during their interview. Below, I discuss the technology used to carry out the data analysis in this study.

### 4.9: Use of Technology

This study relied on the use of a qualitative computer program to assist in organizing the data in preparation for the next stage of data analysis. Dragon Naturally Speaking Software was used to transcribe interviews which were then imported into NVivo10 and analyzed alongside the participant observation notes. Using computer software in qualitative data analysis has been debated with some arguing that there are drawbacks including: difficulties ensuring confidentiality if the data is lost or stolen particularly with visual data, the distortion of the participant’s line of reasoning when cutting up the text, and being restricted by the program’s
coding limitations that may encourage the researcher to rely on oversimplified coding patterns (Grbich, 2007; Hesse-Biber, 2004). Nevertheless, the use of computer programs in qualitative research provides the benefit of managing large amounts of data (Grbich, 2007) and it was valuable for this study because of the scope of the project and the depth of the interviews. Keeping in mind the concerns raised, I stayed as close to the data as possible by conducting the interviews and sitting in on the participant observation and I maintained this practice by continuously reviewing the coding decisions.

Dragon Naturally Speaking software is designed to recognize the voice of one trained speaker, therefore, I used headphones to listen to the recorded interview and simultaneously repeated the conversation so that it would be transformed into text. I identified the responses of the interviewer and interviewee throughout the dialogue to accurately transcribe the interview in a timely manner. Upon transcribing the interviews, I listened to each interview a second time to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts after which the audio recordings were destroyed. I used NVivo10 to enter my participant observation notes. NVivo10 was chosen because it allowed me to organize and code the data into different themes based on Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence. It was also beneficial for organizing other emerging themes or contextual factors that may have influenced women to use force but may have been found to contradict or not fit within Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) existing typology. Such circumstances created an opportunity to engage in theory building using constructivist grounded theory. Below, I discuss the data analysis techniques used in this study.
4.10: Data Analysis Procedures

To address the first research question: How do women charged with intimate partner violence and enrolled in IPV intervention programs perceive their use of force?, I tested the applicability of Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) typologies of IPV. To do this, I created core categories or parent nodes representing the four typologies – coercive controlling violence, violence resistance, situational couple violence, and separation-instigated violence. I then created subcategories or child nodes which represented the key elements within each of the types (see Figure 4.1 for NVivo Nodes for Participant Typology). First, the operationalization of coercive controlling violence was informed by Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) definition as “…a pattern of emotionally abusive intimidation, coercion, and control coupled with physical violence against partners” (pg. 478) which they attribute closely to the pattern used in Pence and Paymar’s (1993) Power and Control Wheel (see Appendix D). Additionally, this study replicated Johnson & Leone’s (2005) operationalization of coercive controlling violence as physical violence accompanied by three or more controlling behaviours outlined in the Power and Control Wheel. Child nodes were used to capture physical violence and control which was embedded within the ‘coercive controlling’ parent node.

Using Johnson and Leone’s (2005) criteria for coercive controlling violence was intentional for several reasons. The conceptualization and utility of these typologies have been debated heavily among researchers and practitioners and within courtrooms which has contributed to a lack of agreement and consistency about how best to delineate and operationalize each category (Zorza, 2011; Meier, 2015). In the absence of agreement in the field, I felt it was best to turn to Johnson’s application of his typology for guidance, specifically, his operationalization of coercive controlling violence and situational couple violence – the most controversial categories.
within the typology and therefore, the most examined among experts in the field. Further, I sought to examine the suitability of Johnson’s typology of violence relative to the types of violence used by women in the current study. Additionally, replicating how Johnson operationalized his typologies in his own study minimized the potential for further misclassification within the field (see Rosen, et al. 2005), which I believe would strengthen the legitimacy of my findings. Comparing the findings against Johnson’s most recent representation allowed me to be more confident when making recommendations about how the typologies could be modified and areas where new typologies could be created.

Second, violent resistance is an immediate reaction to coercive controlling violence in which the individual acts based on the immediate threat of harm or actual violence that is being perpetrated towards themselves or others (Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Johnson & Leone, 2005; Johnson, 2001). Therefore, violent resistance could only be present when responding to coercive controlling violence, thereby making it necessary to first determine whether this was present in the relationship by having immediate physical violence and three or more controlling behaviours perpetrated against the woman in the relationship (Johnson & Leone, 2005). Therefore, the violent resistance node was comprised of child nodes that captured each of the controlling behaviours listed in the coercive controlling typology in addition to “immediate threat of violence to self/others” which captured the type of force women were responding to as well as how they described physically reacting towards their partner.

Third, situational couple violence is identified as “the type of partner violence that does not have its basis in the dynamic of power and control” (Kelly & Johnson, 2008: 279) and instead stems from situations or arguments that occasionally result in physical violence against an intimate partner (Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014; Johnson & Leone, 2005; Johnson, 2001). As a
Figure 4.1: NVivo Nodes for Participant Typology

- **Coercive Controlling Violence**
  - Uses Physical and/or Sexual Violence
  - Uses Coercion and Threats
  - Uses Intimidation
  - Uses Emotional Abuse
  - Uses Isolation
  - Uses Minimizing, Denying and Blaming
  - Uses Children
  - Uses Male Privilege
  - Uses Economic Abuse
  - Subjected to Physical and/or Sexual Violence
  - Subjected to Coercion and Threats
  - Subjected to Intimidation
  - Subjected to Emotional Abuse
  - Subjected to Isolation
  - Subjected to Minimizing, Denying and Blaming
  - Subjected to Children
  - Subjected to Male Privilege
  - Subjected to Economic Abuse
  - Reacting to Immediate Threat/Violence to Self/Others
  - Absence of Desire for Power and Control
  - Exhibits Poor Anger/Conflict Management
  - Exhibits Emotionally Abusive Behavior
  - Presence of Gender Symmetry/Reciprocal Violence
  - Less Frequent Violent Episodes
  - Minor Violence
  - No History of Domestic or Other Violence
  - Violence First Occurs at Separation
  - Traumatic Separation
  - Public Humiliation at Separation
  - Child or Sexual Abuse Allegations Present
  - Immediate Discovery of Infidelity in Public
  - Atypical Loss of Psychological Control
  - Limited Episodes of Violence at Beginning of Separation
  - Compliant with Ensuing No-Contact Order

- **Violent Resistance**
  - Subjected to Physical and/or Sexual Violence
  - Subjected to Coercion and Threats
  - Subjected to Intimidation
  - Subjected to Emotional Abuse
  - Subjected to Isolation
  - Subjected to Minimizing, Denying and Blaming
  - Subjected to Children
  - Subjected to Male Privilege
  - Subjected to Economic Abuse

- **Situational Couple Violence**
  - Exhibits Poor Anger/Conflict Management
  - Exhibits Emotionally Abusive Behavior
  - Presence of Gender Symmetry/Reciprocal Violence
  - Less Frequent Violent Episodes
  - Minor Violence
  - No History of Domestic or Other Violence
  - Violence First Occurs at Separation
  - Traumatic Separation
  - Public Humiliation at Separation
  - Child or Sexual Abuse Allegations Present
  - Immediate Discovery of Infidelity in Public
  - Atypical Loss of Psychological Control
  - Limited Episodes of Violence at Beginning of Separation
  - Compliant with Ensuing No-Contact Order

- **Separation-Instigated Violence**
  - Compliant with Ensuing No-Contact Order
result, the *situational couple violence* node was comprised of the following child nodes: the absence of desire for power and control; exhibiting poor anger/conflict management; exhibiting emotionally abusive behaviour; the presence of gender symmetry/reciprocal violence; and less frequent violent episodes.

*Separation-Instigated Violence* is the final category within Johnson’s typology of violence that was examined in this study. According to Kelly and Johnson (2008: 487):

Separation-Instigated Violence is triggered by experiences such as a traumatic separation (e.g., the home emptied and the children taken when the parent is at work), public humiliation of a prominent professional or political figure by a process server,\textsuperscript{16} allegations of child or sexual abuse, or the discovery of a lover in the partner’s bed. The violence represents an atypical and serious loss of psychological control (sometimes described as “just going nuts”), is typically limited to one or two episodes at the beginning of or during the separation period, and ranges from mild to more severe forms of violence.

Therefore, *separation-instigated violence* child nodes examined: no history of domestic or other violence; violence that first occurred at separation; traumatic separation; public humiliation at separation; child or sexual abuse allegations; immediate discovery of infidelity; atypical loss of psychological control; limited episodes of violence at beginning of separation; and compliant with ensuing no-contact order.

By coding each participant’s responses line-by-line and organizing it into the appropriate parent nodes and child nodes, I was able to determine where each participant’s particular experiences fit under Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) typologies, if at all. This research is deductive as it aimed to test the typology of violence while being open to inductive possibilities that would help enhance the theory by modifying existing typologies or creating new typologies that would better reflect women’s use of force. Therefore, I created an *other* parent node to capture elements

\textsuperscript{16} In this quote, Kelly and Johnson (2008) are referring to a process server who is hired to deliberately deliver divorce papers to a professional or political figure in a situation or manner that would cause embarrassment to them (e.g. at their place of employment or at a publicized event where they are being scrutinized).
that were deemed relevant but may not have been represented within the existing typologies. As such, child nodes that comprised the other parent node were to be identified and developed at the data analysis stage of the research process.

During participant observation, I took detailed handwritten notes focusing on the discussions that occurred between the facilitators and the participants throughout each session. The notes centred upon topic being discussed and the reactions and concerns raised by the women. I documented how the facilitators responded to these concerns and whether the women appeared to be satisfied by this advice based on their verbal responses and body language. These notes were used along with the standpoints from PAR participant and PAR facilitator interviews to answer the remaining research questions using line-by-line coding. Drawing upon constructivist grounded theory provided insight into how each woman’s social location produced different types of inequality resulting in multiple interpretations of their experiences with the PAR program and the criminal justice system (Charmaz, 2003; 2005; Allen, 2011).

My second research question asks: How do IPV intervention programs address women’s lived experiences? Relatedly, to what extent does the PAR intervention program take into account forms of oppression within their lives (concerning race, culture, immigration status, children, class)? Participants may have had positive or negative interpretations of whether the PAR program was effective for addressing their lived experiences that brought them to the program. I organized these responses into the following parent nodes: program addressed lived experiences, and extent that the program addressed gender and other forms of oppression. Potential child nodes for program addressed lived experiences included: (1) Program used examples applicable to participant’s situation; (2) participant successfully addressed issues
underlying the use of force with partner involved in the incident using program advice; and (3) program helped participant recognize her abusive/controlling behaviour to facilitate change.

In contrast, the extent that the program addressed gender and other forms of oppression node initially included the following potential child nodes: (1) participant discussed how the program addressed gender and IPV; (2) participant discussed how the program addressed IPV and citizenship status; (3) participant discussed how program addressed concerns over partner’s increased power over child custody disputes; (4) participant discussed whether the program addressed concerns about partner having further financial control; (5) participant discussed whether the program addressed concerns regarding their IPV and the effect on participant’s ability to find/maintain employment.

To examine my final research question: What are the perceived challenges and benefits of mandating women to attend such programs and in having them apply the curriculum to future incidents where they may potentially engage in IPV? I created two parent nodes: challenges and benefits. Potential challenges child nodes included: (1) Partner also needs to change; (2) difficulty applying content because partner is not required to be present in sessions; (3) provided information but not skills to overcome abuse; (4) unrealistic conflict resolution tools; and (4) reproduced/reinforced individualistic analysis of IPV. Child nodes for benefits included: (1) Able to identify healthy relationships; (2) able to identify relationship red flags; (3) more knowledgeable about resources; (4) increased participant’s support system; (5) self-esteem increased; and (6) helped participant see her use of force within the larger context as a gendered social and political problem. Depending on the various interpretations of each participant’s responses, the goal at the analysis stage was to provide a greater understanding of the types of force women in this sample were charged with using and whether they felt this court mandated
response adequately responded to their varied needs. Presented below is a discussion regarding ethical considerations in this research.

4.11: Ethical Concerns

This study received ethical approval from the University of Guelph REB (See Appendix E for Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants REB#14AU001). Although the women in this study were not formally incarcerated at the time of the participant observation and interviews, they had nevertheless been brought under the control of the criminal justice system as perpetrators. Considering the involuntary nature of their participation in the PAR program, the participants were treated as a vulnerable population. Thus, I worked closely with the REB at the University of Guelph to ensure that this study adhered to all the protocols regarding vulnerable individuals laid out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement for the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (2010), including ensuring that the participants understood that their participation must be voluntary and that it was not connected to their status with the agency or the criminal justice system.

This study entailed the possibility of some physical, psychological and social risks. Physical risks pertained to the personal safety of the women participants since they had all been involved in violent relationships which may have included isolation by their partner. Thus, there was the potential that in some circumstances the partner may object to her participation in the PAR program or the research by threatening to use violence against her if he learned about her involvement in the study. It was also possible that some women could experience psychological risks because they were being asked to share their experiences with IPV, the criminal justice system, and the PAR program - all of which they may experience as traumatizing. There was
also a possibility that the participants may be subject to social risks including feeling embarrassed or upset if they were to be identified as participating in the study either during the recruitment stage or in the writing of the findings or if they are seen meeting with the researcher. With this in mind, precautions were taken to ensure these risks were minimized by working closely with the REB in addition to consulting with the agency and the women throughout the study. The potential physical, psychological and social risks of the study were outlined in the Consent to Participate in Research form (Appendix A for Consent to Participate in Research PAR Participant Observation Form; Appendix F for Consent to Participate in Research PAR Participant Interview Form; Appendix G for Consent to Participate in Research PAR Facilitator Interview Consent Form) so that participants were given full disclosure. This form also outlined that their consent must be freely given and that they had the right to revoke it and withdraw from the study at any time up until when the data was published (Auld, 2013; Palys, 1997). In addition to providing the participants with consent forms, I followed the best practice of reviewing the form through a dialogue with each participant and obtaining their consent from this conversation and having the participant sign the form (Auld, 2013). I also reviewed the literature relating to training for sensitive interview subjects prior to starting the pilot interview as well as final interview phase.

Lastly, it was essential to maintain confidentiality throughout the entire duration of the study because the interviews asked the participants to elaborate on their perceptions of the PAR program, either as perpetrators who were mandated to attend, or as employees of the agency who may not view the program in a positive light. Furthermore, some participants could potentially have discussed personal details about their experiences with IPV and the program that they would not have otherwise shared or that could comprise their safety and therefore it was
important to maintain their confidentiality. The names and contact information of the participants were retained for the purposes of following up to provide each participant with a copy of the results of the study. However, the names of the participants were not identified in audio recordings or field notes. Instead, unique codes were used for the interview and participant observation participants. A separate master list with the names and their corresponding codes were kept in a secure location to ensure that I was the only person who could match this information (Palys, 1997). The interview and participant observation data was stored on an encrypted and password protected computer to ensure the safety and security of this information.

According to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2010), there is no specified period of time that data should be retained since these periods will vary depending on the discipline, purpose of the research and the type of data being stored and it can be useful in the future for different purposes. The University of Guelph REB states that the researcher must make each participant aware of how long the data will be retained. Therefore, the participant consent forms advised participants that all participant data would be retained following a five-year period after publication at which point this information would be destroyed.

This chapter discussed the methodological decisions used to guide this study including the research design, conceptual framework, reflexivity, sample and research site, data collection, use of technology, data analysis procedures, and ethical concerns. The following chapter presents the findings produced from the data analysis of the first research question.
5: Analysis Part I

The chapter draws upon the voices of women mandated to attend Ontario’s Partner Assault Response (PAR) program to present the findings to the research question: How do women charged with intimate partner violence (IPV) and enrolled in IPV intervention programs perceive their use of force? The first section examines interviews with women who appeared to align with Johnson’s (2008) concept of violent resistance (VR) based on their descriptions of their use of force alongside control tactics they encountered throughout their relationship as listed in the Power and Control Wheel. The second section focuses on participants who describe force that reflects the characteristics that comprised Johnson’s (2008) situational couple violence (SCV) definition. Situational couple violence characteristics included women who described themselves as using force in the absence of power and control, exhibiting poor anger management, and displaying signs of emotionally abusive behaviour. None of the women described using force that met the requirements of Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) coercive controlling violence (CCV) or separation-instigated violence (SV). The third section discusses use of force that cannot be captured under any of Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence categories. The final section reviews situations where the women indicated that they were wrongfully accused of using force.

Table 5.1: Type of Force Used in Sample (N = 19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Force</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Resistance (VR)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Couple Violence (SCV)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Typology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrongful Conviction</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercive Controlling Violence (CCV)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation Instigated Violence (SV)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and charged resulting in their mandated participation in the PAR program. Table 5.1 presents the type of force that the sample of women interviewed described using.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, although 20 interviews were conducted with women PAR participants, one woman declined to share any contextual details about the force that led her to being enrolled in the program. The context in which she used force could not be assessed based on the lack of details in her interview and as such, she was excluded from the interview analysis portion of this research resulting in a final interview sample of 19 women interviewed. As shown in Table 5.1, three women described using VR (n = 3 or 16%); eight were categorized as using SCV (n = 8 or 42%); four women used force in their relationship in a manner that could not be captured under any of Johnson’s categories (n = 4 or 21%); and four women discussed being wrongfully charged and convicted for actions that never occurred (n = 4 or 21%). Again, none of the women described using SV or CCV. The descriptions of how their force transpired within their relationships are categorized and described in greater detail below.

5.1: Participants Who Used Violent Resistance

Three of the 19 women (or 16%) interviewed provided descriptions of their use of force that met Johnson’s (2008) definition of violence resistance (VR) – violence used in response to coercive controlling violence (CCV) by a male partner that includes physical violence, along with the presence of non-physical control tactics. This research examines the suitability of Johnson’s typology of violence in capturing women’s use of force and, therefore, the patterns of violence used in this study are operationalized to reflect how Johnson theorized these categories. More specifically, Kelly and Johnson (2008) conceptualized VR as violence used to protect oneself or others from an oncoming physical assault by a CCV partner. Violent resisters are also
subjected to a combination of non-physical control tactics, as outlined in the Power and Control Wheel, which the perpetrator adapts to use those that are most effective in the relationship as part of the CCV (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Therefore, the current research uses the presence of physical violence in the incident for which they were charged alongside ongoing non-physical control tactics as outlined by Johnson (2008) to determine whether the women were ordered to the PAR program for using VR.

Each of the control tactics are addressed separately below as they relate to the participants’ perceptions within the larger context of understanding the abusive relationship, rather than just the circumstance for which they were charged, which is necessary to appreciate their use of force. The control tactics included: emotional abuse; coercion/threats/intimidation; financial abuse; isolation; and minimization/denial/blaming for abuse; male privilege; and using children. All three women acknowledged that some of these control tactics had been used against them by their partner in addition to the imminent threat of violence – the prerequisite to identifying VR (Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014; Johnson & Leone, 2005). One women reported her partner exerting male privilege to maintain coercive control. Lastly, the one mother who used VR reported that her partner would use their child as a control tactic throughout the relationship. As a prerequisite to Johnson and Leone (2005) identifying VR, the real imminent threat of violence is presented below as it pertains to the three women who were classified under this category, followed by the non-physical control tactics relevant to the coercive control they were subjected to within the overall relationship.
Pre-requisite For Violent Resistance: Real Imminent Threat of Violence

Three women said their charges stemmed from their alleged use of force as they were being subjected to the imminent threat of violence by their partner defined by Kelly and Johnson (2008) as VR that meets “at least the common-sense definition of self-defence: violence that takes place as an immediate reaction to an assault and that is intended primarily to protect oneself or others from injury” (p. 478). For instance, Patrice admitted to giving her partner a shove after he ignored her request to give her back her phone which led them to physically fighting over it and resulted in her biting his arm:

I just didn’t want to have the argument [over my ex-partner who my current partner was jealous of] so I just gave him my cell phone and he proceeded to go through my cell phone and he held onto my cell phone. […] I remember he held onto it for somewhere between ten and fifteen minutes and every single time I would ask for my cell phone back he refused to give it back. […] Finally, I gave him like a, almost a small shove on his shoulder and I was like “Okay listen, enough. Give me back my cell phone.” And he said, “No I’m not done.” […] I went and I got my cell phone back. […] I remember that it went from the grappling to the hair pulling and we ended up on the floor and he at some point during the altercation puts me into a headlock on the ground and I remember I’m on the ground with my head twisted like this and he’s on top of me like that pinning my head down in my neck and it’s starting to hurt and so, I felt scared in that moment. I felt like he’s either going to break my neck or something else could happen and I turned my head and I bit his arm. I did it like there was no tomorrow. […] I was afraid that because I felt the pressure here I could feel my airway getting smaller.

Even though Patrice had bruises that had not yet surfaced, she was charged because her partner had scratches that appeared immediately which he used to support his claim that she was the primary aggressor.

Next, Laverne started to socialize with her co-workers outside of work after recently discovering that her partner had been cheating on her. On the night she was charged, her partner

---

17 The use of force in response to the “real imminent threat of violence” is a unique characteristic used by Violent Resistors. Therefore, it is not included in the seven control tactics used by coercive controllers. Instead, according to Kelly and Johnson (2008), Violent Resistors are subjected to non-physical control tactics used by coercive controllers as conceptualized by Johnson (2008) using the Power and Control Wheel, along with physical violence.
was upset that he had to walk the dog after work because she had decided to come home late again:

He flipped out and he hit me and I guess because I had a few drinks in me and I had a little bit more confidence than I normally do I was just like, “Oh no you didn’t”. […] I hit him back and then he pushed me. […] He’s kicking me and I just want to get him away from me but I was on the ground and I didn’t know what to do so I picked up the little whatever it was and I threw it at him. However, he moved out of the way and I ended up hitting the TV. […] He dragged me, like, physically dragged me outside of our apartment into the hallway, locked the door and called the cops and told them that I abused him and that I destroyed property.

Brooke had gotten into an argument with her partner who ignored her request to help her find an item she needed for work. The situation escalated to physical violence when he started calling her crazy and she tried to pack their daughter’s belongings to leave:

He’s like holding me up against the wall […] and the only thing I can […] grab onto was the empty water plastic bottle. […] I hit him with it, […] it just bounced back. […] He locked me in the bedroom […] the door cracked open a bit and I reached out and so he’s pulling my hand out the door and jamming my hand with the door so I screamed out and I said “You’re gonna break my arm!” […] I screamed, yelled out, and he ran. […] I took his boots, his steel toed boots […] and I just tossed it behind him and I’m like “Here, take this with you.” I didn’t know if it hit him or not and apparently it did because he told the cops that it did.

Thus, women who used VR shared how the imminent threat of violence played a role in their charges. For some women, they reacted to this threat by using force to defend themselves; others responded hastily resulting in their partner exaggerating their version of events to make it appear as though she used force in an entirely offensive manner.

Johnson views VR as a reaction to the imminent threat of violence (Johnson, 2008: 52; Kelly and Johnson, 2008: 484) and similarly, this research focuses on how women perceive their use of force that resulted in charges against them. Nevertheless, providing insight into the history of physical violence in the relationship clarifies the context to which the violence may have occurred (Dasgupta, 2002; Melton & Sillito 2012; Stark, 2009; Kernsmith, 2006; Hamberger &
Larsen, 2015). All three women were subjected to physical violence throughout the history of their relationship which ranged from infrequent and less severe, to repeated and more serious acts. Of the three women, two reported infrequent episodes of physical violence describing their male partner as the aggressor. For example, Brooke said:

One time we had an argument on the, like on the platform, subway, and he wanted my phone. And I said “No, you’re not going to get my phone because even if there’s something there or not, […], you’re going to see what you want to see” and he actually held my hand and was forcing the phone out of my hand and my pinky finger got hurt. […] The phone […] fell […] on the train tracks and he actually asked someone to go for it, so he kept the phone for like two days, I don’t know, he went through it. […] I told him “I’m scared and we should end things.” […] But I actually did meet up with him [a couple of days later to get my phone], he promised not to do it again.

And similarly, Patrice revealed that:

A lot of them were screaming matches and I think near the end maybe two to three weeks leading up to the incident, that’s when the little shoving thing started. It was like I’d shove him or he’d shove me and the other would be like “alright don’t touch me” and it would be like “okay” it’s like two dogs or cats backing away, like any second now […] and then that day [of the incident] everything exploded. That was the day when things, like, people did not keep their hands off of each other. […] It was just not good.

Although these two examples did not always result in the woman using force, it nonetheless added to the history of physical violence the women were subjected to that may have culminated in her eventually using force.

Out of the three women, Laverne described her partner as being the primary aggressor throughout the history of the relationship using frequent and severe physical violence:

[I endured] […] years [of his violence], when the incident happened [where I hit him back and threw a small object that ended up missing him and damaging the TV]. He’s been to jail for hitting me before. I mean, I’ve lost several jobs because of him, because he would give me a black eye. I actually have a permanent dent in my leg because he hit me with a broom once so hard that it literally ruptured a vein. […] So, [it was] years since […] we were together until I did something, I guess through retaliatory or whatever.

Laverne believed she was using VR in response to the prolonged periods of physical victimization by her partner from which her charges originated.
Johnson (2008: 96) is less specific in his discussions on sexual control in relation to his typology other than referring to items used in his previous sexual control scale that ask the respondent if “sex is ever unpleasant because “he forces me to have sex when I don’t want to,” or “he makes you do things you don’t want to do.”” Because Johnson theorizes VR occurring in response to the imminent threat of violence, prior sexual violence may be overlooked. However, for the purposes of providing greater context into the violence in the relationship, this form of violence is discussed below. Two of the women who were identified as using VR reported that they had experienced sexual violence as part of the CCV that they were subjected to by their partner throughout the history of the relationship. Patrice spoke about being coerced into having sex with her partner throughout their relationship (but not in the situation that resulted in charges against her):

Now it just went from we’re not having sex, I’m not interested, him huffing and puffing, so now […] the paranoia starts kicking in. […] He starts asking me “Did you wax?” […] “Let me see” and so I have to show him that I hadn’t waxed. And then he’s like […] “Did you talk to [your ex] today?” […] He’ll just start touching me between my legs and he’ll be like “Oh, well you’re wet, you probably want it.” And it’s like […] pure frustration […] because now this conversation has been going on for 30 plus minutes. I would literally take off my clothes and be like “There’s my pussy, you want to stick it in?!?” […] And then the guy would actually get on top of me and start having sex with me. […] Meanwhile, I’m lying there like a dead fish because I’m not interested.

However, Patrice had difficulties acknowledging that her partner had sexually assaulted her saying, “He’d say to me, “That was really good, did you enjoy it?” What do you say to that? […] It’s not rape, someone didn’t force themselves on me, but they did, in a way.”

Laverne reported that she would strategically engage in sexual acts throughout the relationship to minimize the likelihood of being subjected to other forms of CCV from her partner. She believed he was not only aware of this approach, but at times would act accordingly to get what he wanted sexually:
I can think of a couple instances where he would be violent with me and I would feel like if I did things for him, or to him, he would be nicer, and he would be. And then I sometimes would do them just because I didn’t want him to be mean anymore. […] Sometimes he would […] make arguments up sort of like on the spot and I’m like “I don’t know where this is coming from?” […] But then I would give him let’s say a blow job or whatever and all of a sudden, he was all happy […]. He wouldn’t ask me for one, but when I did it […] whatever he was bitching about before didn’t exist […]. So yes, I do feel like he knew certain things would make me do certain things and he would do them on purpose.

For Laverne, initiating or participating in these sexual acts was a conscious strategy to avoid what she believed would otherwise lead to violence and more serious control tactics being used against her. Overall, conceding to, or pre-emptively engaging in sexual acts to avoid other forms of control may have contributed to their overall resentment and influenced their decision to eventually use VR.

**Control Tactic #1 – Emotional Abuse**

Johnson (2008) describes emotional abuse to include calling a partner “ugly, stupid, a slut, a lousy wife [partner], an incompetent mother [parent]” to make them feel helpless and/or dependent on the abuser to survive and may be accompanied by demeaning and humiliating actions (p. 9). All three of the women who had used VR reported being subjected to emotional abuse by their partner throughout their relationship. For instance, Brooke said:

> If I go out after work to meet up with a friend, […] I’m irresponsible, I have my daughter to come home to but I’m going out. […] If I don’t do the laundry the day I’m supposed to do it, I’m irresponsible. […] I’ve told him stuff about my family before in [country of origin] like my sisters, my mom, you know, I’ve shared personal information with him and he would use that against me.

Patrice spoke about how her partner would accuse her of being promiscuous as a form of emotional abuse:

> [It was] never-ending, […] the same argument, the same things are getting repeated over, and over, and over […] “You’re a cheater, you’re a liar, I don’t trust you, I’ve done everything for you. Umm, do you want to have sex?” […] If I ignore him it’s like “Well
why aren’t you returning my texts, you must be with [your ex].” Everything is if I don’t answer the text right away or if I don’t answer the phone right away I must be out spreading my legs for someone. Not just [my ex], for anybody. […] Everyone apparently has had the benefit of being with me.

She returned to this point later stating:

Everything I am is a whore [from my partner’s perspective]. If I have twenty dollars it’s I’m a whore, if I have sex with him I’m a whore, if I go out for coffee with [my ex] I’m a whore, if I’m talking to somebody I’m a whore, everything was I’m a whore. And that particular day [of the incident] was not any different, it was I’m a whore, I’m a whore, I just saw you having sex.

Two of the women reported that their partners’ emotional manipulation made them believe that they were losing control of their sanity, a technique that facilitators discussed during the PAR group as “gaslighting18”, with Patrice stating:

[He would ask] “Did you talk to [your ex fiancé] today?” “No, I haven’t talked to [my ex fiancé].” “When was the last time you talked to [your ex fiancé]?” it’s like he’s trying to catch me in a lie that I’m not telling but he’s putting things into your head to the point where now you don’t even trust yourself. Now you’re afraid, now you’re just walking on eggshells.

Laverne shared an experience where she felt that her partner was gaslighting her:

He was going [overseas] a lot and it was always like […] “I’m trying to do business there, I’m trying to buy a vacation house there.” No, he was cheating. […] I saw a picture of another girl […] in one of my dresses that I know I had in my closet that I guess he stole from me and took [overseas] to give to her […] I think I was going a little bit personally crazy too because if I couldn’t find something I’d be like “Oh my god you took it [overseas] and you gave it to some stupid bitch or whore or whatever it is.”

18 The term “gaslighting” originated from the 1938 play by Patrick Hamilton which gained attention after being adapted into the 1944 movie, Gaslight by George Cukor. The plot follows Gregory’s manipulation of his wife, Paula whom he convinces that she is becoming forgetful and behaving erratically. He isolates her by telling others that she is unwell and restricts her to the house. At night, he dims the gas light causing it to flicker while convincing her that it is all in her imagination causing her to question her sanity. Therefore, the term “gaslighting” generally refers to an individual who is able to repeatedly lie with such conviction that the recipient can no longer be certain of their own reality, causing them to become more reliant on the gaslighter. This concept is gaining attention in the literature on IPV, specifically, men’s use of indirect threats and act towards women. For example, Rees et al. (2006) found that 75% of women in their study reported their male partner had attempted to make them feel crazy “often” or “all the time” and further, 32% reported that their male partner had made threats to assign them to a mental institution.
Although Laverne did not use force against her partner immediately upon discovering his infidelity, it was one of the reasons why she felt less invested to remain in the relationship. Instead, this emotional manipulation furthered her paranoia towards him and incited her willingness to fight back against his emotional and physical abuse.

**Control Tactic #2 - Coercion/Threats/Intimidation**

Johnson (2008) treats coercion/threats and intimidation as one tactic whereby “coercion involves getting someone to do something they do not want to do by “using or threatening [ . . . ] negative consequences for noncompliance”” which may result in the perpetrator using intimidation to demonstrate what they are capable of if their partner does not behave (p.14). Using Johnson’s (2008) definition, this research treated coercion, threats and intimidation as one tactic. All three women reported being subjected to coercion, threats and/or intimidation by their abusive partner throughout the relationship. There was a wide range of coercion, threats and intimidation tactics used against the women including threatening and intimidating body language. Brooke appeared to take the most uncompromising approach to her partner’s coercion/intimidation and threats, describing how she would refuse to concede to his demands:

> If he’s like in my face about something I would not just back down and put my tail between my leg and walk away. […] I would stand my ground I guess, and he didn’t like that. So, by me standing my ground that led him to like just go over the top.

Resisting her partner’s control would result in his use of extreme intimidation to get her to comply with his demands. Similarly, Laverne reported that her ex-partner would use intimidation tactics whenever she was angry at him:

> He doesn’t respond to me being angry very well, […] so when I would get angry he would get more angry, to sort of be one on top of me. […] It was just like world war 3 and it would always escalate to violence.
Patrice tried to be assertive in her approach towards her partner’s intimidation. She tried to reason with his jealousy and calm his suspicions about meeting with her ex with whom she remained friends. Patrice reiterated that she was partially responsible for tying up loose ends on a condominium that she previously shared with her ex-partner, however her current partner’s jealousy persisted:

He would be pacing like these weird little twitches and mannerisms and […] I would just say “Look, I’m just going out for a coffee you need to calm down.” […] He’d just get up in my face when I came back upstairs from the coffee, started yelling at me, just yelling at me all the time, like, not just yelling but like screaming, he’s like screaming in my face to the point where the spit and saliva like all over. […] Telling me what I can and can’t do.

Next, some of the women discussed how their partners directly threatened to manipulate the police to their advantage as another form of intimidation with Patrice saying “[After the incident occurred and the police were called] he was like “Oh, I don’t care. I’m going to fucking tell them everything you did. I’m going to tell them how crazy you are and this and that.””

Laverne shared a similar example stating:

He would pick up the phone and actually have a pretend conversation with police saying like “Yes, hi, this is […] [name] I’m calling from [address], I just want to say that like my girlfriend was being crazy and I’m scared of her.” […] He used to do this to me constantly, like constantly, and almost like when this whole incident with me this time happened I almost didn’t believe him that he did it because, you know, the boy that cries wolf kind of thing.

For all three women, their partners’ threats, coercion and intimidation existed well before the charges and may have served as a warning of what their abusers were capable of if the women resorted to using force.

**Control Tactic #3 – Financial Abuse**

Johnson (2008) describes perpetrators of CCV frequently exerting financial abuse by removing economic resources that would have otherwise been available to their partners. They
may forbid them access to bank or credit cards, forcing all income to be handed over so that they
must ask for money to purchase even the most basic necessities, and are then required to provide
proof of all expenditures to ensure that everything is accounted for. Financial abuse was a
prominent theme throughout all three interviews with women who had used VR. Throughout
their interviews, many of the women identified more than one method of financial abuse they
endured. The first type was stealing their money which Laverne spoke about:

He would go into my purse while I was sleeping in the morning […] It just became such a
routine. […] I never had anything, he had everything. I would literally have to ask him for
five bucks to buy tampons when I was on my period, even though I was making more
money than he was.

Second, Brooke’s partner would make light of the fact that he was taking advantage of her
financially:

I’d pay it off and then he started working, he would still be using my visa. […] I actually
called my bank and told them to cut it off so that he couldn’t use it anymore. […] So many
times [before that], he would actually use my visa card or my debit card and I would give it
to him to say, “Use $100 or less” and then I would check my account and its like $300-400
dollars later. […] He would make […] a joke out of it, like [our friends] would say
something like “Let’s go to Niagara Falls this weekend” and he would say, “Umm yeah,
money? Money’s kind of tight but I know where I can get some, I have an unlimited visa
or debit.” So, and then he would like laugh about it. […] He would always be like “I’m
making more money than you do, […] but I could never understand where his money was
going. So, with that I guess was financial abuse.

Third, Laverne also discussed how her partner’s physical abuse made it difficult for her to
maintain steady employment resulting in her increased financial hardship each time she lost a job
due to his violence:

I’ve switched three career choices as of now because of him. When I first met him, I was
working at a […] firm […] and he hit me so bad one time and I had to go to work because
[…] we were in the middle of a [busy period] […] and I could barely see out of my face.
And my boss […] was like “If you don’t press charges, I will.” […] I ended up getting
fired as a result of this because I didn’t go to court and because I didn’t pursue it. […] Then
after that I went into doing […] reception. […] The same thing happened, he ended
up hitting me to the point that I was like not presentable. […] I got let go from that job
because they thought that I couldn’t keep up with the demands of my position, at least, I
was not reliable because it was like who knows if you’re going be like this next week or tomorrow? […] I got into [the service industry] and I’ve lost about three jobs right now because of what he’s done to me. Because I mean sometimes I literally couldn’t walk, sometimes I literally couldn’t see.

In the forth type of financial abuse discussed, women stated that their partners made empty promises to pay back the money that had been lent to them. First, Brooke stated:

One time we had a big family trip […] and he said he couldn’t go. But he only told me he couldn’t go, only because, and I knew, I felt it, he wanted me to offer to pay for his trip or a part of it. He kept bringing it up, “Oh I really wish I could go but I can’t, you know, work is kind of tight” blah blah blah and then last minute he said, “Can you put it on your Visa and I’ll give you back cash for it?” […] So, I put it on my Visa, I believe the ticket was about eleven something? He gave me back $400 […] and he said, “I’ll give you the other half, - which wasn’t even half, but I’ll give you the other half […] in a week,” or something like that. And he never brought it up.

And Laverne shared that:

Because I lent him so much money and I lost so much because of him and due to him, I eventually stayed because I wanted some of it back and he would always tell me “Okay next time I get paid or I have an extra hundred bucks I’ll give it to you or whatever” and I didn’t want to feel that I was going to lose everything that I had invested into the relationship up until that point you know, I wanted to believe, so much, that I was going to get some of it back, that I wasn’t being taken for granted and that I wasn’t being used, which is exactly what it was.

Overall, being subjected to financial abuse by a male partner meant that some women had to do without the necessities, such as Brooke:

Going back to the visa and my debit card that he had, I remember I needed, needed that visa or money to do something. And he wanted it to do something else and I just said “Okay, go on.” So, I put his wants in front of my needs.

Lastly, Patrice reported that her partner’s ongoing efforts to maintain financial control over her continued even after she had been charged and sent to the PAR program:

He even asks me how much money I have in my chequing account. […] It got to the point where he would even ask me to check my statement just to make sure. He doesn’t have [that right], were not engaged. We don’t even live together. […] [Recently he told me] “Okay, well what we need to do now is come up with the budget.” And I was like, I didn’t even respond to that. I just stayed quiet. I was just like [thinking] budget for what? So you can control my money? So that you can know exactly where my money goes? […] I have
to justify everything and now you want to monitor my expenses which, to me, was actually pretty scary. That’s why didn’t answer.

To summarize, the three women who used VR reported numerous methods that their partners used to maintain financial control. Even though most of the women worked or had access to their own funds, they shared various examples of financial abuse. Being subjected to financial abuse creates another layer of complications among women experiencing coercive control who may not have the financial resources to survive on their own (Stark, 2012). Therefore, for some women, they may have felt that using force was the only realistic option.

**Control Tactic # 4 – Isolation**

According to Johnson (2008), the perpetrator may engage in isolation tactics by having the victim sever all ties with friends and family so that they become solely dependent on them for support and information. Isolation creates ideal conditions for emotional abuse to occur using repeated put downs, humiliation and brainwashing so that the victim feels she cannot survive without the perpetrator since she no longer has support networks. Isolation was a prevalent theme among women who reported using VR. Again, all three of the women believed they were subjected to forms of isolation and described a variety of approaches that the men took to cut them off from their support networks by discouraging them from socializing with their family, friends or both. Brooke’s partner was blatant in his disapproval of her having friendships with others:

A guy friend sent me a text message saying, “Good morning [Brooke], what’s up?” and he saw that and he said, “Why is this guy messaging me so early in the morning? Does he have nothing better to do? What’s up with him and I? Like, what’s going on?” I said “Nothing.” […] He actually made me feel like something was going on between myself and this guy. So, I actually called the guy and said “Well, here’s what, I’m in a relationship, I know there’s nothing going on with you and me, but just don’t message me
anymore.” Right? And I just ended that friendship, there was nothing more but a friendship. […] It’s always, I’m never faithful.

Laverne’s partner would criticize her family’s lack of support towards her while simultaneously making her feel that she was worthless and only had him to rely on:

Yeah [he didn’t like it when I went out with friends]. No, we wouldn’t fight about family but he would always make me feel bad about my family, he would always make me feel like “Oh, they didn’t want you, I was always there for you, they weren’t. When you needed somebody your mom wasn’t there, your dad wasn’t there, your brother didn’t give a shit.”

Patrice reported that her partner continued to attempt to isolate her from her fellow PAR members in an effort to thwart her from creating a new support network. He would interrogate her about the potential friendships she had made in the group and would pick her up so that she would not have the opportunity to socialize with any of the other women outside of the program:

He would even like pick me up at the groups sometimes because he didn’t believe that I was at the group. Yeah. Or I would come out of the group and he’d be like “Oh, who’s that, who’s that girl or what do you talk to her about?”

Thus, all the women who had used VR had experienced some form of isolation by their partner throughout their relationship which may have culminated in their decision to use force when viewed alongside all the other control tactics they were subjected to by coercive controlling partners.

Control Tactic # 5 – Minimization/Denial/Blaming for Abuse

For Johnson (2008), minimizing, denying and blaming the woman for the abuse is related to the emotional abuse that many women experience as part of CCV. Men who exert coercive control view their partner as the abusive person in the relationship that is in need of help. Therefore, they view her as the reason why he tries to control her behaviour through non-physical tactics as well as physical violence. One woman discussed being blamed by her partner
who refused to take responsibility for his actions as part of the overall coercive control she experienced in the relationship. Patrice acknowledged that her partner had repeatedly accused her of being unfaithful and used this to blame her for causing his jealousy and paranoia in the past, rather viewing this as part of his controlling behaviour towards her. The PAR program had helped Patrice recognize that he was using this tactic to control her when she stated she would no longer take the blame for his feelings:

I don’t want to deal with his paranoia and I made it clear to him that this is now his issue, you can’t blame your paranoia on me anymore, you can’t blame your jealousy on me anymore, that’s not how it is.

Patrice believed her partner would minimize his jealous and controlling behaviours by blaming her for causing him to feel this way as another method of exerting coercive control over the relationship and which played into the situation that resulted in her charges.

**Control Tactic # 6 - Male Privilege**

Johnson (2008) describes male privilege as a blanket expectation that, as the man of the house, anything he says goes without reason or question. It is expected that the woman will remain amenable to his demands because she is seen as “his woman” (Johnson, 2008: 8). One woman discussed how it was insinuated that her partner felt being the man afforded him the privilege of having sex whenever he desired. Challenging these privileges essentially translated into Patrice’s partner feeling disrespected within the relationship. Patrice reflected on his expectation that she should be sexually available to him on command regardless of her desire to be intimate saying “I was like “I’m just so tired can I just go to sleep?” and then he would just start huffing and puffing and he’s a man and he’s not getting sex.” Refusing to have sex would ultimately result in an argument where her partner would be emotionally abusive by calling her a
whore and accusing her of cheating on him. He felt blatantly insulted because, from his perspective, he was entitled to the benefits that living in a patriarchal society afforded him (Chesney-Lind, 2006).

Control Tactic #7 - Using Children

Coercive controllers may use children as another form of domination against their partner since the children understand that the perpetrator is in control and may intimidate them into supporting or engaging in activities that demean the victim (Johnson, 2008). The perpetrator may also threaten to take the children away or harm them if the victim does not do as she is told (Johnson, 2008). Brooke shared an instance where she felt her ex-partner was deliberately making it impossible for her to take their daughter on a trip to see her family:

I wanted to take my, or our daughter to [my country of origin] to see my parents, my side of the family because I’m here in Canada alone. […] I asked him like months in advance, he said yes and then closer to the time he’s saying no, like, I cannot take her because he doesn’t trust me. […] Then he said, “Okay, you can take her but I need some information.” […] I gave him all the information […] and he just kept coming up with more stuff. […] He would come to the apartment and he would make a big fuss, […] he would […] see her toys on the ground, say that’s not acceptable, the place is dirty, the place is nasty. […] He would […] say to my daughter, “You’re just like your mother.” […] I would say to him “Don’t say that to her, it’s not a good thing, I would never say to her “You’re just like your father.”

Overall, women who were classified as violent resistors were subjected to a variety of control tactics throughout their relationship which collectively may have led to their use of force resulting in charges. The three women who used VR described their actions that met the definition of acting in self-defence and two argued that their partners made exaggerated claims about how their use of force unfolded.
5.2: Participants Who Used Situational Couple Violence

Eight of the nineteen women (or 42%) interviewed were classified by the researcher as using Situational Couple Violence (SCV) – violence that is not motivated by the need to exert control over the relationship, and is not in response to CCV, but rather, conflict that can escalate to use of force by either or both the woman and her partner and, therefore, is distinct from CCV and VR (Johnson, 2008). Of the eight women who were classified as using SCV because their actions appeared to be situationally driven, five described situations that involved poor anger management on their part while three discussed their partners’ use of emotionally abusive behaviour in the situation where they were charged which did not meet the threshold for CCV. Their experiences are presented below, followed by a review of the other relevant aspects of their SCV.

SCV Characteristic #1 – Use of Force Arising From Situational Conflict in the Absence of Power and Control

Situational couple violence occurs when a partner reacts by using force in response to mounting tensions that stem from a specific argument and their physical actions are not motivated by a desire to gain control over the person or the relationship. This absence of a desire for control is what distinguishes SCV from the other categories within Johnson’s typology (Johnson, 2008; Kelly and Johnson, 2008). All eight of the women described their use of force that led them to the program as a conflict that turned physical in an incident-specific situation where there was no desire for relationship-wide control on the part of either themselves or their partner. Cristina maintained that neither her nor her partner had ever exhibited controlling behaviours towards one another but rather, they were arguing over an ongoing stressful situation:
[Relating to an unrelated tragedy that my partner witnessed at work] Apparently he’ll never get over it but he won’t go and get any help for it and so I actually had to deal with it. And what brought us to always clash, was that, him being super tired and on edge because he doesn’t sleep well, he has nightmares over it. [...] Because we’d been together for [...] years and it was like [...] days before [an important event] that basically stuff hit the fan. [...] I stomped out of the room and he said “So, so you’re leaving, are you?” and I said “I don’t want to say that, I don’t want to threaten you [with a separation], [...] I’m going to have to because this isn’t the way we live.” [...] [Long pause, tears up] After [...] years [together] he said “[…] Maybe I could help speed things up a little bit.” [pause] And I said, “What do you mean by that?” and he says “Just, just go, just go!” and so I just left the room [...] and I heard him say to me [clears throat], this is what his exact words were [long pause] “Why don’t you just fucking go and arch your back for someone else.” [long pause]. [...] And I went back to the bedroom because I heard it and I gave him an elbow right in the jaw.

Zara felt that her partner would repeatedly prioritize his friends over her and on the day that she used force he had invited her over but then left her alone so that he could visit his friends. She texted him pretending that she broke his video console and then went over to his friend’s place to convince him to spend time with her but he ended up phoning the police:

He decided he was gonna call the cops saying that I destroyed his property. [...] He was like, “Oh, my ex-girlfriend.” We wound up in the stairwell, [...] I was trying to talk to him to find out why all of a sudden [I’m now your ex]. I went to walk away and basically, he called my name and I turned […] and that’s when he ran at me and his shoulder met my of rib cage and he basically speared me into a stairwell door and my head hit off the door. [...] He did it again, [...] and then the third time […] and that’s when I basically wrapped my arm around his neck, grabbed his shoulder and flung him to get him away from me so that I can get away. [...] He turned around and he told police that basically I pushed him to the ground and I got on top of him and that I beat him up.

Olivia’s use of force also stemmed from an argument about her partner’s friend which, from her perspective, was an extension of a larger point of contention in their relationship. Generally, Olivia felt her partner avoided working through conflict and therefore she was adamant that they come to a resolution:

There was never any real common thread, [...] something very little [...] would always bring on a level of aggression from not resolving the previous argument [...] We had also argued about one of his friends a couple days before that never got resolved where he ended up cracking our coffee table [...] so it just ended up being the same argument. [...] It just seemed like [my ex] was always chasing after his [best friend’s] friendship. [...]
We were discussing […] if we were to have a kid who would be the godmother and godfather […] and he specially mentioned this person and I knew for a fact this person had a child [and the] godfather wasn’t my ex. […] I was like, “I understand that you care for him and that you really appreciate the friendship, but […] how does that make sense when he doesn’t have you in his life in that way?” […] I just felt that I had a good point and I wanted to be acknowledged for it, and [my ex] never deals with things at all. […] I had a couple to drink, […] we start arguing and when he was hitting the laundry door […] I don't know if I thought at that time that it would be kind of funny or that it would stop him in his tracks, but I threw the [glass of] water at him and said, “You need to cool down” […] which obviously is not smart.

Olivia admitted that she was not sure whether she threw water as a joke or to alarm him; nevertheless, she did not do so to gain relationship-wide control.

Madeline viewed her use of force as stemming from her state of intoxication which hindered her ability to use self-control:

We were both just really drunk and we were drinking one night and I wanted to get more alcohol so my boyfriend said no and I got really aggressive and I didn’t know that I was doing it because I was blacked out, like I didn’t understand what I was doing at the time and then it just got really, like physical, like where I just started hitting him because I just wanted to drink more.

Marian did not appear to be trying to exert relationship-wide control when she admitted to taunting her ex-partner for not spending time with their child whom she felt deserved his attention. Rather than continue to enable his absence in their son’s life by not voicing her opinion, Marian used the opportunity to incite a reaction out of him:

There’s some things that you have to let go of when you become a parent and he wasn’t ready for that and there were other things that were more important to him than taking care of his kids. […] I was dropping my son off to his grandmother and I seen his dad outside and it’s been months where he hasn’t made any contact, […] and I was like, “Deadbeat of the year, come get your kid!” you know? [laughs]. […] I’m an instigator and I’m going to use my words and instigate things. […] We got into a fight, he hit me and I pushed him off of me, you know, and he kept coming back and I’m kicking him and we’re fighting.

Rather than wanting to exert control over her partner, Neda described her use of force occurring out of frustration and exasperation because she lacked post-partum support that she
needed:

[My infant son] was really sick, he had pneumonia, and he was on his way to the hospital for a 24 hour check up and I was so tired, I was just like miserable. So, I just had a c-section and [...] I was tired, I was still cleaning up after everyone, umm and I just felt like I didn’t have enough help from my partner and he was ignoring me. […] I wanted to have a shower that morning too before we left and he just came out of the shower and he said, “Okay let’s go” and I said, “Well I want to have a shower before we leave” and he said, “Well we have to leave now” and that’s when I was just like “Okay I’m done, I’ve had enough.” […] I pushed him and then he pushed me back onto the bed.

Ivy was charged for carrying out a previous threat to damage her partner’s vehicle that she knew he cherished to get back at him for continuing to cheat with a woman whom he had promised he would stop seeing. However, Ivy made it clear that she had no intentions of physically harming her partner and she felt that she was not trying to control him other than wanting him to stop cheating on her:

I saw him drop off the girl, I drove behind him. […] That’s when I jumped out of the vehicle […] and that’s when I explode[d]. […] He’s been doing this to me too much and every time he did it, he said he’d stop. […] Then I [would] catch him doing it again. […] I had a chopper in my hand and I did have a knife in the car too, because I said I’m going to puncture the tire and I’m going to take the chopper and chop up the vehicle. […] There was no damage done to the vehicle, there was no damage done to him. […] He told the cop that “She's not going to hurt me, she just wants to damage the vehicle because I cheated on her.” […] He knows I’m not going to hurt him and I wouldn’t do that.

In addition to not wanting to cause physical harm to her partner, Ivy made it clear that she had no intentions of separating from him despite his repeated infidelity; therefore, her circumstance could not be considered as SV.

Lastly, Denise’s actions seemingly occurred as a joke when she threw a frozen bun at her partner after he came home drunk and wanted to talk which she was not in the mood for:

He came back a little bit feeling good, […] and I was in the kitchen and I wasn’t drinking anything. It’s just him, [he] keeps talking and talking and I said, “Please, shut up!” [laughs]. And he was drunk and I threw the frozen bun at him and it wasn’t nothing like I meant to hurt him, I can’t, and I threw it. And because he was drunk [he phoned the police]. […] He felt stupid, but too late, right? […] It was just an incident because he didn’t want to stop talking and that’s why it was like a joke when I threw the bun at him.
All the circumstances mentioned above appeared to capture conflict that was situationally motivated with many of the arguments escalating to physical force because the women felt hurt or frustrated with the situation rather than wanting to gain control over their partner or the relationship. In fact, two women made it a point to discuss their willingness for their partner to maintain other friendships with Zara stating:

I don’t mind him going to spend time with his friends. But my problem was, [...] don’t sit there and tell me you’re going to go there and come back. If you’re going to stay, at least be honest with me. [...] I would love it to spend time with you, but if you want to go spend time with your friends that’s fine, but at least let me know. [...] I would love it if you know, we can go to my friends’ houses and you guys have a friendship and I can go to your friend’s houses and have a friendship with them.

And Ivy:

[I want him to] stop seeing that woman [that he is having an affair with], that’s the only thing I’m trying to control him with. I’m fine with him going out there. I am fine if he leaves and goes out there to be with his friends and go places.

These women did not want relationship-wide control but rather simply wanted a resolution or a response to a specific situation.

**SCV Characteristic # 2 – Poor Anger Management**

The first characteristic of SCV highlighted women’s accounts of how their force occurred in the absence of a desire for power and control; and the second characteristic is poor anger management which has been described by Kelly and Johnson (2008) as occurring when “one or both partners appear to have poor ability to manage their conflicts and/or poor control of anger” (p. 485). Five women described their actions as occurring due to their inability to convey their anger using constructive forms of communication. For example, Marian admitted that they were “very hot-headed people together,” while Cristina felt that her partner had purposely provoked
her to escalate the situation after he crossed a line by swearing at her. Alternatively, Olivia felt that she engaged in poor anger management by initially provoking her partner which she subconsciously knew would escalate his behaviour:

I probably was initially the aggressor by not letting something go, but then he kind of took it up to that physical level by losing his shit [and hitting the laundry door] so, it was a back and forth, but I mean […] to say who started it, probably me by not letting anything go, it probably looked like I was the aggressor.

However, two of the women describe their poor anger management as stemming from other issues, including Madeline who was under the influence of alcohol and Neda who was possibly reacting to feelings relating to undiagnosed post-partum depression. Thus, while their use of force appeared to have occurred in part because they were unable to manage their anger during the incident, it could also be attributed to their larger addiction and mental health concerns that were affecting them at the time.

**SCV Characteristic # 3 – Exhibiting Emotionally Abusive Behaviour**

According to Kelly and Johnson (2008), SCV may include some emotional abuse and jealousy and the presence of these features distinctly falls under this category if it is not intertwined with “a chronic pattern of controlling, intimidating or stalking behaviours” that are characteristic of CCV (p. 486). Three of eight women who used SCV reported using some form of emotional abuse towards their partner. First, after reflecting on the situation with her ex-partner with whom she was frustrated for not making an effort to see their child, Marian admitted “Me, I’m an instigator and I’m going to use my words and instigate things. […] I realize that over time that you know, I instigated the whole thing.” Although women may typically be more willing to accept their wrongdoing in IPV (Dobash and Dobash, 2004), this did not appear to be reflective of Marian’s personality based on the observations made throughout the interview as
well as during participant observations made within the group she attended, since at times, she
exuded attitudes and shared opinions that could instigate negative reactions from others.

Neda acknowledged her previous use of emotional manipulation; however, she did not
describe it as being chronic throughout the relationship nor did she engage in it to intimidate her
partner. Rather, she acknowledged doing this to get him to share their parental responsibilities:

I’ve tried to say “You don’t care; you don’t care about the family, about our family, our
little family. […] Because I know it makes him mad. When I see that he’s not doing
something, like he’s not helping out enough I’ll say something like that. I know it’s
wrong but I know it will get to him and he’ll be like “Okay fine, I’ll do it.”

Lastly, Ivy discussed her intention to emotionally rather than physically hurt her partner
by damaging his car to get back at him for continuing to cheat on her:

I’m telling them [the police] “No it’s not my husband [that I want to harm], it’s just the
vehicle I want to do the damage and it’s my vehicle.” […] I don’t want to hurt my
husband, I just want to hurt my husband by damaging the vehicle.

These women admitted that they had used forms of emotional abuse to get back at their partner
for the emotional harm they had caused them and/or to try to get through to their partner in a
manner that was not consistent with attempting to use coercive control over the relationship.

5.3: Uses of Force Not Captured by Johnson’s Typology of Violence

Five of the 19 women (or 26%) did not meet the criteria to be included in one of the four
categories of Johnson’s typology of violence. To recap, first, CCV includes imminent physical
violence in addition to non-physical control tactics present throughout the relationship as
identified in the Power and Control Wheel (Johnson, Leone, & Xu, 2014; Johnson, 2008; Kelly
& Johnson, 2008). Second, VR occurs in response to the CCV described above and requires the
resistor to act defensively to the imminent threat of violence (Johnson, Leone, & Xu, 2014).
Third, SCV is circumstantially triggered by mounting tensions over a specific encounter that
does not stem from the desire for power and control over the relationship by either partner and can vary between occurrences that are singular and minor to chronic and severe (Johnson, 2008; Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Finally, SV captures violence that first occurs at separation rather than pre-existing violence that continues upon separation, which was not captured within this sample (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Each of the women’s descriptions of their use of force that did not fit any of categories within Johnson’s (2008) typology are presented below. To follow, the section will examine the context in which they used force in relation to Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence by highlighting the characteristics that align and those that diverge from the categories to demonstrate where the typology requires further theorizing.

**Elsie**

First, Elsie’s ex-partner recently ended their long-term relationship because he had found someone new but they agreed to meet to discuss his infidelity. Elsie described her use of force occurring during separation because he lacked empathy towards her which made her angry:

> It wasn’t even a long argument either, it was just like we were angry or I was angry? And then I was saying stuff about it, it’s like “How could you do that? How could you not care how I feel?” That sort of thing and he was just kind of being really I guess like, stonewalling or something? Just like “Whatever, too bad for you” kind of thing and then yeah, I just got really mad and I slapped him.

Reflecting on her use of force throughout their relationship, Elsie identified one other instance where she used force occurring for the first time at separation:

> I would say he was more of the aggressor. […] There was probably only two incidents in our whole relationship where I got aggressive with him. […] I don’t know what he was getting mad about but he got mad about something, this is when we were trying to be friends again, and he just like, started tearing the apartment apart. […] Yes, I was fearful. […] I can’t say what my mindset was while I threw the frying pan at him but […] likely I was upset with him that he was always breaking my things. […] He was spanking me and I guess […] it wasn’t hurting me enough so he decided to cut me so he was cutting me. I think he found a piece of glass on the ground.
Although Elsie’s use of force could be characterized as SV since it began at separation, she described her partner perpetrating physical and non-physical control tactics throughout their relationship. This suggests that she was using VR by responding to the long-term effects of being subjected to elements of coercive control by her partner. However, Johnson’s (2008) operationalization requires that VR be in response to the imminent threat of violence which was not the case here. Rather, Elsie reported that her ex-partner was violent two to three times a year which included physical and sexual abuse. She also described him using two non-violent control tactics including threats and intimidation, and minimizing/denying/blaming her for the abuse over the course of their long-term relationship. However, the use of force for which Elsie was charged was different from their typical arguments which centred upon his threats to self-harm and would often turn physical:

*What would happen is he would be upset about something […]*, he was a self-mutilator and tried to kill himself on multiple occasions so when he would get to that point I would get really worried about him and I would try to make sure he’s okay and everything like that. And then he would get mad at me and throw me around and stuff like that. Later, she returned to this point saying:

*I wouldn’t leave him alone and he would want me to leave him alone. But I was afraid to leave him alone because if I left him alone he could end up dead […]* So I wouldn’t leave him alone and that’s when he would get mad and push me away and stuff like that. But he’s really strong and he’s drinking so he doesn’t really realize like how much force he’s using.

It was unclear whether her partner had suicide ideation or if he made these threats to maintain control over her. Nevertheless, she would respond by either attempting to stop him or would avoid arguing with him in the hopes that this would minimize his urge to self-harm.

Elsie reflected on her partner’s sexual violence against her when he engaged in non-consensual sex with her and then blamed her for his actions:
He had [laughs] sex with me while I was passed out and then he woke me up and got mad at me that I allowed him to have sex with me. I was like, “I didn’t allow you to have sex with me.” [laughs] […] He was really upset with me and I had to calm him down and stuff instead of myself being upset with him like, “What the fuck is wrong with you?!” [Laughs] You know, but I had to calm him down. So, I had to sort of negate my own feelings in regards to it and make him feel better about it.

In other words, he used sexual violence towards her and then resorted to the control tactic of minimizing, denying and blaming her for him sexually assaulting her while she was passed out.

While the situation that brought Elsie to the PAR program centred upon her frustration with a recent separation which is characteristic of SV, a deeper look into her use of force over the course of the relationship suggests that she was using VR thereby exposing additional difficulties in applying the typologies accurately and consistently. First, Elsie made it clear that she did not have any control over her partner throughout the relationship stating “[Would I use any strategies to try to get what I wanted or to control him?] No. I would just talk. And then eventually he would convince me [laughs] of the wrongness of my thoughts [laughs].” She continued by stating:

Literally, I could never threaten him, it wouldn’t have mattered. I could have tried and it wouldn’t have mattered. He would have just been like “Fine, do whatever you want” [laughs]. You know what I mean? There was no convincing him. […] I had to talk to him in a reasonable way. And I could never come to him in an angry tone, because if I ever came to him in an angry tone then he would just be mad, you know, and shut down and not want to listen to me.

Next, Elsie summed up her reason for slapping her partner in the jaw after he had stonewalled her in the situation for which she was charged by saying:

I think the reason why I got aggressive with him at the end was because of all the years where he would, umm, [sniffles, starts tearing up] […] just because you know, like, umm, like, he always dominated me. Yeah. I think that’s why. I just wanted to fight back but I never could.

Thus, Elsie lacked any sort of power and control in her relationship contrary to the premise of most psycho-educational programs that operate under the principle that addressing this desire is
central to modifying violent behaviour in intimate relationships (Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009). Elsie was subjected to the frequent use of a limited number of control tactics alongside occasional physically violent episodes that operated to subordinate her. However, she lacked reacting to the imminent threat of violence in the actual incident which was needed in order to meet Johnson’s requirements of VR even though she had used VR in a previous incident where she threw a frying pan to defend herself from his oncoming violence.

These findings suggest that Johnson’s typology may not apply to all forms of IPV since Elsie’s experience lends support to Stark’s (2007) critique that coercive controllers can rely on their frequent use of non-physical tactics rather than violence to ensure compliance. However, the application of Johnson’s typologies could result in some women such as Elsie being misclassified by the incident-based criminal justice system since she was not reacting to the threat of physical violence when she was charged.

Aurelia

Although Aurelia acknowledged that she hit her partner which resulted in charges, the details of her partner’s actions leading up to her use of force eliminated her circumstance from fitting into any of the categories within Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence. Aurelia described her use of force as follows:

It was due to an argument related to my son and my son’s father, […] [my partner who was involved in the charges] just wasn’t able to handle the situation and he started saying horrible things again to me and I ended up losing it and I must have struck him, he says over 100 times, I don't have any recollection. […] [At the same time, he was engaging in actions that were typical of his threatening behaviour], he would punch the walls, he had tried, he also has firearms in the home. He was threatening suicide. It was just a really bad scene.
Even though she admitted that he had never used physical violence towards her, Aurelia discussed feeling as though she had to be sexually available to him even though they had separated but were still living together:

I could only say “no” so much before I knew I sort of had to give in because if he didn’t have sex for a while that […] would make him angry. […] Even though we had separated and were not sleeping together anymore, at one point I felt I had to sleep with him because […] he starts punching walls, like I had moved out of our bedroom and into my son’s bedroom across the hall with my clothes, everything. […] I was afraid with his drinking that one night he was going to be horny and not take “no” for an answer and I just shudder at the thought of what may have happened and so I literally felt like I had to sleep with him just to relieve that.

She felt that she had to pre-emptively engage in sex as a strategy to avoid being a target of his sexual violence in the future. Although Aurelia initiated force against her partner, she perceived her actions to occur in response to a number of non-physical control tactics that he had used throughout their relationship which contained aspects corresponding with CCV including the use of intimidation, coercion and threats as mentioned above. Aurelia also discussed his attempts to isolate her from her son’s father as well as how he manipulated her family into cutting her off after she was charged:

I’m estranged from some of my family because they have taken up for him and so far, my cousin lives in my own [matrimonial] home. […] [Cries] My other cousin, her sister, introduced him to a lady who is now his girlfriend, my cousin, yes. […] My mother has had to deal with the backlash from [my cousin’s] mother who’s her sister, and so my mother […] is torn between her child and her sister and it’s killing her what’s happening to me. [Cries] But there’s my ex who is making her feel as if she has to cut me off, or she has to treat me badly, or not be my mother.

Aurelia also spoke of his emotional abuse which, in the example below, intersected with his use of male privilege and racism towards her:

He has that chauvinistic attitude, that type of behaviour about him, that he is the man, and for many years I felt like a second-class citizen […] because […] he is Canadian, I’m a visible minority, and he would make me feel that way throughout the years. […] We were walking pushing the baby in the stroller and a couple had stopped [and said] […] “He’s so cute, but he’s so fair” and [he] turned around to the women and said, “Yeah it’s
hard to believe he’s half [derogatory term].” Because […] he’s a White guy, he’s Canadian like this is his land type of thing, right? […] So, hence why I felt like that way and in terms of me being arrested now, he decided he’s staying in the home, he is going to stay in the home, I must leave.

Her account of this particular incident reflects the intersecting oppressions of race, class and citizenship that she experienced. His disparaging remarks about Aurelia’s racial background coupled with his feelings of entitlement as a White, Canadian man who should have priority claim to the matrimonial home, all played into his emotional abuse and use of male privilege which he also asserted by maintaining financial control over the relationship:

I pretty much had to fight to be added onto his bank account as jointly as his wife. He didn’t give me a debit card until I was added jointly. His reasoning was that if I want something, I just have to ask for it, like a child.

Aurelia also discussed how he would threaten to take the children away from her if she left him and carried out this threat after she was charged:

The worst part of this whole situation was […] because of Children’s Aid involvement they would not allow both of us to reside at the home. […] I’ve stayed home every single day with my […] younger children, [cries] who have special needs, who I had to cart around to doctor’s appointments, therapy, you know, to school, this children’s centre, that children’s centre. And he decided that he was going to stay in that home because that’s his home, where he lives and pays the bills, and it’s in his name.

Even though Aurelia acknowledged using physical violence twice thereby corresponding with less frequent episodes which is characteristic of SCV, it could not be classified as such since SCV requires that neither partner possesses controlling features throughout the relationship (Johnson, 2008). Her partner was extremely jealous of her son’s father which caused tension within the relationship as he did not want her to have contact with him even though their adult son needed their support due to difficult life circumstances. Because her current partner was not physically abusive towards her, she did not meet Johnson’s (2008) VR classification. However, as indicated above, her partner exhibited non-physical control tactics that reflected coercive
control and collectively fed into her low self-esteem and feeling trapped in the relationship. She tried to manage these feelings and experiences which eventually led to her blanking out and exploding, hitting her partner multiple times and being charged and sent to the PAR program which is designed to address coercive controlling features that appear to align with her partner’s conduct rather than her own. Overall, this raises questions regarding how well suited the curriculum may be in addressing the needs of women in relation to their use force towards a non-physical, coercive controlling partner as presented in Stark’s (2006) critique of Johnson’s typology which is raised in the discussion chapter.

Lynne

Lynne was at home drinking and feeling depressed when her co-worker, with whom she had recently ended their brief relationship, arrived at her door unexpectedly in another attempt to harass and monitor her whereabouts:

Somehow he bypassed that [the locked lobby door] and knocked on my door and it’s like, “I don’t want you here I don’t want to argue, I don’t want to hear it.” […] I let him in and I got a little too drunk and next thing you know we’re fighting, we’re arguing and I told him not to touch me, not to hold me, I don’t want hugs, I don’t want this, I don’t want that, I don’t want nothing from you. I just want you to get the eff out and when he didn’t, I had to start pushing him and be like “Just take your stuff and just go” and then he didn’t go. […] I honestly don’t know why, it must have been because I was drunk, I picked up the screwdriver and I just punctured him in the hand and then the next thing I know, he’s calling the police. And I’m like wow, I’m being arrested in my own house for self-defence, that’s great.

Lynne felt her actions were in self-defence and were justified because she was responding to her partner who was repeatedly attempting to isolate her by monitoring her day-to-day activities in an attempt to try to hold onto the relationship. However, Lynne’s force could not be captured under Johnson’s (2008) categories. First, Lynne’s actions could not be identified as
SCV which requires neither individual to be controlling because she made it clear that her partner was extremely controlling:

He’s calling me, sixty missed phone calls at a time by the time I get out of the subway. […] When I don’t answer, he completely fills up my […] entire mailbox. […] He’s very controlling, […] calls all the time, wants to know [where I am all the time], and it just got too much for me. […] I think that was the biggest mistake, that I let him know where I live because now […] that’s why he just shows up randomly. I mean, it’s scary.

From her perspective, his controlling tendencies led him to show up at her door unannounced which spiraled into an argument where she used physical force in an attempt to have him leave. Lynne also discussed her partner using coercive control tactics during the brief time they were dating, including making efforts to isolate her while minimizing and denying this by trying to appear as if he was looking out for her:

He ended up telling me “Just so you know, you need to watch your back because these guys were talking about you and saying how easy you were […]” And I said, “How did you catch that? That’s not what it sounded like.”

He was also emotionally controlling by giving Lynne the silent treatment and passing by to glare at her:

If I didn’t talk to him [he would give me the silent treatment]. […] He did try to [interrogate] me […] “Why wouldn’t you pick up your phone, where are you for lunch? Why wouldn’t you pick up your phone and tell me?” […] and then he’ll pass by [while I’m eating lunch with co-workers] which is even worse.

In addition, he would threaten to end the relationship in an attempt to isolate and control her by saying “If you don’t come and talk to me now, that’s it, we’re over, don’t bother talking to me, we’re finished.” Lynne’s partner displayed features similar to Johnson’s (2008) dependent coercive controller which describes individuals who exhibit high emotional dependency on their partner resulting in their extreme jealousy and desire for control within the relationship but not outside of it. He was highly preoccupied with his emotional dependence towards her causing him to be excessively jealous in an attempt to maintain control over the relationship (Johnson,
2008). However, her partner fell short of Johnson’s definition of a dependent coercive controller because he did not use physical violence to exert control over the relationship. Therefore, although Lynne was responding to the intensity of her ex-partner’s isolation tactics along with his minimizing, emotional control, and coercion and threats, she could not be classified as using VR. She used force after they had separated, she identified her ex-partner as controlling which at times made her scared, and her actions were not the result of embarrassment or trauma on her part caused by the separation thereby eliminating her use of force as SCV or SV.

**Rayanne**

Rayanne did not have any recollection of her use of force since she and her partner had been drinking heavily, although she indicated that they had never previously used physical force against one another:

> We were drinking and […] we got into an argument and it got […] loud. The music was loud […] when somebody called the police, when the police came he was bleeding because I had nails and I grabbed his arm and he had you know, like a scratch right there and it was bleeding a little bit. […] We hadn’t hit each other, we weren’t fighting, […] he just went to walk away. […] I had […] an injury on my leg [from the incident] […] but I couldn’t pull up my pants and be like “Here look at this,” [to the police because] […] mine was bigger than his and then he would have went. […] He didn’t realize saying to the police “Yeah, she just grabbed my arm,” […] [would result in me being charged] because that’s what happened. And because there’s alcohol involved it’s a domestic and there’s visible physical injury, it’s just a stupid scratch, and you know, it was an argument, somebody has to go. […] I don’t even remember [what the argument was about]! Neither does he.

Although a proper assessment of the type of violence used by Rayanne could not be made because she was unable to recall details that lead to her use of force, it is important to note that alcohol may have played a role in the argument. However, it is difficult to determine to what extent this affected her decision to use force since she was unable to provide further insight into the events leading up to the police arriving.
In summary, force used by these women that led to charges against them could not be classified under the categories within Johnson’s typology of violence. None of the women who could recall what happened reported that they were reacting to the imminent threat of physical violence by their partner. This stipulation excluded them from possibility that they acted in self-defence or VR as operationalized in studies by Johnson and his colleagues (Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014; Johnson & Leone, 2005). Lynne and Aurelia reacted to the imminent threat of their partner’s non-physical control tactics whereby they sensed that a big argument was about to ensue based on familiar cues from the history of their relationships. Elsie also did not react based on an imminent threat of physical violence, but rather, was acting on the culmination of tolerating years of her partner’s control while supporting him through his mental health struggles, only for him to treat her as easily replaceable by cheating and ending their relationship. Their explanations of how their use of force unfolded in response to their partners’ non-physical control tactics make sense considering that the research suggests that coercive controllers use a variety of non-physical tactics to manipulate their partner and, therefore, do not need to rely on physical violence to exert control (Stark, 2007). Nevertheless, these deviations highlight some of the shortcomings of Johnson’s typology of violence for women who are charged and suggests that much more research is needed to understand IPV differentiation if it is going to be used to inform programs that seek to address women’s use of force. Below, the final group of women interviewed described themselves as being wrongfully accused, charged, convicted and mandated to the PAR program for using force against their partner.

5.4: Wrongful Convictions

Being wrongfully convicted was not an anticipated finding when examining the type of
force used by women; nevertheless, four of the 19 women (or 21%) described circumstances that could not be categorized under Johnson’s typology since they maintained that they were falsely accused. As such, the context in which they ended up in the program appeared to reflect wrongful convictions – where an innocent person is accused and erroneously convicted of engaging in criminal activity (Denov & Campbell, 2005). False allegations of abuse frequently stem from vexatious accusations by a partner who may not necessarily need to use physical violence because they can effectively rely on non-physical forms of coercion to maintain control in the relationship (Fitch & Easteal, 2017). All four women described being wrongfully accused by their partners which sparked criminal charges laid against them.

**Janine**

Janine was charged after her partner accused her of actions that she maintains had never occurred:

He was inside the house, no argument was going on, no nothing, […] I came home and I said “Hi” and he said “Hi” very funny, he looked at me and said, “I’m leaving now.” I said “Okay.” […] I called [him] at 8:45 and he answered very funny but I didn’t know he was with the police. But I said, “Hi [his name]” but he stayed quiet, somebody was listening and he hung up and I said, “Oh maybe he’s downstairs with somebody” and I went downstairs and a get out the elevator and I see two police at the front door. […] The officer said, “Are you [Janine]?” I said, “Yes”. He said, “Sit down.” […] I sat down and he said, “You’re arrested, […] [your husband] accused you.” I said “What? He accused me?” […] I was alone [and] my daughter was working. […] The police said, “Okay let’s go.” They put me in handcuffs, […] my two grandchildren […] [saw this] and they’re screaming saying “Nanny, Nanny what happened?” I said “Call [your mother] and tell [her] that [my partner] sent me to jail, call, run!”

Janine believed that her partner was retaliating because a family member had accused him of touching Janine’s granddaughter inappropriately. This sparked a rift in the family and isolated Janine which furthered her partner’s ability to engage in emotional and financial abuse:
One year before he had [Canadian] residency he touched my granddaughter. […] He was in jail […] because my daughter called police and this is why he has revenge towards me. […] I went to pay the [bail] for him to get out. […] I helped to pay the lawyer for him to get out of this problem. Later he told everybody, “Oh […] I don’t have a relationship with her for […] years.” But he didn’t tell me anything, he lied to me. He told me he was sick and he had this problem and I believed it and this is why I worked alone [instead of with him as a self-employed couple and I paid for everything].

Further, Janine believed he was resentful because she refused to sponsor his children, after which he resorted to forging her signature on the application:

He would say that I’m terrible and I don’t care for his family, […] you don’t care about my children. […] He got really mad […]. I said, “I don’t get paid a lot of money, the immigration won’t allow me to [sponsor] you and your son, […] you need to get your papers and ask for your children, not me.” […] He applied for [his] children [to immigrate to Canada] and he didn’t tell me […] he signed my name on the papers.

Janine’s partner appeared to be using his knowledge of the criminal justice system against her leading up to the charges:

He knows I don’t like when he grabs my ear and twists it. And I said, “[…] You know I don’t like this, […] please don’t do that.” And he never stopped, he would come close and would say “If you hit me, I will call the police” every time.

Thus, Janine’s partner may have been planning to wrongfully accuse her by fabricating her use of force because her daughter accused him of child molestation as well as for Janine’s unwillingness to sponsor his family.

Sophia

Sophia recounted her partner using physical force against her when she attempted to end their relationship upon discovering that he had been unfaithful. In turn, he made false accusations against her which resulted in her being solely charged and sent to the PAR program:

He had another relationship […] and when it came out […] I said, “I’m going to leave and I’m going to find somebody else who’s better for me than you.” […] Then just in a second he lost his mind and he grabbed a bottle and begun to hit my head and I had to run out from that place […] He said [to the police] that I was breaking his laptop even though
he was the one that was breaking his laptop, not me. [...] But he said that I [...] also assaulted him by scratching his neck. It was this way [vertical] not this way [horizontal]. And if grabbed him, I would grab this way [horizontal choke] because I was sitting and he was up there [standing above her]. [...] He was doing the scratches to himself.

Sophia also recounted previous circumstances where her ex-partner would become physical with her:

He slapped me before and he slapped me again. And every time I let him to do it, it was harder you know, first it was just a slap, then a punch and I would fall and you know he would become stronger.

Sophia also discussed five forms of non-physical abuse that her partner subjected her to throughout their relationship including emotional abuse, intimidation, financial abuse, isolation, male privilege. Starting with emotional abuse:

He would make me feel down a lot. He would call me a slut or say that I wasn’t worth anything, [...] or I had more than two men in my life. [...] I had a marriage before this, and my ex-husband also had some affairs, [...] I had an affair too. [...] Still today he tries to make me feel bad about my past. Then I feel down for days. [...] I feel emotionally just so down and worth nothing.

At times, Sophia felt intimidated by her partner’s threatening behaviour and she would act accordingly to avoid any confrontation saying “I know his face, so I would keep quiet so when I see he’s angry then I don’t talk. So, it was better to be quiet then to fight it out.”

She also discussed being subjected to financial abuse by her partner who would discourage her from taking opportunities to make money in an effort to maintain control over her:

The person [...] said, “Come, you’ll make some money, [...] and you’re going to make good money” and when he saw that it was the man he said, “No, it’s better if you don’t go. I’ll give you that money, it’s not for you, it’s not worth it.” [...] He was controlling.

Sophia’s partner tried to isolate her by indirectly warning her that her mother-son relationship could turn sexual:
He would tell me stories about how some moms sometimes end up in the bed with their son [laughs]. He was telling me as a joke but I knew what he meant, that he was not trusting me. He would tell me that he heard all kinds of stories may be where he came from. […] He had some trust issues, he was jealous for my son.

He would also make plans to spend time together knowing that she had already committed to seeing friends in an effort to have her abandon them:

Just slowly I see that I don’t have any friends. […] I have a lot of friends before, in two or three years they were gone. He was smarter than me, he doesn’t say “Stop hanging out with them” but when I would try to go out with them […] there were always other plans so he would pull me out from friends. He’s smart, yes. And then I lost my friends because I was not there.

Sophia discussed how cultural expectations that supported male privilege in their country of origin played into her partner’s belief that he could be unfaithful and abusive towards her while still expecting her to stay thereby revealing the intersections of gender and cultural oppression at play:

It’s different back home. […] There’s no protection, you have to live with that man, you need each other for survival, women don’t have self-esteem so they stay. […] Yes, yes, of course [he believed this and therefore expected me to stay with him and have low self-esteem].

Overall, Sophia described her ex-partner as using non-physical controlling tactics against her throughout the course of their relationship in addition to the physical violence that she endured up until their separation. She maintained that she was wrongfully accused by her ex-partner who was using the criminal justice system against her to exert further control by alleging that she left vertical scratches on his neck while choking him even though these marks would have been horizontal if had they occurred in the manner he described.
Ana

Ana was co-habiting with her ex-partner but living in a separate room since she was relatively new to Canada and did not have anywhere else to live because he had isolated her from her limited support system. Ana’s charges stemmed from an argument where she confronted her ex-partner about stealing money from her and he responded by making false accusations against her to the police:

Money was missing, I confronted him [by asking him if he took my money]. […] He said I should get out of the house […] and I said, “I’m not going anywhere.” […] I just hopped into the shower because I wanted to just, like, go somewhere else and I heard […] the garage door open and someone was flinging my [belongings]. […] I was putting my stuff back, that was when he locked me outside the house. I wasn’t fully like clothed, it was cold [because it was in the middle of the winter]. […] He calls the police and says that there’s someone in his house […] trying to harm him. [He] made me look like I’m some psycho that just came to his house but I was living there at the time, I was buying groceries for everyone. […] It just happened so fast and the fact that I was locked outside the house, not fully dressed and […] [my ex-partner who] was inside the house went to the kitchen and said [to the police], “Hey, this is the knife she used on me.” It’s like, how does that even make sense?

Ana went on to recall her partner ridiculing her for falling victim to his deceitfulness while the police were nearby:

The police went to the corner to talk about […] what to do and […] I was sitting outside still because he had locked me out. He came to the window, […] whispering […] “Oh, so you wanted to challenge me? Okay, you’ll see,” and the police were there and I still didn’t say anything because my mind was just like, there’s no way they’re going to arrest me. Like if they know […] what I have been through there’s no way. That was my mindset. So, I was just trying to tell them, […] “I don’t want to make a comment, like, just please just warn him.” I was still talking like that until he said, “You’re under arrest.” At first I thought he was joking.

While Ana believed her ex-partner wrongfully accused her, she ended up in the program because she lacked the financial resources needed to defend herself in criminal court:

I had representation until I couldn’t afford it anymore. […] I had a court date and I showed up by myself and I just told them that I have one more class and they said that I should go for it and they would drop the charges, so. I believe it was early intervention. […] It was that or [go to] trial and I knew that financially for me I would love to go to
trial because I felt I had enough to get him locked up […] if I was trying to be vindictive, which I wasn’t trying to be. It was just like “what is right is right” at this point.

Ana’s description of her ex-partner’s behaviour in the larger context of the relationship appeared to have many similarities to a coercive controller. She was subjected to serious physical violence throughout their relationship in addition to several control tactics. Similar to the circumstance that resulted in Ana’s charges, arguments generally centred upon his lying, cheating, and stealing money from her:

Mostly it was cheating, stealing money, it was the same things when I think about it. […] I don’t know what he was thinking, and it’s like, he could always ask me for anything and I would give [it to] him but he just felt the need to do that and sometimes he’d steal from me and help his family out and it’s like, if you asked me I would have helped you anyways, so why cause me that like, discomfort?

Ana discussed how her experience intersected with her immigration status, with her ex-partner’s physical violence towards her beginning shortly after she arrived to Canada:

As soon as I moved here, he was the only person I knew in [the city] so I kind of trusted him to help me find my way here and […] from what his friends have told me, I guess he saw that as an opportunity to take advantage of someone. […] Two months into it, he was hitting me already.

The physical violence that Ana endured early in the relationship resulted in her suffering serious injuries including a miscarriage as well as being unable to walk for two weeks:

He had stolen money from my account again, and I confronted him and […] he elbowed my knee. I couldn’t walk, I was just in the basement and his mom treat[ed] me because I didn’t have health insurance. […] She put a cast on my leg.

Ana discussed six non-physical control tactics that were used against her including emotional abuse, isolation, financial, minimizing/denying/blaming, using male privilege, and using coercion/threats/intimidation. First, Ana discussed his emotional abuse which was intertwined in his attempt to coerce her into having sex:

He came over this one time out of nowhere [after I had attempted suicide] and immediately he’s asking me “Oh, I want to be intimate,” and I’m like “Are you crazy?
Like don’t you see my life right now? And at the time I was taking Tylenol strength 3 because I was seeing a doctor and just there was so much other stuff that I was going through. […] When I turned him down he just went […] “ape[shit]” on me. He started screaming, calling me names like “Go and die, kill yourself.”

Second, she described his efforts to isolate her by creating circumstances that caused her to accuse her roommate of stealing money when, in reality, he had stolen it which was also an example of his third control tactic, financial abuse:

I had isolated myself from everyone, I felt ashamed, I felt my lowest because every other day he had told me that I’m not anything, […] it had gotten to the point that I had believed that so strongly that I’m not anything so, I just, I wasn’t talking to any of my friends, I wasn’t talking to my family, my siblings. […] He had stolen money from me and me and my housemate so I ended up having an argument with her and then […] eventually when we realized he’s masterminding everything. And then he was hitting on her behind my back.

Fourth, he would use the tactic of “gaslighting” to make Ana feel as though she was going crazy by minimizing and denying that he was cheating even though she had proof in front of her:

There were times where I would see text messages and it’s blatantly from another female and it’s obvious you’re cheating but he’s telling me to my face “I’m not, like, you’re imagining things.” So, I sit down and think “Oh my god am I hallucinating?”

Fifth, Ana’s ex-partner relied upon male privilege to justify his position in arguments and would feel disrespected if she disagreed:

I would argue or I would say something like “That’s so stupid” and to him, that’s everything. It’s like, “You just disrespected me.” And for me it’s like, […] me calling the situation stupid, […] that’s nothing compared to [what he’s done me]. […] And he wouldn’t take it in, like how extreme stuff was. So, when he did get physical, I just didn’t bother fighting back.

Finally, Ana discussed how her partner would threaten to commit suicide when she tried to leave him at the beginning of their relationship:

He said he would kill himself, […] that was the time that he hit me when I was crying and […] I almost left him. That was still at the beginning and he went and leaned on a rail like he’s going to die, that oh he’s in love with me, that he has issues. […] I’m thinking,
“Okay let me try and help him get through it.” But it’s happening again and again and again.

To summarize, Ana maintained that she did not use force or non-physical abuse towards her ex-partner; instead, he exhibited coercive controlling behaviours throughout their relationship leading to his false allegations against her. The criminal justice system then failed to thoroughly investigate the allegations but rather, reinforced his coercion and control by encouraging her to undertake the PAR program rather than dismissing the charges.

**Evelin**

Evelin was mandated to the PAR program after her ex-partner made accusations against her in both the initial assault and breach incident which she argued, were false. She recounted that after years of not speaking with her ex-partner, her initial incident involved him arriving at the entrance of her apartment building and attacking her in response to their daughter contacting him to tell him that Evelin had yelled at her. He ended up phoning the police after she scratched him with her keys that she was holding as she had the intent of opening her apartment door. He later falsely accused Evelin of breaching her no-contact order bail condition as an act of vindictiveness which was the actual charge that resulted in her being court-ordered to attend the PAR program:

He still stalks me and he said that I was following him [when he accused me of breaching my conditions]. […] The breach is the reason why I’m here because they found me guilty of one of the breaches because he said I made gang signs that I wanted to kill him while […] he was driving past me. […] I was found guilty because him and his girlfriend or whomever said yeah, I did that. So, it was two against one and so that’s why here and I’m actually going to appeal it. […] I’m here because of the breach, not the actual assault charge. The actual assault charge is still ongoing [and occurred when I was] coming home and he was at my door and […] he was charging at me and I was like, you know what? I’m not scared of you anymore. You don’t have any power or control of me anymore. […] I started knocking on the neighbours’ doors to see if anyone would open their doors, nobody did. He came over and started punching me, […] [and] pushed me.
I’m obviously going home so it’s natural for me to have my keys in my hands to open my door. [...] So I started fighting back and with that, the keys must have scratched him [...] and I was charged because he was bleeding and I wasn’t.

Although Evelin ended up in the program because she was convicted of breaching her conditions, her initial assault charges centred around her resorting to VR. Evelin also discussed the extensive physical violence she endured throughout the history of the relationship:

It wasn’t just speaking [the emotional abuse I endured], it was with beating and not with just hands, but with weapons. Anything he could pick up. There are so many holes in my apartment that I’ve sealed up [...]. I’ve had dining tables, chairs, forks, knives, plates, I’ve had to replace so many things. TVs, phones, you name it, I’ve had to replace it. He’s used it against me or shoved me in it. [...] My knee hurts in the winter, [...] it’s so cold that it actually hurts and I know it’s because of what I went through. Like my fingers broken, my nose, [...] it was so flat. I broke my nose so now I have a bridge. [...] Physically, you name it. [...] Being beat up, being kicked, being slapped, I mean, there were days where he would slap me so hard I swear I saw the light. He punched me in the mouth so hard that I lost a tooth. [...] I have scarring here [points to a 1.5-centimetre scar]. He had a knife to my neck and he dug in so deep and at that point I was so done, I was so fed up. I just said, “Kill me”, like I’m so done and he just kept digging and digging and digging until the blood just started coming down my neck and he was just like “You see, you fucking stupid bitch, I’m going to fucking kill you, I’m going to fucking, fucking stupid bitch” and he punched me in the head and I flew back and he threw the knife away, he just threw the knife and walked out. [...] I got up, I cleaned the blood, I cleaned myself. I was still bleeding profusely, and I had to pick up the same knife that I was beat up with, that I was stabbed with, and clean it and throw it away.

Evelin also spoke about being subjected to his sexual violence throughout their relationship:

Sexually, of course you’re going through all of this stuff and the last thing you want to do is lay down with this person. You have no choice because you are there and if you don’t, there’s been times that he’s had a knife to my neck because I didn’t want to have sex with him.

In addition to the physical and sexual abuse endured, Evelin recounted her ex-partner using all seven forms of non-physical violence discussed by Johnson (2008) throughout their long-term relationship including: emotional abuse, threats/coercion and intimidation, financial abuse, isolation, minimizing/denying and blaming, male privilege, and the use of children. Discussing the emotional abuse, Evelin said “Mentally, just the constant bashing of how good of a person
that I’m not, or how disgusting I am, or how nobody wants me, or he will put you down. Just insults, dirty insults.” Evelin’s ex-partner’s unpredictability served as a constant threat:

I could just cough the wrong way and it was like “Why are you coughing? Why did you cough like that?” […] I had to walk on eggshells. I had to watch what I said. […] I don’t think anybody knows how it feels like not knowing when to laugh, when to not laugh, when to say something, when not to say something. Because he’ll make a joke and I’ll be like, do I just laugh right now, or do I not? Because if I laugh I might get my face bashed in, or if I don’t laugh, hmm…? Do I answer? Because if I answer will I get slapped, if I don’t I’m going to get slapped because I’m being disrespectful…hmm. And I found that the best thing sometimes was to zone out and his response is how I would react. So, he’d be like “Do you know that I made a joke?” I’d be like “Oh, sorry! Hahaha.” […] But I was well aware because I had to be on my “A” game 24/7.

The volatility of Evelin’s ex-partner’s behaviour served to intimidate her and she learned to mirror his reaction as a resistance strategy to minimize the threat of violence. He also made vague threats that could be easily overlooked by an outsider but served to intimidate her:

Every time I won’t talk to him he’s like “I’m setting for you” and knowing him and living with him for […] years, “setting for you” means “I’m going to get you” because every time we were home or whatever and an argument ensued, you know, he’d say “I’m setting for you” and when he does get to the apartment he does set for me and he does beat me up. So, “I’m setting for you, I’m setting for you,” I know what that means.

Evelin endured years of financial abuse to the point where her ex-partner would blatantly make light of the fact that he was taking advantage of her:

Financially, I was the only one working, because he never really worked. He lived with me, plus his friend for […] years for free. Like I would work, he had my debit card and it was TD so he would call it “green means go.” […] I paid the rent, I bought groceries, they would take my money. That’s financial abuse.

Evelin also stated that:

My nickname that he gave me was George19. He called me George. Why? Because I worked to pay the bills, I cooked and cleaned and if anything was broken or needed to be done, I did it. […] He wouldn’t do anything. So, I was the man, I was George, that was his nickname to me. Yeah. No word of a lie. I couldn’t have come up with a better name myself.

---

19 This nickname has been changed to protect the identity of the participant.
Evelin discussed the long-lasting effects of being subjected to years of isolation by her partner which continued to hinder her ability to make friends:

Every time I got close with anybody I started being called a lesbian, pushed a lot of friends away, or potential friends away, so until today, I don’t even know how to make friends. […] People want to be my friend. […] Every time people are around me, they’re laughing. There’s never really a dry eye, […] [they’re] laughing so hard that they’re crying. […] I’ll get a text “Hey girl, you wanna do something today?” […] I freak out and I don’t answer the text until three days later saying, “Oh my God, I’m so sorry, I missed your texts, I’m so busy.” Lies. So, I don’t know how to make friends because I’ve been preconditioned not to have friends. So, of my friends, […] not that many of them stayed. I don’t know why, I guess they stayed because they knew my heart, they knew how nice I was and maybe they stayed subconsciously because they knew I needed help.

Evelin also reflected on her prior use of VR where she injured her ex-partner causing him to minimize his own initial actions and blame her for provoking him to kill her:

I had to take a glass because I was eating when he came at me [in a previous incident]. So, I took my cup and I threw it and I didn’t know where it was going to go, I didn’t know where it would land. It caught him in his face and it cut him. […] He said “Oh yeah, yeah? Now you’re making me bleed? I’m going to kill you.” […] He was coming at me with a knife. Yeah, so the knife at my neck is because I took the glass and flung it and it cut him. Because he was bleeding, I had to die.

Evelin discussed how her ex-partner exaggerated his male privilege to overcompensate for the cultural shortcomings of not being the primary financial provider. This was in part due to racism in the public sphere which echoes prior research relating to IPV among certain racialized couples (Hampton, et. al., 2003; Oliver, 2003):

What he did say was “Oh you think you’re living on your high horse because you think you’re doing, you’re paying the bills, you think I’m less of a man because you’re doing this?” And I’d be like, “If you want to be the man, by all means, go ahead, go get a job, pay the bills. But I’m not going to lose my apartment because I’m waiting for you to pay a bill, or I’m not going to not eat today, or not feed my daughter because I’m waiting on you to get a job.” [He would say] “Yeah, you think because you’re working, this whole country is a woman’s country and dadadadada. […] Just watch, just watch what happens to you.” So constant threats because I was paying the bills so I made him feel like less of a man. […] He felt like less of a man so I got punished for that because he felt like less of a man.
Evelin’s ex-partner would use their daughter to manipulate and discourage her from phoning the police:

Being preconditioned to not call the cops because [...] if you call the cops you’re going to lose your daughter, so there’s a lot of factors and reasons why I didn’t call the cops and [in the incident where I was charged with assault] he went downstairs and he called the police because he wanted to take my daughter which he ended up taking my daughter, so I ended up getting arrested.

He then used the assault and breach charges to exert further control by threatening to instigate vexatious litigation through the family court to gain custody of their daughter:

Even to pick her up from school sometimes he’s like, no he’s not going to do it, he doesn’t want nothing to do with her, but now he’s father of the year. He’s just using the status quo to his advantage because now I’m the bad guy in the eyes of the law. He’s like “Oh my God she’s a criminal, she’s a criminal! […] She’s been charged with assault so I want my daughter” and I’m just like, you are so lucky, you really got away with murder.

Evelin’s ex-partner exhibited behaviour that reflected CCV which he continued to exert upon their estrangement by initiating a series of vexatious claims. These claims stemmed from his false allegations that she assaulted him, followed by wrongful accusations that she had breached her bail conditions which ultimately led her to the PAR program.

To summarize, four women described circumstances where they were wrongfully accused of using force which incited varying degrees of vexatious allegations brought against them by their ex-partners. Of the four women wrongfully convicted of IPV, three of them described ex-partners who exhibited behaviours that met Johnson’s categorization of CCV. The implications of such vexatious accusations by partners who exhibit coercive control are discussed in greater detail in the discussion chapter.

This section has been organized to address how women charged with IPV and enrolled in intervention programs perceive their use of force in the situation in which they were charged using Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence. In summary, three women (16%) discussed using
VR with the predominant non-physical control tactics used against them being: emotional abuse; coercion, threats and intimidation; financial abuse; and isolation. Eight women (42%) described their use of force as occurring because of a situationally-driven conflict in which neither they nor their partners were attempting to gain relationship-wide control but instead, exhibited poor anger management or emotionally abusive behaviour that was not part of a larger attempt to gain control over their partner. Four women (21%) could not be classified under any of the four categories in Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence, many of whom appeared to be defending themselves either from their partner’s non-physical control tactics but were not being subjected to the imminent threat of physical violence needed to meet Johnson’s definition of CCV (Johnson & Leone, 2005), or they did not provide enough details of how their force transpired.

Among those who used force that led to charges against them but could not be classified under any of the categories within Johnson’s typology of violence, none were reacting to the imminent threat of physical violence by their partner which excluded them from possibility that they acted in self-defence or VR (Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014; Johnson & Leone, 2005). More specifically, Lynne and Aurelia reacted to the imminent threat of their partner’s non-physical control tactics, whereas Elsie was not reacting to an imminent threat of physical violence, but instead she acted on the cumulative stress of tolerating years of her partner’s control while being an ongoing source of support through his mental health struggles only for him to leave her for another relationship. Women’s use of force in response to their partners’ non-physical control tactics aligned with the research in that coercive controllers often draw upon a number of non-physical tactics to control their partner and need not rely on physical violence to enforce compliance (Stark, 2007). This demonstrates some of the shortcomings of Johnson’s typology of violence for women who are charged and indicates the need for further research that examines
the suitability of Johnson’s typology of violence if it is to be used to inform intervention curricula to address women’s use of force. Lastly, four women (21%) described instances of vexatious accusations stemming from being wrongfully accused by their partners of perpetrating IPV. None of the women described using force that met Johnson’s (2008) criteria of CCV or SV. The section to follow presents findings relating to the two remaining research questions that examine whether and how the PAR program was effective in addressing women’s lived experiences that brought them to the program.
6: Analysis Part 2

This chapter provides a qualitative analysis addressing the two remaining research questions. First, how do IPV intervention programs take account of women’s lived experiences? Second, what were the perceived challenges and benefits for women who are mandated to attend the program including their ability to apply the content in future incidents of IPV? Both research questions draw upon all methods used in this investigation and include participant observation of the agency’s PAR groups and interviews with PAR participants and facilitators. The first question is organized into three broad sections. To begin, the findings relating to the program’s success in addressing women’s lived experiences are presented, followed by the areas that the PAR program did not address and/or reproduced intersecting oppressions in women’s lives. Other relevant areas that the program was not designed to address but needed to do so are discussed.

The second section draws upon the participant observation and interviews to examine the perceived challenges and benefits of women being court-mandated to attend the PAR program. First, core challenges are examined followed by practical challenges that resulted from being court-mandated to the PAR program. Although the study did not originally intend to examine practical challenges, these issues surfaced as important and relevant to the lives of women throughout the participant observation and interviews. Lastly, the benefits of mandating women to attend the program are discussed. These findings are presented below, first discussing how the PAR program was effective in addressing women’s lived experiences with violence.
6.1: Research Question #2: How do IPV Intervention Programs Take Account of Women’s Lived Experiences?

Effective Elements of the PAR Program in Addressing Women’s Lived Experiences

In examining whether the PAR program was successful in addressing women’s lived experiences that brought them to the program, this section presents the broad findings that support the program having effective elements for the women participants. To do this, it first presents the findings that specifically support the position that the program was helpful in women being able to recognize their abusive behaviour.

**Program Helped Women Recognize Their Abusive Behaviour**

While learning about the different forms of abuse in the PAR program, some women self-reflected on the use of force in the relationship leading them to admit that they had used some form of abuse towards their partner. Women’s revelations to the group varied and one participant shared with the group that:

> When it happened, I was confused angry and then ashamed and embarrassed and feeling guilty. I reflected on myself and what happened to me, I hit him and I don’t want to be one of those people. I want to use my words. […] I’m proud of myself because I know what I did was wrong. […] It’s not something that I want to forget because I want to be able to grow, but I do feel a lot of shame so I’m trying to pull out the positives of the situation but having it happen to me warped my view because at the time I felt that I had a right to hit him because he’s a man and I’m a woman.

Some of the facilitators noted many of the women may not have been coercive controllers, nevertheless, they may have tried to manipulate and control their partners but did not recognize this as abusive behaviour until they attended the PAR program:

> When we do that one test “Things you do to others and what others have done to you”, that check-off list, I think that’s when they realize that maybe they […] do a lot of verbal abuse. […] I guess they didn’t see that as a form of abuse at the time.
This was also observed during participant observation of the PAR groups with one woman saying:

Before the incident I used to be jealous but now I don’t care. Based on getting charged and the program, I know more about myself. I see now I was abusive and trying to control him and I didn’t know it at the time. So now I do and I’m admitting it.

Women were given a “Cycle of Abuse” handout to show the pattern of an abusive relationship which caused one woman to cry as she reflected on her actions and she was observed as saying “My husband would do anything for me, […] I want to be a better person. I feel I should be because this cycle of violence is me [as the abuser].” Although some women admitted to engaging in some sort of abuse in the one-on-one interviews, they also emphasized their partners’ role in the dynamic. First, Olivia said:

I do find that any aggression, there’s something to learn from it, but I don't feel it’s necessary [for me to be in the program] at the same time because […] I’ve had long term relationships in the past [and] I’ve never had this sort of communication outcome.

Further, Zara stated:

I was trying to argue with him […] instead of […] giving myself a time out and breathing and letting him cool off and then trying to approach it. […] [If I had approached it that way,] maybe the situation would have been […] different […]. Regardless it’s still violence, even if it is self-defence. […] I wasn’t physical enough to hurt him, […] but I still hurt him. That’s still wrong.

Overall, some facilitators and women agreed that the program was effective in helping them recognize their own abusive behaviour, whether physical or emotional, so that they could make changes in their lives. Other women maintained that their partner also played a role in their relationship dynamic while acknowledging their own responsibility in the abusive relationship.
Women Recognizing and Understanding Their Anger

Many women in the group believed that the PAR program was effective in helping them recognize, reflect, and work through their anger more constructively. During participant observation of a PAR session, one woman expressed that the PAR program was helping her to be more cognizant of her feelings by “Watching signs of anger, trying to walk away when recognizing triggers. Sitting down and do breathing, time outs, I haven’t yelled at my dad lately and he’s noticed.” During participant observation, some women expressed that felt the PAR curriculum helped them recognize and acknowledge their feelings of anger as an emotion within themselves while teaching them that it did not have to be expressed in a negative way with one woman saying “It’s okay to express anger, whereas before I thought that there was something wrong with me when I would express anger.” Other women who were being observed had discussed how the session broadened their understanding of what anger was and how it may manifest itself into other feelings as one woman stated “The [feelings] wheel is helpful because it’s not just one thing that makes me angry.” Some interviews reiterated these sentiments, for instance, Laverne state:

I do have to say though, I’m getting a lot [out] of the class, […] like learning about why I’m angry and […] alternative ways to express it. […] I mean these are things I never thought about before that I feel unless I took this class or unless I had to take it, that I would have never known.

Thus, the program helped women explore their anger styles and how it may have manifested into other feelings and abusive behaviours. Examining these connections helped some women make sense of why they used force and taught them how to express their feelings in a more productive manner.
Greater Self-Awareness and Understanding of the Situation

The PAR group discussions frequently prompted women to have more self-awareness about the abuse they endured in their relationships and why they accepted it. Some women were unaware that their partners were using manipulation tactics to discredit their feelings since they often did not have a safe space to discuss their relationship concerns. However, upon sharing their experiences with the group, they appeared confident in their assessments of their relationships. For example, Olivia said:

He knew when I was feeling down about something, he knew how to use those moments of my vulnerability in moments that were heated. So, if I was really down about something or if I was really vulnerable, [...] he would remember those things and bank those things. [...] He would use that against me to show, “Look how emotionally unstable you are, you go from that, to that.” I’m like, “It's called being a human.” And then it makes you feel, it’s like that thing we were talking about at PAR where you get labelled the crazy bitch and it’s like, I’m not crazy for having emotions, you know, maybe the way I’m expressing them I need to figure it out better.

Similarly, Elsie discussed how the program helped validate her suspicions that her ex-partner’s behaviour was, indeed, abusive:

[The PAR program] helped me kind of fine tune it [how I felt about the relationship] [...]in the sense that as women, we’re always like, “Yeah well you know, there’s a reason” excuses. [...] I did mention it at the end of the class that there were things that I noticed about his behaviour [being abusive] and now that I’m aware [...] I can deal with it.

Ana described how the program helped her make connections between how her lived experiences contributed towards her tolerance of her ex-partner’s abuse:

I would say the class helped me address things I had internalized, that I didn’t put together [...] to understand that “Okay, this is why I’m letting this kind of thing [...] happened to me.” [...] It helped me understand like a lot more about my own issues. [...] Then thinking, [...] abuse is not right from anyone. So for me, the class has helped me just put two and two together with like why I stayed with that kind of person [...] and why I trusted someone like that.
Although the facilitators generally agreed that the program often validated the women’s feelings and raised awareness of the abuse, some were critical of the ability of the program to address the women’s lived experiences with violence with one facilitator stating:

The only thing that those women receive that will be helpful in their situations is potentially red flags and ways of spotting these things and […] starting to undo the ideas that batterers put in their minds [by telling them] […] “This isn’t your fault and you don’t deserve this”. […] But in terms of concrete information about you know, you used violence and now you’re here, I’m not even sure what we could provide them. I don’t even know what a suggestion I would make would be. Because they shouldn’t even be there.

At times, the facilitators’ opinions about the program differed from the official goal of addressing women’s abusive behaviours to generate change. Nevertheless, there was some agreement that the program was effective in addressing their lived experiences by encouraging women to reassess the relationship that brought them to the program.

**PAR Program Successfully Addressed Women’s Underlying Reasons for Using Force**

There was some recognition amongst women and facilitators that the PAR program was able to attend to women’s underlying reasons for using force to bring about change in their lives. First, two of the three facilitators believed that the program had the potential to empower women, with the first facilitator stating:

Women’s mindsets do change within that twelve weeks. […] [One] lady […] became this completely different self-sufficient, empowered woman. […] So, for most women, yeah, it becomes realistic, [for] some women, their partners who are being stubborn, maybe not.

A second facilitated noted:

They learn to change their behaviour or at least we hope. […] We do the best we can just to educate them on a general level without saying, “Okay well, you really are the perpetrator.” […] I’m not going to point fingers at you, I’m just going to give you everything you need to make things better for yourself and then in the long run they usually do.

However, only one woman indicated in her interview that the program acknowledged her
underlying drinking problem that she viewed as central to her use of force. Participant
observations also indicated that the success of the program was limited. For instance, in one
group, only two women were observed as acknowledging that they had used the assertiveness
tools they had learned. As observed, only one of the two women admitted that she had done so
only after mocking the curriculum to her friends and seeing their reactions which caused her to
reflect on her own attitude and altered her perceptions about the program:

I was bitching about PAR, showing friends [the assertiveness styles handout] and my
friends told me I was “aggressive assertive.” […] [With my assertiveness style in mind]
my son’s father [who had me charged], he came over and he cussed at me about whether
I heard him and I wanted to yell at him, but I didn’t. He baited me, I didn’t fall for it.
Then he apologized twice. He came and sat down and looked me in the eye to apologize.

To summarize, while some facilitators perceived the program to be somewhat successful
in addressing women’s underlying reasons for using force, participant observations and
interviews with women did not reflect this view. Nevertheless, a small group comprised of Olivia
and Zara validated the facilitators’ perspectives and this represents a degree of success by the
program, albeit, limited, in addressing women’s use of force in intimate relationships.

**Women’s Experiences That Remained Unaddressed or Reproduced by the PAR Program**

While the previous section highlighted the limited ways that the PAR program addressed
the needs of women, this section describes its shortfalls in responding to their diverse lived
experiences. To begin, the intersecting oppressions that were present in the lives of women but
were beyond the program’s capacity to address are as follows: women’s gendered use of force
including self-defence; concerns relating to children; the role of race/ethnicity/culture;
immigration/status concerns; disability; sexual orientation; substance abuse; financial concerns;
and the role of pregnancy in women’s use of force. Although these categories are presented
under separate subheadings for analysis to maintain a degree of organization, it is acknowledged that an intersectional approach views social identities as part of a complex web of social oppressions (Mosher, 1998; Damant et al., 2014). With this in mind, where possible, these intersections are discussed in a manner that acknowledges different areas of oppression that are interwoven to reinforce one another.

**Intersecting Oppressions**

Many women discussed various intersecting oppressions within their lives that extended beyond the capabilities of the PAR program. For example, one woman was observed sharing with the group the difficulties she was currently facing because of the incident:

> CAS was involved and one of the two of us had to leave home and he chose to stay home, so I had to leave. [Starts to cry] I can’t take care of my two children because it’s his house and he pays the bills. None of my family have helped me. I’ve been out of my home from [six months] with no place to live. […] There are so many different circumstances going on. Today, my [child] had to be taken out of school in a straight jacket because he lost it because I’m not at home. […] I had to withdraw from school because I had no place to live. My [older child] calls me and says he wants to see me, but I can’t go see him because my partner has cut me off, I have no money and he withdraws the money out of our account when he’s paid. He took me off his insurance so now I have no car and no job. I’m living in another city and I can’t get to my home city everyday so I can’t take care of them. He owns firearms and I can’t be around firearms as part of my bail so now I can’t go to the house to see the kids. I can tell there is no discipline and the consistency that I had for the kids is now gone. It’s horrible, I can’t be a mother to my kids. My son can’t tell me how he feels because he can’t speak. I can only do so much based on the restrictions over my head. I don’t know if I’ll ever have the children again. I have no say in what happens at school and I can’t make any decisions. He would never hit me, but instead he would punch holes in the walls where I slept.

Multiple intersecting oppressions stemmed from the woman’s charges, many of which undermined her social identity as a mother, which some feminist scholars argue is an identity shared among many women and should be considered within an intersectional analysis (Damant et. al, 2014). This woman took on a more traditional gender role within the relationship,
remaining in the unpaid domestic sphere so that she could be the primary caregiver to her children with special needs while simultaneously attending school so that she could eventually enter the workforce. Her social class was determined by her dependency on her partner as he maintained their lifestyle on his income as the sole financial provider of the household. The direction by CAS allowed only one of them to reside in the matrimonial home and this reinforced her subordinate position within the relationship as her partner used their traditional gender roles to argue that he should stay because he financially supported the household. This prevented her from being able to care for their children because he severed all financial ties once they became estranged thereby drastically altering her social class. Her ability to have access to her children, let alone, care for them was hindered since she did not have the financial means to secure stable housing or transportation making it nearly impossible for her to provide them with the daily support they needed. The bail restrictions by the criminal justice system prolonged her absence from the children since she could not legally enter the home because her ex-partner stored firearms on the premise. Knowing this, her partner refused to remove his firearms from their home which impeded her ability to see their children while strengthening his custody case against her since he could argue that she had not made an effort to visit the children. Lastly, the school board reinforced her helplessness because she was stripped of her authority to act as the primary contact for the children. Overall, she found herself entangled in a complex web of oppressive forces based on her gender, class, and her social identity as a mother and these intersecting oppressions were well beyond what the program was able to address.

One facilitator also raised concerns in their interview about the program inadequately addressing the various needs of the women who were enrolled:

They have really severe long-term consequences that are not addressed by this program at all, other than me referring them out. So, everything from physical symptoms […].
Obviously the emotional, psychological scars of that, PTSD, trauma, substance use, and then just things that I think people don’t consider. I have a lot of clients that have a hard time with […] committing short term memories to long term memories, can’t hear very well, can’t see very well, […] they have trouble with intimate relationships in the future. […] They sometimes lose their children, they lose their financial support if that partner was the breadwinner and they are now […] precariously housed, precariously employed, can’t find work because of the myriad of reasons, so it affects their entire lives.

The facilitator also felt limited by her lived experiences as she was working with groups of diverse women who deemed their various racial/ethnic/cultural backgrounds to be relevant to their situation. The facilitator indicated in the interview that:

I am not equipped to handle […] people coming from [outside] a North American context, people coming from a Western, Eastern, Southern, Caribbean, Asian, religious, non-religious, all of that intersects, all of it. There could be a person sitting from the Caribbean that’s extremely religious and there’s a White way of looking at things […] and my only understanding of that context is what I’m learning from them and I have twenty clients, I cannot possibly do the work to support them properly and I shouldn’t be expected to.

She then critiqued the program’s lack of an intersectional approach by saying:

There is nothing in that curriculum that talks about religion, sexuality, ethnocultural backgrounds, race, nothing. Nothing. Zero. Anything that is talked about comes out in discussion, but there’s no prompts for it and if there are prompts it comes from the women or myself. Yeah. But let’s be clear, the program isn’t even designed to be women-centred.

Thus, the women had a multiplicity of needs stemming from various intersecting social identities that oppressed and complicated their lived experiences with violence which neither the PAR content nor the facilitator were equipped to address.

**Gendered Use of Force**

Women’s use of force is gendered since it occurs in different contexts and does not occur as frequently as men’s nor does it generate the same level of severity, injuries or consequences (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Dasgupta, 2002; Conradi & Geffner, 2009). Broader circumstances are relevant to understanding whether and how women use force in response to their gendered
subordination including ideological beliefs that operate alongside a lack of institutional support. Gender-neutral laws are upheld by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) as well as the criminal justice system which tends to treat IPV as an incident-based and gender-neutral phenomenon by assuming that women and men are “mutual combatants” (Miller, 2001; Dasgupta, 2002). This reinforces patriarchal power relations by mandating women to attend intervention programs that ignore their gender subordination which may be counterproductive in addressing the violence (Miller, 2001; Dasgupta, 2002). The facilitators raised serious concerns in their interviews when asked how the program was designed to address women’s gendered use of force:

The Ministry has nothing for that whatsoever [regarding women’s understanding of how social structures operate alongside men’s violence against women]. [...] In general conversation, we’ll bring things up but we have no real allotted time to really focus on it [and] I think that’s lacking.

Another facilitator noted in her interview:

We talk about why is the world the way it is and why you may end up resorting to violence to do something and how [...] men use violence or men use their cultures as a method of putting you back in the [woman] box [a group exercise that discusses stereotypical beliefs and cultural expectations about how women should conduct themselves]. [...] Everything else is [...] very neutral. [...] I can’t think of any specific tool [that addresses women’s gendered use of force].

Although this facilitator believed that the official program lacked recognition towards women’s gendered force, she maintained that the agency’s stance to treat all women as criminalized victims was also problematic:

[The agency] is a women’s centered agency. [...] One of the first things a lot of the facilitators would say is implied is that we know that you’re the victims here [...] instead of “No, this is a serious issue.” So, while the [...] PAR program is catered towards men who batter, the way that the program is done at [the agency], [...] you tend to have to give that emotional support [...] and you coddle them and there’s not a lot of calling them out on their bullshit and some of the women really do need to be called out on their bullshit because they know how to work the system and they will work that “I’m the victim” [angle].
From the facilitators’ perspectives, the PAR curriculum inadequately addressed women’s lived experiences with violence on a number of grounds. First, some facilitators felt that the agency’s narrow view that all women participants were criminalized victims created a shortfall in providing service to women who truly needed to address their behaviours and actions. Second, the facilitators felt that MAG’s official program standards ignored the gendered ways that women may use force, including self-defence, which is discussed in greater detail below.

**Self-defence**

According to Kelly and Johnson (2008), self-defence can be defined as “violence that takes place as an immediate reaction to an assault and that is intended primarily to protect oneself or others from injury” (p. 484). One facilitator discussed the program’s inability to acknowledge self-defence as a gendered response to IPV in her interview by stating:

> The program is created for batterers. So, anything […] that is provided […] as extra by the agency that we have included [is] because we have seen the need for it. But as far as my understanding […] of what the curriculum is, […] [self-defence] is not a main concern at all because these women are not being seen as victims, they are being seen as batterers.

However, modifying the curriculum to acknowledge self-defence created confusion among the women when discussing the topic of “what is abuse”. During participant observation, one group appeared to be confused when discussing self-defence versus physical abuse since the facilitator’s explanation did not openly validate physical force used to protect oneself and instead said “It boils down to power and control. If you hit someone to get them off of you, that is not abusive behaviour. If you hit them to control them, this is abusive behaviour.” Clarifying this confusion may have been beyond the facilitator’s capabilities since many of the women appeared to believe that they were in the program because they had used the former rather than the latter.
type of force. In her interview, one facilitator discussed the difficulties she faced when confronted by women who had acted in self-defence but were being told to address their abusive behaviour:

[When validating the experiences of women and telling them that violence is not the answer], some of them tend to be like, […] “Well what else did you expect me to do? […] He’s hitting me, what am I going to do? Sit there and take it?” [If I say] “No”, [they will say] “Well, what then?” Well I don’t know, I don’t know, I never know what to say then.

In one example during participant observation, a woman who was not familiar with Canadian culture or the criminal justice system raised concerns that her husband would tickle her against her wishes. She stated that she slapped him and he responded by taunting her and threatening to phone the police. The facilitator responded “What he did was abusive, but what you did is also an abusive action.” No further tools or advice came out of the discussion. The implied message was that in the Canadian context, even though the unwanted touching was inappropriate, it was equally inappropriate to respond with force and her best recourse was to accept the unwanted touching or resist in another non-violent way which could not be viewed as a true solution to her concerns.

Overall, the facilitators expressed concerns that the official curriculum was lacking in its ability to acknowledge self-defence as a gendered form of IPV and they often resorted to amending the content to vaguely acknowledge this viewpoint. The conflicting messages by facilitators who were holding the women accountable while indirectly suggesting that they did not belong in the program frequently confused the participants. As such, women’s needs likely remained unaddressed since the program was ultimately designed to attend to battering behaviours.
**Children**

The well-being of children and issues involving custody were prevalent concerns among mothers in the PAR program whose charges complicated their level of access. This was, in part, because the criminal justice system placed restrictive conditions on the women, some of whom had partners who took further advantage of the court conditions by using their children as pawns to exert further control. For example, Evelin left her abuser after enduring years of coercive control and had worked her way up a competitive industry. However, the progress she had made was derailed when her ex-partner fabricated assault allegations against her. This sparked a custody battle involving CAS which Evelin discussed in the interview:

In the beginning of all this he took my daughter for four months and he didn’t give her back. I called Children’s Aid, Children’s Aid got involved [and I] actually had three different workers. [...] [All three workers came to] the same conclusion that our daughter should go back to her mother and he didn’t like that either and they closed the file and he wanted to raise it again.

Evelin was forced to make numerous sacrifices so that she could gain back full custody of her daughter which was one consequence that arose from her initial charges. The criminal justice system’s conditions that required her to attend court and the PAR program forced her to juggle or decline employment contracts. She went to great lengths to hide the charges from her employer out of fear of being stigmatized, let go, or overlooked when new opportunities arose, and she risked being scrutinized by CAS because she needed their assistance to gain back custody of her daughter.

Aurelia’s ex-partner used her bail conditions to keep her from contacting their children which she believed he was doing to build his family court case against her:

I barely have access to my children. [...] My soon to be ex will not go to court and apply for a revocable consent, [...] he is keeping that no contact order in place. [...] I can’t even pick up the phone and call my children and say, “Hi it’s mom.”
Aurelia’s lived experience had many complicated layers: Her and her ex-partner had decided earlier on in their relationship that she would stay at home because their children had special needs; however, this left her lacking an independent income because she was not working and also open to being subjected to years of emotional and financial abuse. As a mother, her partner belittled her for how she raised her adult child from a previous relationship and limited her access to the family income. She accepted his abusive behaviour since she did not have the financial support to leave; however, upon being charged, the no-contact order created conditions where she had no choice but to do so regardless of her financial hardship. The incident exacerbated the oppressive conditions she faced since the no-contact order allowed her ex-partner to cut her off, leaving her financially destitute and making it impossible for her to maintain contact with her children. Her children had special needs including low-verbal communication making it difficult for them to convey their desire to speak to her and to adjust to the sudden inconsistency of her in their lives. Financially, her ex-partner would immediately withdraw his paycheques from their joint bank account so that she would not have the opportunity to hire a lawyer to petition for spousal support or request a bail variation for more access to their children. Overall, her identity formation as a mother to children with disabilities and as a perpetrator within the criminal justice system who was low-income and precariously housed all intersected to reinforce the oppressive conditions that made it likely that she would permanently lose custody of her children.

Although ongoing issues relating to the custody of children were at the forefront of the concerns amongst the mothers in the group, their participation was observed to be limited when discussing the topic of children witnessing violence. The potential consequences of the violence on their children appeared to make it difficult for most mothers to discuss this subject in a larger
group setting which was confirmed by one woman during an interview. Specifically, Rayanne noted:

[Intergenerational violence and children witnessing violence,] that’s something that has to be dealt with more on a one on one basis or a smaller group setting. […] It’s tricky, right? Because you’re talking about your parents, right? You don’t want to beat down on your parents and you don’t want to bring that [to the group].

The facilitators acknowledged that the program itself provided very little support for mothers with one facilitator saying “That worksheet [on how to talk to your children about violence] in my experience is not effective at all. […] I had one women who came up to me […] and said, “That’s not enough information.”” Another facilitator noted that the official PAR curriculum did not offer any support to mothers who wished to put an end to the cycle of violence so that it would not affect their children:

It addresses it [witnessing violence as a child] in […] the fact that it says that it admits that it happens. It allows women the opportunity to state that it did happen and then launches immediately into […] the effects of witnessing violence as a child, which again, gives women the opportunity to say either “yes” or “no” that it did happen in my life and then launches into “so this is maybe how it may be affecting your children” and “how do we-”, and sort of stops short there. So, what we bring outside of the curriculum as facilitators is […] “how do we break the cycle?” But there’s nothing in the curriculum that explicitly talks about breaking the cycle.

The facilitator expressed further concerns about the discussion revictimizing mothers:

We talk about children witnessing violence and then we give them […] one sheet in terms of how to talk to children after witnessing violence. The rest of the context is added by me saying children are resilient. […] It’s a really hard thing to hear for women especially when […] they’ve witnessed violence growing up and […] realizing that they are a part of the cycle and that potentially their children are now in the cycle is such a hard thing for them to handle and to admit. And then we just leave it, that’s it. Like, “Here’s a sheet for how to talk to children after abuse.” That’s massive.

From the facilitators’ perspective, the program was ineffective and revictimized mothers who were forced to discuss the effects of the violence on their children since the curriculum did not provide enough support for such an emotional topic. Mothers expressed concerns relating to
custody and access which often became relevant to their lives because of criminal charges. These troubles were further complicated by other intersecting considerations in their lives including low income, unstable housing, and manipulative partners working the criminal justice system conditions to their advantage to gain custody – all of which were beyond the scope the program.

**Race, Culture, Ethnicity and Religion**

Although the program was not designed to acknowledge racial, cultural, ethnic or religious differences when discussing IPV, some women found it relevant to their circumstances. Many women were observed sharing with the group their cultural understanding that IPV was a matter to be dealt with in private with one woman saying “In my culture, parents beat their children and we are encouraged to keep our problems in-house.” One woman in the group was observed as saying that IPV was so common in her country of origin that she believed it was normal and acceptable behaviour in all families and across all cultures saying “The way that we were brought up overseas was my dad was abusive to me, my brother, and my mom. Everyone’s family did this, we would compare bruises in school. I thought this was normal.” Despite immigrating to Canada and becoming acclimated to various Westernized practices, many of these women and their partners did not view IPV as unacceptable but rather, they believed it was commonplace. Because of this, they were unable to identify the violence as a red flag in their relationship. For instance, Laverne said:

My father was very abusive towards my mother and towards both me and my brother. My mother left home […] to come to Canada to work because the economy back there was really back[wards]. […] She left us behind with [my father] and I guess she was never there to be beat up so he took it out on us and we were beat pretty much every day. […] [In my native country], […] being hit by your parents is just something that your parents did. […] It was just a normal conversation, there was nothing perceived wrong with it. It’s not like here where it’s like “Go tell a teacher, go tell someone, go call the police.” No. That was your parent’s right to discipline, I suppose, and that’s the way I saw it. And because
we saw my father doing it with my mother and I saw my friends’ parents doing it to each other, when it started happening with my ex now, and him being [from a similar cultural background], I just figured that’s the way we do it, you know? And I really didn’t see anything wrong with him whatsoever, for the longest time [until I started being let go from numerous jobs because I was coming to work with injuries].

Women who grew up in cultures that normalized IPV refrained from phoning the police because they believed these were in-house matters and were unaware that it was criminalized in Canada. Instead, they tolerated the violence and tried to manage its impacts in other areas of their lives, including their ability to maintain employment. Laverne’s lived experience with IPV stemmed heavily on her cultural upbringing where women were subordinate to men and this was used to justify her ongoing victimization. She was let go from several employment opportunities because the violence was affecting her job performance but she continued to stand behind these culturally entrenched values by refusing to testify against her violent partner. Each time she was dismissed from her job she became increasingly dependent on him, thereby affecting her low income and making it difficult for her to leave the abuse. She was shocked and confused when police not only took interest in the matter, but also laid charges against her for actions that she believed were normal. These cultural discussions were absent from the official curriculum despite its heavy influence on women’s use of force. Any dialogue that emerged was the result of the women bringing it up themselves and the facilitator’s efforts to improvise using their own limited personal knowledge.

In one example that occurred during participant observations, there were no real answers even though the women were looking for insight on how to mediate their cultural beliefs while being mindful of Western standards. One woman was observed asking “Are we only viewing abuse as wrong because we live in Canada?” A facilitator responded “That’s tough to navigate but it’s important to ask the people that grew up in that culture if it’s okay.” The second
facilitator disregarded the relevance between culture and IPV by concluding that “Culture aside, beating a child is not good for their development.” Thus, women were forced to confront this mindset largely on their own since the program was limited in its ability to incorporate a cultural/racial/ethnic understanding of IPV or to challenge these beliefs in a manner that did not denigrate their cultures. One facilitator supported this observation during her interview saying “I don’t think the Ministry does anything […] [to recognize racial and ethnic diversity]. I think it’s on the agency themselves and the facilitators themselves.” Further, the lack of race/ethnic diversity among facilitators created service gaps within the groups with one facilitator noting this during the interview:

At [this agency], […] there’s a lack of different [racial and ethnic] perspectives, right? […] We do recognize that different cultures have different values. […] But there are certain perspectives, […] [and it is embedded in] the way that women can talk about those issues. […] If I see someone of my own color, or someone from a similar culture then I can feel comfortable talking to them and know that they’ll be talking in that same sense, but if I’m seeing somebody who doesn’t, […] and I’m talking about violence within my community, I’m not sure how much of that will be taken away. […] There’s a limitation of how much support they can give or how much […] they can provide or personal experiences that they can share because they don’t have that experience.

This facilitator highlighted the difficulties of being able to relate to participants who held distinct cultural beliefs that conflicted with Westernized beliefs and laws:

In a lot of these cultures you smack your child. That’s okay, […] that’s a good thing. […] I don’t think the other facilitators have been smacked by their parents. So then when they hear it they don’t know how to handle that because technically it’s not illegal, but it also could be illegal. How do you kind of talk about that? How can you tell your clients “No, that’s not an acceptable way of disciplining your child” [if you don’t have that cultural background to relate]? To get them to critically think about that is really hard because you don’t have that experience and you don’t know how to explain it to them. […] In [some countries] you’re seen as a terrible parent for not smacking your child, [others will criticize you and say] “You’re just going to let them loose and undisciplined?”

To further demonstrate this discrepancy, the facilitator also highlighted how certain cultures valued distinct aspects within intimate relationships which did not align with Western thinking:
A lot of women have arranged marriages, how do you [as a facilitator] talk about that if it doesn’t even exist in your culture? In fact, the perspective of that in your culture is very racist because here […] a lot of people think “Oh they’ve never met, they have to get married.” No, it’s a lot different than that. […] Or the lack of romance, […] in some cultures the romance is not seen as the most important thing in a relationship. […] How do you talk about something if you have no experience in it? You don’t even know what it is. […] It limits you as a facilitator when […] you’re part of the dominant culture and […] the discourse of the project is part of the dominant culture and you really can’t look at it from a different perspective.

Another facilitator’s interview response highlighted this disconnect:

It’s really weird, […] there were a group of [ethnic] women and culturally they slap […] and they kept on making it a point of it being their culture. […] But the thing is, when you come to Canada our laws are different so you have to abide by them. […] I think it was a cultural thing that got them into it, and they recognized it after the fact.

Although she believed that the women ultimately realized that their actions conflicted with Canadian standards, she deemphasized the importance of dismantling these ethno-specific beliefs that brought these women to the program by simply instructing them to abide by Canadian laws.

Rayanne raised concerns stating that the curriculum lacked the diversity to be able to relate to a fellow participant who was from a different religious background and could not speak English:

Her culture, half the stuff that we were […] going over didn’t apply to her. She can’t leave her husband. […] Even if she wanted to, she can’t, he’ll kill her! […] She’ll be thrown out of her faith, her family, she’ll lose everything. […] They didn’t help her much. Design a course for [culture]. […] You can’t make it a non-religious group because there’s some highly religious people.

Her observations highlighted an important shortfall in the program’s inability to respond to women who did not identify with Western society. Their experiences with gender oppression likely differed from the experiences of White, Anglo-Saxon women because their gender oppression was entrenched and reinforced within the cultural and religious values they identified with and could not be dismissed or separated. Instead, the PAR program may have reproduced
social inequalities by ignoring the cultural and religious beliefs that were relevant to their situations and by offering advice that could put them in danger of further violence.

Based on the interviews with women and facilitators as well as participant observations, the program lacked any sort of attempt to acknowledge the relevance of racial, ethnic, cultural and religious considerations in addressing women’s use of force. Some facilitators did not truly appreciate the unique racial/ethnic/cultural/religious standpoints of the women and appeared to be speaking to an entirely separate set of experiences than what was being brought to the program. The Ministry of the Attorney General’s expectation that all participants separate their behaviour from their race/ethnicity/culture appeared to be unrealistic because these features were fixed to their identity and informed how they conducted themselves on an everyday basis. Thus, exploring the possibility of racially or culturally specific programming may be worthwhile since Gondolf (2008) found that its inclusion at the very least improved the likelihood of program completion, which is discussed in greater detail in the discussion chapter.

**Immigration and Status Concerns**

Immigrant women and those living without landed status are differentially affected by criminal justice responses to IPV since charges can jeopardize their ability to remain in Canada. For example, immigrant women may not have the social supports available for them to leave the violence; fear of being separated from Canadian-born children if deported; and fear of facing further isolation and stigma from their communities if they have been involved with the criminal justice system (Tam, Tutty, Zhuang & Paz, 2016). Rather than acknowledge these differences, the program created circumstances that complicated the status of women without Canadian citizenship. One woman who was charged while visiting Canada was observed discussing how
the program acted as an oppressive force since she could not return to her country of origin until she completed it and provided proof that she had satisfied this condition to the criminal court saying, “This is the main reason I had to stay in Canada longer, because I have to finish taking the PAR program.” Her experience was complicated by the fact that English was not her first language and she relied heavily on her partner who had her charged to navigate through the system up until they separated at which point, she lost her support system in Canada. She then had to find her way through the criminal justice system and the immigration and citizenship system to extend her visa so that she could complete the PAR program and return home without having a warrant for her arrest.

Even though her status in Canada complicated her situation and increased her vulnerability, neither the program, nor the facilitators were equipped to address the unique barriers that women with precarious citizenship and immigration statuses faced as one facilitator acknowledged in her interview:

Hmm, I don’t know too much about [how the PAR program addresses women’s concerns relating to citizenship and immigration]. I know a couple of people have brought up the issue [whether the charges will impact their immigration status], they’re afraid, but I don’t know the law so I couldn’t really answer that properly.

Overall, the program fell short for women with immigration and status concerns stemming from the criminal charges and their mandated attendance potentially complicated the terms they had agreed upon when entering the country. Some women were forced to navigate through these unfamiliar systems to extend their stay which was likely overwhelming for women who were isolated, unfamiliar with Canada, and/or were not fluent in English.
Disability

Depending on the type of disability, some physically disabled women may be subjected to certain forms of abuse due to their dependency on their partners and physical aids, as well as the reality that they have lower average incomes compared to able-bodied women (Statistics Canada, 2018; Burlock, 2017). Therefore, women living with a physical disability must consider their day-to-day physical limitations when determining whether it is safe and realistic to leave an abusive relationship (Ballan & Freyer, 2012). Despite the complexity of their situations, the curriculum did not acknowledge how women with disabilities may engage in IPV in ways that are uniquely distinct from able-bodied women as noted by one facilitator interviewed:

No, there is not [curriculum in the facilitator’s guide that discusses disabilities]. […] We don’t talk about […] how […] women who are disabled can statistically […] get abused more than able-bodied women. […] There’s nothing in there that I can remember that talks about that.

In fact, it appeared that the facilitators only discussed this if there was a woman in the group with an identifiable disability. The discussion was limited to whatever personal knowledge the facilitator had on the subject which was improvised on the spot as the facilitator said:

[If we had a woman in the group that was living with a disability then] we would throw that [information] in there. […] If the facilitator knows [that there is a woman in the group living with a disability], she will, if the facilitator doesn’t, she will not.

The facilitator acknowledged that unless observed otherwise, they assumed all the women in the group were able-bodied and did not discuss IPV as it related to ableism any further:

Most of the women - , no, all of the women who were in the program while I was there […] [were] physically able […] bodied people. […] We don’t really talk about it in terms of how disabilities [can make you more vulnerable to violence]. Because we just happen to never have had a woman who’s disabled in our groups that I can think of.

However, leaving the onus on the women to identify themselves as physically disabled could be problematic for several reasons: First, having a physical disability could be a sensitive subject for
some women who may hide their disability. Second, some women may not be mindful that having a disability can increase their vulnerability to IPV and they may assume it is irrelevant to their circumstance. Finally, women who are unaware of their increased risk of IPV may discuss their disability in passing which could be overlooked by facilitators as was observed in one group. Although the facilitator above indicated that she had never encountered a participant with a disability, this was not the case as Rayanne acknowledged in her interview that she had a physical disability which she also stated she brought up during a PAR session:

The police didn’t know about my [disability] […] until they handcuffed me. They had already made the decision to arrest me by that point so it was too late. […] They didn’t know about it because I never told them [because I knew if I did, my partner would look like the primary aggressor and would be charged]. [If] I would have fought it [after the charges had been laid, my partner] would have had to come in and testify against me. I probably would have beat the charge because I’m disabled. They would have looked at him, […] looked and me and would have gone “Nope, that’s not right.” […] [The disclosure said I hung onto my partner hard]. Of course I’m going to hang onto him hard, [I’m physically disabled]!

Although Rayanne’s disability was relevant to her use of force, she concealed it to ensure that she would be charged since her partner was the sole provider and she relied upon his income to survive. She also had a criminal history making her more familiar with the criminal justice system than her partner and therefore, she felt that she would be better off navigating her way through the system. Irrespective of her reasoning, the relevance of her disability remained unacknowledged and she likely did not benefit from any advice or tools provided since her physical disability was central to understanding her use of force.

Sexual Orientation

The role of sexual orientation and its impact on women’s use of force remained unacknowledged throughout the participant observation of the PAR program which was
consistent with the curriculum’s neutral approach to IPV. The absence of an inclusive discussion on sexual orientation may have been a missed opportunity to address the unique challenges faced by non-heterosexual women whose use of force may have been intertwined with their sexual orientation. Identifying as LGBTQ+ could create tensions for women with partners that threaten to “out” them or who use this information to justify their isolation tactics (Carvalho, Lewis, Derlega, Winstead & Viggiano, 2011). Despite the potential for these distinct challenges, all three facilitators acknowledged in their interviews that there was no consideration with respect to sexual orientation in the program:

There is no material on that whatsoever for same-sex relationships. That falls on the facilitator. […] The material, it’s usually “him or her” because it’s supposed to be you, the perpetrator, so the language […] has not been addressed in any of the Ministry’s work.

Another facilitator noted that she was not trained to identify IPV in non-heterosexual relationships:

The facilitators are not really trained in that [IPV in same-sex relationships]. […] We’ll give a little spiel about how we respect everyone’s [sexual orientation], we don’t say anything that’s transphobic or […] homophobic, […] the umbrella terms like that. […] We don’t talk about this to the women, we, I, I’ve never gotten trained in it, […] I don’t think the facilitators are trained and there’s nothing in the program that deals with that. There’s nothing in the program that talks about transwomen and their experiences with violence […]. It comes from a very heterosexist, cisgendered point of view.

A third facilitator put this shortfall into perspective by saying:

Like I said, the program isn’t even gender responsive, never mind, you know, [LGBTQ+ inclusive]. We have made attempts as an organization to address [sexual orientation] as we’re getting more and more women coming in who are LGBTQ+ but nothing in the program addresses it.

Like the approach taken when discussing the other intersecting oppressions, non-heterosexual relationships were only acknowledged when the facilitators were aware of participants who identified as such, as one facilitator stated in her interview:
Every single woman that I’ve dealt with has never outed herself as being bisexual or transgendered. […] You just kind of assume that everyone is straight and that everyone’s cisgender, right?

However, this assumption created another opportunity for the needs of LGBTQ+ women to be overlooked. Patrice identified as bisexual and explained how her sexual orientation played a role in her partner’s jealousy, highlighting the need for the curriculum to be more inclusive to her experience as a LGBTQ+ woman who was mandated to the program:

I don't think they actually touched upon that [sexual orientation]. Because from what I gather, everybody who was in the group, maybe with the exception of one girl, everyone was in a heterosexual relationship, […] In my own experience I consider myself bisexual and I remember it was something that I shared with [my partner] when I went into the relationship with him. Even though I’ve never had a relationship with a woman, I am attracted to women, so it’s something that I acknowledge. […] He felt threatened by it. […] He was coming over to visit me and he saw a girl walking towards the elevator and I let him in […] and he inspected my entire apartment, […] and he said, “Who were you with, […] I just saw a girl […] and she looks like your type.” […] I was like, are you kidding me? So now not only do you accuse me of cheating on you with guys, but now women are being thrown into the picture as well. So now in that moment I actually felt like, are you going to lock me up in a room so that I don’t associate with anybody? […] So, I felt like it was used against me like that. I don't feel we touched upon it in the group very much. […] They mentioned that there is a wheel for […] people who are in like LGBT relationships or something. We didn’t have [the LGBT wheel given to us] because I guess it didn’t apply to our group. But I know one of the girls there […] was in a relationship with a woman.

However, based on Patrice’s comments it appeared that such a discussion would certainly apply to the group since her needs extended beyond addressing IPV in heterosexual relationships and her sexuality was being used by her partner to exert further control and isolation. Thus, the inability to acknowledge her unique needs as a LGBTQ+ woman left a service gap which could not adequately address her lived experiences with using force.
Pregnancy and Women’s Use of Force

The PAR curriculum lacked a discussion on the increased vulnerability of women being subjected to IPV during pregnancy. This was despite several women sharing previous instances of abuse occurring during pregnancy by the partner who was involved in their charges and having at least one pregnant woman enrolled in two of the three PAR groups that were observed. Several women who were interviewed felt the program fell short in acknowledging concerns relating to pregnancy and abuse with Marian saying, “[Shakes head to indicate that there was no mention of pregnancy and IPV] Unless I wasn’t paying attention. But I mean, I’m pretty attentive when it comes to [that]. I’m very active as well in the program.” Aurelia assumed the facilitators would take the initiative to connect one-on-one with women who appeared pregnant to inquire about their ongoing safety and provide resources:

[No the program did not talk about pregnancy and IPV], not that I can recall off hand. But I would imagine so because you know, there was one woman who was pregnant and so, I, I think they provided, I can’t say for sure, but provided different resources for her, but I can’t say 100 percent.

Several women who were interviewed disclosed stories of heightened vulnerability to abuse during their pregnancies. Sophia made the decision have multiple abortions as she felt her partner’s controlling behaviour would worsen if they had children together:

I had four abortions from this guy. Because I felt that […] if he’s controlling me like this now then what will he do if I need him with the baby. He knew that I had an abortion. He always wanted me to keep it. He said that I didn’t listen when I would have the abortion [and because of] that, I didn’t love him. […] He would just […] [use] emotional abuse [when I was pregnant by saying] that I didn’t love him and [by] not talking to me.

For Zara, the physical abuse started while she was pregnant as she said “The first incident happened when I was pregnant with our [child] […] and he elbowed me in the stomach […] and he threatened to kill me.” Evelin detailed how her abuse continued throughout her pregnancy and postpartum:
When I was pregnant I was beat up, when I had my [baby] I was beat up, I was breast-feeding my [baby] and he would slap me while I was breast-feeding my [baby] because I must’ve done something he didn’t like.

Lastly, Ana discussed how the violence resulted in a miscarriage:

[In one incident where I caught him cheating] I was pregnant for him and I was asking him like, “This is not okay, like there are so many things going on and this is what I’m seeing” […] and he beat me up. […] I remember I went to the clinic and the lady told me that she doesn’t think I would have a good chance of carrying the babies because it was twins because he beat me up badly. To cut the long story short, I didn’t have the babies.

Even though most of the women were not pregnant when they were charged, the one-on-one interviews brought out some extremely sensitive stories of physical abuse occurring during pregnancy by the same partner involved in the incident that brought them to the PAR program. Incorporating IPV and pregnancy into the curriculum could be beneficial since there was no opportunity during the sessions to discuss this abuse. Doing so would highlight the unique gendered experiences that many women living with abuse faced thereby increasing their awareness and providing support to reduce their vulnerability in the future.

**Identifying Service Gaps Beyond the Scope of the PAR Curriculum**

Women discussed intersecting oppressions that needed to be addressed but were beyond the scope of the program’s original aim of addressing the battering behaviours of those mandated to attend. Mental health concerns, substance use, and financial abuse were among the areas that many women required further support for as these matters were intertwined with their use of force and are discussed in greater detail below.
Mental Health

Even though the PAR program was not designed to address mental health, many of the women interviewed raised concerns about the mental state of themselves and/or their partner. Some women discussed these concerns in an indirect manner which was not surprising given the stigma that is often attached to mental illness. Lynne had difficulties expressing whether she felt the program addressed her mental health concerns as it related to her use of force, seemingly because she continued to struggle with this:

It’s so hard to relate to some of these things [like mental health and the use of force] when I don’t know myself. You know? I mean, I re-read […] [the handouts on anger and self-esteem], […] and I said to myself, […] everybody’s depressed around me. […] Everybody’s stressed out and because of the stress, it leads to depression. Me, I’m always depressed, I’m always upset about something, I’m always angry, I’m always unhappy.

One facilitator agreed that a meaningful discussion relating to mental health and IPV was lacking:

I don’t think we cover enough [regarding mental health]. I think we only talk about anger and self esteem. […] Self esteem sometimes can trigger things and open their eyes. […] [In] most groups, the women cry. […] I don’t think that’s enough for women.

A thorough discussion on how mental health frequently intersected alongside other social identities to elevate the risk of IPV needed to be implemented in the curriculum since some women may not be aware of this link to recognize it in their own behaviour as noted by Zara:

It would actually be helpful to know that other women have been through this and have a mental [health] problem like myself. Because I do also suffer from depression but a lot of that has to do with a lot of my past. […] It would be nice to know that […] the program can at least explain a little better that […] this could be part of the reason this happened […] because it didn’t. It just said basically, “What are your signs of anger/ being angry?” Well sometimes it’s not anger that triggers it, it could be something else, […] a mental illness or having post-traumatic stress because that gives you flashbacks, that triggers [you to become angry and to use force]. […] Some people don’t understand what post-traumatic stress disorder is, or what can happen when you’re depressed. […] So, it would be nice to understand that […] it might not have been anger, this could have been the issue.
To summarize, many of the interviews discussed how mental health was somewhat related, if not central, to women’s use of force and, thus, it would be beneficial to recognize this intersection in the curriculum even though this was never the intent of the program. Validating this connection could encourage women to be more self-reflective towards how their use of force coincided with a mental illness while reducing the stigma and providing a safe space for these discussions to occur. This could prompt women to seek further support for themselves and/or their partner which could be central in addressing the violence in their lives.

**Substance Abuse**

The PAR program was not designed to be a substance abuse program for women who have used force; however, it acknowledges that an intersection exists by allotting one session to discuss this relationship. While it goes further in recognizing that the two are interconnected than it does with mental health, many of the women noted that the session was entirely information-based with Elsie saying “I think they did address how [alcohol and substances] can influence […] disagreements in your relationship, but maybe not necessarily how to deal with it other than to just not do it.”

Madeline did not believe she was an abusive person but instead believed her use of force stemmed from her alcohol dependency and found the PAR information to be unhelpful to her situation:

They kind of just provided me with information, they kind of just touched on it too, it wasn’t really […] a lot of information that I needed. […] [The information provided was saying] you have more of a chance to abuse somebody [if you are under the influence]. No [they did not provide any helpful tips or referrals].
In fact, the program rules reprimanded those who struggled to remain sober in the group as the facilitators were observed communicating MAG’s rules relating to sobriety to the group by stating “Sobriety is important because you will be discharged if you come inebriated.”

Overall, there was a consistent belief among those interviewed that the substance abuse session was highly superficial in acknowledging the relationship without providing any support. The program appeared to assume that women would be able to take control of their situation once they identified that there was cause for concern which is unrealistic for anyone living with an addiction, let alone for those experiencing it alongside IPV. In fact, some researchers have advocated for the domestic violence field to recognize dual diagnoses so that treatment efforts can focus on addressing these needs in a holistic manner which is highlighted in the chapter to follow (Gondolf, 2004).

**Financial Abuse**

Although the PAR program did not aim to address financial control as a form of abuse, it may be worthwhile to do so since patriarchal social structures make women vulnerable to economic abuse in the family by reinforcing traditional gender roles (DeRivere, 2014). Women who assume the unpaid role as the primary caregiver in the private sphere experience negative earning potential making them financially dependent on their abuser who typically works outside the home for pay (DeRivere, 2014). As previously highlighted among violent resisters (Johnson, 2008), women frequently discussed being subjected financial abuse which may have played a role in their use of force. This was a reoccurring theme during participant observation where many women were learning for the first time that this was a form of abuse. Still, one facilitator noted in her interview:
[The program does not address women’s use of force as a response to financial manipulation], not at all. […] If it is talked about it, it’s because we [the facilitators] talk about, it not because the program is designed to talk about it.

Nonetheless, another facilitator acknowledged that the program raised awareness so that the women could identify it since many had been accepting the power imbalance as normal:

Just recognizing that it’s not okay in and of itself is a huge perspective shift, right? Because a lot of women think that it’s a normal thing to do, “Oh, I don’t earn [the money], so he controls all the money, so it’s fine for me not to be allowed to go out for coffee at all, […] it’s fair.” So that perspective change itself helps a lot of the women.

Still, financial abuse continued to be a serious issue for women in the program. The charges exacerbated their financial difficulties and some reported that their partners were making ongoing efforts to use it to maintain control. For example, Patrice said:

Paying for the attorney was interesting because the attorney fee was $2600 plus HST. I didn’t know what to do for the attorney money. […] I had spoken with [my partner], the on/off ex or boyfriend [involved in the incident] and […] he agreed we’re both responsible for […] this mess, [so] I’ll pay for half and you pay for half. […] Well, he ends up backtracking and now all of a sudden, he doesn’t want to help me with this. Now he’s like, “Well you deserve more than you got, you deserve to be in jail, so you’re lucky, you’re lucky your attorney’s getting out of this so it’s your problem.”

Laverne believed that her ex-common law partner racked up her credit card while she was awaiting bail in anticipation that there would be a no-contact order in place that he could use to his advantage if she tried to get her money back:

While I was in jail, […] my [common law] partner stole my credit card […] and charged over $3000. […] We had a no contact order and […] I went to the bank [to get a new card] […] and they’re like “Well you do realize that you have all these charges?” […] I knew it was him. I could tell by the charges […] [and I told the credit card company it was him and they told me] that it would have to call the police and charge him or tell them that I’ve been the victim of theft […] and give them […] his name […] [but I was worried that he would accuse me contacting him about the credit card fraud] so I got screwed out of $3000 on top of everything else.

Overall, the facilitator’s efforts to discuss financial abuse helped participants recognize how it may have contributed to their use of force. This suggests that a need exists for the
program to officially and thoroughly address financial abuse and literacy so that women can gain the tools necessary to live without violence since receiving this information remained contingent upon the agency and facilitator’s willingness to do so.

Summary

This section presented the qualitative findings from participant observation and one-on-one interviews with women participants and facilitators regarding whether the PAR program was successful in addressing women’s lived experiences in the incident in which they were charged. Some participants provided positive feedback as they felt the program revealed their abusive behaviour and allowed them to recognize and acknowledge their feelings of anger. Women self-reflect on any forms of abuse in their relationship which may have prompted their force so that they could work towards expressing their feelings in a more constructive manner. However, the program overlooked the relevance of other social oppressions present in the lives of women which may have created circumstances that promoted violence.

Lastly, although the program was designed to narrowly address IPV among batterers, the findings suggest that it would be beneficial to formally acknowledge other overlapping issues including mental health, substance abuse, and financial abuse concerns. These themes were raised by women across all participant observation groups and were often discussed in the interviews as being relevant either leading up to, or during the incident in which they were charged. Incorporating a meaningful discussion using a holistic response to women’s gendered IPV could potentially eliminate the violence in their lives thereby reducing recidivism. Below are the challenges and benefits of mandating women to attend the PAR program including whether it provides realistic options for women to minimize future incidents.
6.2: Research Question 3: What are the Perceived Challenges and Benefits for Women Who Are Mandated to Attend the PAR Program, Including Their Ability to Apply What They Have Learned to Future Incidents of IPV?

This section identifies the perceived benefits and challenges to women who are mandated to attend the PAR program, including their ability to apply what they learned to future incidents of IPV. First, the challenges directly related to the PAR program are presented, followed by challenges of a more practical nature. Lastly, the benefits of being mandated to the PAR program are presented.

Challenges Directly Related to the PAR Program

The one-on-one interviews and participant observation revealed various challenges that were directly related to the PAR curriculum which are presented below and include: (1) the curriculum containing confusing messages to women about abuse; (2) women not identifying as batterers; (3) re-victimizing women who don’t identify as batterers; (4) women holding the opinion that their partner needs to change; the program’s reliance on gender-neutral material; (5) the application of monolithic curriculum to heterogeneous groups of women; and (6) the provision of information with no opportunity to learn or practice new skills.

Curriculum Contains Confusing Messages About Abuse

The PAR curriculum contained confusing statements about how to identify forms of abuse which caused some misunderstanding among women who were not batterers, but due to their use of force, had been mandated to the program. Participants struggled with the ambiguous statements relating to jealousy and control, self-defence, and using children since their
experiences did not fit neatly into the assertions made by the program. Others interpreted the curriculum as validating that they were the abuser in the relationship which prompted some women to pre-emptively acknowledge this even though knowledge of the context in which they used force may have contradicted these conclusions. Some women outright disagreed that they were the abuser and pushed back at the facilitators who were expected to continue promoting the program’s beliefs. For example, Rayanne recalled a disagreement that she had with a facilitator about whether jealousy reflected love or abuse:

I started picking apart the program after a while. […] I was shot down when I said a lot of things […] about jealousy. […] I said, “What if you are not jealous and you don’t care? Well if you’re not jealous and you don’t get jealous then you don’t care. Hello?!?” She [the facilitator] argued […], “No I don’t agree with that, no I don’t agree with you.” Well then, you know what, I don’t agree with you! Well who’s right? Well you’re the facilitator, I guess you’re right, right? […] [In my opinion,] if you’re not jealous to some extent, you can’t care. If I watch my boyfriend kiss another girl and […] it doesn’t turn something in me, [then] I don’t give a shit [about him].

It was clear that more time was needed to allow the facilitators to develop a thorough argument as to why jealousy was considered a form of abuse. Instead, women who disagreed were left feeling dismissed and those who were uncertain did not gain clarity on the matter.

A second form of abuse that the women found confusing was “using children” as presented in the Power and Control Wheel and used by the program which defines it in part as using children to relay messages and threatening to take the children away (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Some women needed further clarification as to whether they were being abusive because they had concerns about their current visitation arrangements or they had been pursuing changes to their custody agreements. During participant observation a mother wanted to know if she was being abusive:

I find it’s more that he doesn’t do shit all [with the children]. But it’s me that says, “You don’t want to see your kids, so I’m going to go for custody.” Does that mean that I’m doing that [using children as a form of abuse against my ex-partner]?
The facilitator responded “It’s not abusive in terms of the way you are describing the situation.” Based on this inquiry, there needed to be more time spent on distinguishing the difference between abusive and non-abusive behaviours relating to child custody. As presented, the Power and Control Wheel lacked context and potentially discouraged women from renegotiating custody arrangements to reflect the best interests of the child as they believed this was abusive behaviour based on what they learned from the program.

In another instance from the participant observation of a group, the women appeared confused when a facilitator was explaining the difference between physical abuse and self-defence. The facilitator explained “It boils down to power and control. If you hit someone to get them off of you, that is not the abusive behaviour. If you hit them to control them, this is abusive behaviour.” Clarifying this confusion may have been beyond the facilitator’s capabilities since many of the women believed that they had used the former rather than the latter type of force.

Similarly, discussions about withholding sex as a form of abuse also created uncertainty and may have sent the wrong message to the women about whether they were being abusive. It was observed that in all three groups, the facilitators were asked to clarify this point:

By withholding sex, we mean it is different from not wanting sex because you were upset which is valid and in no way abusive. But the difference is power and control. We mean when you do it or vice versa specifically to control. It’s almost like giving the silent treatment.

Although the facilitators tried to provide clarity, there was insufficient time to discuss the matter and the women appeared to remain confused as to whether they were being sexual manipulative and instead should be submitting to their partners’ sexual demands in the future.

Overall, many women genuinely believed that they responded appropriately towards their partners given the context in which their behaviour unfolded within the relationship. However,
the program provided oversimplified information that was not suitable to every circumstance leaving some women confused about their situation since there was not enough time for a thorough discussion.

Women Do Not Identify as Batterers

One of the shortfalls of the PAR program was that many of the women who were court-mandated to attend did not view their actions as indicative of battering behaviour, nor did they perceive themselves to be batterers. Many believed that their enrollment was purely circumstantial, stemming from the lack of a thorough police investigation into the true primary aggressor, or the program being the least punitive and disruptive option available. For instance, even though Olivia admitted that throwing water at her partner was inappropriate, she did not feel this warranted assault charges or her subsequent participation in a program for abusers saying, “I don't think I should have been charged with throwing water! It’s ridiculous.” However, the incident left her precariously housed since she could not return to the home that she shared with her partner involved in the incident, nor could she afford to live in the city because she had recently lost her job. Her financial situation reinforced her lack of options since she could not afford a lawyer nor did she feel confident in self-representation. After weighing the limited choices available to her, she decided to plead guilty so that she could be diverted to the program.

Laverne argued that if the police had investigated the history of violence in the relationship they would have concluded that her ex-partner was the primary aggressor and she would not have had to participate in a program:

I don't feel that I belong in this program. […] For example, when the cops were called at the time of my arrest, had they looked at the fact that he’s been arrested multiple times for assaulting me and has a violent past not only against me but also against his ex-partners, perhaps I would not have been the one in jail.
Similarly, Evelin was highly critical of the court’s decision to mandate her to the program since she vehemently believed that she had acted in self-defence after enduring years of abuse from her ex-partner:

I’m here because I left a relationship that was abusive. […] I’ve been through a lot, […] I’ve been through hell and back. […] I remember thinking even murderers in prison [cries], they don't get treated this way. And people who have done bad stuff are living better or have it more easier than I have it right now. And then, in the end, […] this is the prize I get for leaving [being ordered to attend a program for batterers].

Evelin viewed her circumstance as highly ironic since she was mandated to attend a program for batterers because she was defending herself after years of being battered by her accuser.

One facilitator stated in her interview that she was told by some women that police had charged them in the hopes that they would receive services as offenders that could prompt them to leave their abuser:

I have heard incidences where cops have disclosed to the woman that they are charging her because they are trying to get her out of an abusive situation. Yep, but that is rare, but it has happened. That’s what women have disclosed to me.

None of these examples could accurately reflect women who were batterers when examining the larger context of their use of force. The PAR program itself was not designed to recognize participants as anything but male batterers and as such, it provided misguided advice to women who did not believe they should be in the program which is an additional challenge discussed below.

**PAR Program Sends the Wrong Message to Women Who Do Not Identify As Batterers**

The PAR program was designed to address battering behaviours, nevertheless, as indicated in some interviews, there were women who identified as victims but were charged for using violent resistance. In these circumstances, the women accepted responsibility for their actions
even though it occurred in self-defence so that they could enroll in the program. For instance, Evelin stated:

Like I said before, if any program was supposed be helping me it wouldn’t be this [one] because I’m not the one [that’s the batterer] and I shouldn’t be here and I know when I signed on to this program they said I had to admit some sort of fault that I did it. And I said, “Yeah, I defended myself” and he said, “Well, that’s good enough.”

One facilitator raised this concern in her interview:

What I hear a lot of is they have to plead guilty in order to get in through this stupid program. […] Why should they penalize themselves for something they didn’t do? […] I think they’re being forced to plead guilty, […] they don’t need to do any of this stuff.

In other words, women who self-identified as victims of IPV were forced to partake in the program that addressed them as batterers which one woman was observed as pointing this out to the group by saying, “These PAR programs are evil because you learn all these things saying that you are abusive when you are not.” Although this woman was critical of the program treating her as a batterer, some women were not. This was concerning for those who acted in self-defence but tended to accept the blame since in these circumstances, the program essentially encouraged their submissiveness. When asked to share one thing they learned from the session, one woman was observed as responding “I’m really opinionated and some things should be kept to myself as it’s better that way.” In other words, she interpreted the program’s advice to suggest that she refrain from voicing her opinion to minimize any potential violence in the relationship. At times the advice that was given to all women seemed unrealistic and potentially dangerous for some participants. For example, one woman was observed asking “How would you change “I can’t stand [your mess]” because aren’t you expressing how you feel?” The facilitator responded:

Instead of harping on it, close the door so you don’t see it. It’s not in your face so there’s no reminder. Or, you tell him you are not tolerating that behaviour, or “I’m going to leave and we can talk later.” That way you are setting boundaries.
Although compromising or setting boundaries could be realistic among women involved in minor relationship conflict with relatively supportive partners whom they do not fear, this advice would likely be unrealistic and potentially dangerous for those subjected to coercive control.

Evelin raised this concern in her interview:

I couldn’t do that [use “I” statements]. I couldn’t do that. [...] I’m literally digging my grave if I were to say, “I said that I don’t like this and you need to stop.” No. [...] Just go buy a coffin at Costco and dig a grave somewhere and lie in it. As a matter fact, lie in it, close it, go in there and cover yourself up [is] pretty much [what] would have happened to me. It would be my own funeral.

To summarize, the curriculum assumed that all participants were batterers and this was not reflective amongst the majority of the women. Mandating women to attend a program that treats them as batterers deemphasizes the lived experiences of those who diverge from this reality while indirectly encouraging them to adhere to the gender stereotype of being submissive towards their male partner. Further, discussing the importance of assertiveness may not be suitable, but rather, potentially dangerous for women who are victims of coercive control but due to personal circumstances, arrived at the program labelled as perpetrators.

**PAR Program Revictimizes Women Who Do Not Identify as Batterers**

At times, the PAR requirements revictimized women who identified as victims by requiring them to admit fault and reflect on the abuse as was observed at the beginning of the first session with a facilitator stating to the group:

MAG says to be in the PAR program you have to take accountability for your own actions and reflect on the incident. We need to talk about the incident that led to you here. Everyone will have to do this.

Although sharing the incident was likely important in moving forward with the content, women were often observed expressing that they felt revictimized when discussing such a personal
incident with strangers, particularly one that they often wished to put behind them with one woman saying “After hearing more of the sad stories it gives me more anxiety. I’m going to the doctor and specialist for stress and anxiety since the incident happened.” Some facilitators described the difficulties they faced with these sessions in their interview:

I think the program right from the get go accuses the woman of being abusive. […] […] The thing that I don’t like about the program is the incident and the impact because we’re victimizing most of the women again because […] they are the victims in most cases. […] First, we’re labelling them and then because they’re in a situation like this we’re drumming up this trauma again so we’re victimizing them all over again.

Being mandated to the program and required to participate posed challenges for abused women who had chosen to suppress their experiences so that they could forward with their lives. In particular, Evelin said:

I feel victimized by him even though I’ve left over and over again and now the Criminal Justice System is victimizing me again. I mean, how much can one person take?” [Cries] […] In terms of this program, I feel like I don’t belong here. […] There are some things that they talk about that really hits home for me. So, it makes it harder for me to sit there and listen because I’m kind of like not there listening, like I’m at two places at once. […] Because if I was supposed to get any help, it wouldn’t be this program. That’s not the kind of help that I need! [Cries] […] So, when they’re bringing up stuff it makes it harder for me because I’ve had to relive things that I’ve already packed away, things that I bottled away […] so that I can live somewhat of a normal life.

The program reignited trauma for some women while falling short of providing any concrete tools to help them heal, as this facilitator noted in her interview:

I think the program in many ways sort of recognizes that there’s a lot of intersectionality going on […] that led the woman to get there but it’s just mere suggestions, it’s hints, it’s “Oh it could be this,” […] and it’s almost like in some ways we’re opening up these wounds and then never closing them and not giving any suggestions for how.

Women were forced to reflect on their lived experiences with violence but without any productive purpose for doing so. This, in turn, simply revictimized women without providing adequate support and in some ways, they were worse off than before they arrived at the program.
**Women Believe Their Partner Needs to Change**

Because many women conceded to taking responsibility for the incident with the goal of being diverted to the PAR program, it is not surprising that some did not truly believe that changing their behaviour would resolve the tensions with their partner. Rather, many of the women felt that their partner needed to change as one woman was observed asking the facilitators “If we can’t change others then why are we here? Why should I have to change myself? Shouldn’t they have to take this class too?” Some women were observed discussing their partner’s resistance to change saying “I try to make efforts with my partner through PAR but he often tries to distance himself.” Brooke shared that she had ongoing difficulties with her ex-partner even after using the program’s advice:

I sat him down after the program and I said […] these are the things that make me upset […] and can we just work together and stop fighting against each other? And he’s still doing the same thing, like I noticed that he’s doing things […] and saying things to piss me off. It’s like why would you want me to go back there?

In sum, being mandated to the PAR program posed challenges for women who did not truly believe they belonged there and were frustrated that their partner was not part of the process. Other women were receptive to the program, but again, their partners were not required to partake in the process nor were they interested in changing. This exposed a serious challenge when mandating women’s attendance since they could not implement learned strategies without their partner’s collaboration thereby making it difficult to expect that the program would incite positive changes.

**Reliance on Gender-Neutral Materials**

As discussed throughout, the PAR program was originally designed to address male battering behaviours; however, the increase in women being charged for IPV due to pro-charging
policies has created a demand for the same services and programs to be made available to women (Tutty et al., 2006). The Ministry of the Attorney General responded by providing gender-neutral curriculum to agencies delivering the PAR program. As a women-centred organization, the agency has made efforts to adapt the material to recognize that some women may be criminalized for force that may not be offensive. However, interviews with facilitators suggest that the modified program continues to be highly gender-neutral:

A lot of the stuff we had was from [an agency that works with men who have come into contact with the law] and we just covered up the name and copied everything they had. So, a lot of it was male gendered material that we gave to the women.

Another facilitator reiterated this concern:

[Scoffs] Our handouts […] are still gendered towards men. The majority of curriculum was taken out of the PAR program [that was designed for male batterers] and […] we just switched “she” to “he” and sometimes it wasn’t even switched.

This facilitator expressed concerns that the agency’s curriculum also lacked women-centred materials:

I’m not given any tools from the PAR curriculum or from the Ministry of the Attorney General […] that are women-centred. Any tools that I use are tools that I create. […] [I use] handouts I found on the internet [and] exercises that I found that are coming from a gender responsive, woman-centred background. […] We [facilitators] combine our combined understanding of psychology and social work and social service work and sociology and counselling. But […] again, we are bringing those tools and if we weren’t doing that this program would be even less applicable to these women than it is now.

Overall, the facilitators questioned whether the PAR program could even be considered “gender-neutral” since it was comprised of MAG’s gender-neutral guidelines which the agency then supplemented with materials from a male-centred organization and simply switched the gendered pronouns to appear applicable to women. Any further efforts to make the program “women-centred” were undertaken by individual facilitators who used their own personal time
and knowledge to do so and risked being reprimanded by MAG and the agency for diverging from the PAR materials that were given to them.

**Monolithic Response to the Use of Force**

As discussed in the literature review chapter, research suggests that women and men are heterogeneous in their use of force; therefore, mandating women to attend a one-size-fits-all program with the expectation that it will address their needs may be unrealistic particularly since their reasons for engaging in IPV are often unique to their gendered experiences with abuse (Bair-Merritt et al., 2010). One facilitator discussed the complexity of trying to adequately address the heterogeneous needs of women in a monolithic manner:

You’re dealing with victims and perpetrators in the same group. […] A few of them are sort of batterers in that traditional sense, and so many more of them are, it’s more grey or they’re just there and really shouldn’t be. It’s really difficult to sort of deal with triggering some of these women by making these suggestions that they are like this [batterer] which is what we do in PAR, right? […] So, you can have a batterer sitting next to a victim, the batterer is still in denial stage […] and the victim is seeing this and is reminded of what her partner did to her. So that’s a huge limitation but at the same time, in some ways, it’s a benefit because then the batterer gets to see the very human side of it.

The facilitator continued:

I’ve had […] groups [where] there were only like three women that [the one-size-fits-all curriculum] applied to and the rest were just bored. So, I find that to be the most challenging because it’s just not something that can be made applicable to everyone’s life.

From this facilitator’s perspective, there were three predominant groups of women in the program which made it difficult for the curriculum be relevant to every participant’s circumstance:

There’s three major types of women in the group. There’s women that didn’t do anything, there’s women that defended themselves, and then there are women that acted abusively either because they are batterers or because they’ve been in a relationship where they’ve abused one another and they are all treated as batterers and it’s very difficult, especially because it’s not equal division within the group to address all of that.
Some interviews with women supported these observations. First, Denise did not feel that she did anything wrong when she threw a frozen bun at her partner as a joke in response to him rambling while under the influence. Therefore, she expressed that she did not feel that the program was appropriate saying “For some people it’s beneficial. […] But for people like me that are there […] just because, [it’s kind of a waste of time] yeah, […] and money.”

Second, Evelin viewed herself as a victim of her ex-partner’s coercive control and felt that the program was doing more harm than good:

This program is not the kind of help that I need. [Cries] So when they’re bringing up stuff it makes it harder […] it just brings everything back to the surface sometimes. […] I’m trying to block it out and I’m trying to listen, I’m trying to block it, am trying to listen, it makes it kind of hard sometimes.

Last, Lynne agreed that some of the program’s advice was geared towards responding to the group rather than to her individualized needs which caused her to lose interest:

The assertiveness section I completely just shut out from that section because [I was being assertive in the incident]. […] I don’t find […] those […] sections relating to me at all whatsoever that’s why I kind of shut down. […] Honestly […] it’s been really hard coming here. […] Some of it was good, some of it made me question a lot of things and some of it just made me really angry, like […] why am I here wasting my time? […] it’s not doing anything for me, it only looks good in the courts when they say, “She completed this program.”

One facilitator expanded upon this point by comparing the anticipated outcomes of monolithic versus streamlined programming:

I really think the program needs to be completely re-hauled starting with looking at who you have coming in, […] what their actual needs are, […] what is gender responsive, being properly responsive to their various lived experiences in terms of their cultural, racial whatever backgrounds and then starting to build it up from there versus trying to do a one-size-fits-all because it’s not going to work and it’s going to create more recidivism. […] So, we can spend a little bit more money now to really give people the tools they need to have healthy relationships, or we can keep doing what we’re doing and seeing more and more of it pile up. It’s one or the other really.

To summarize, the program’s monolithic approach in addressing women’s use of force
created discrepancies in how participants responded to the curriculum and this was dependent on their self-identified role in the incident. Some felt it caused further harm to their lives, some were resentful that aspects were not relatable or that the advice had been previously ineffective, and others felt that it was a waste of time since they did not believe they acted abusively. Because there was such a large discrepancy in the types of force used, the curriculum provided general information with the expectation that the women would make meaning out of it. However, this assumption created another challenge of the program providing information but no skills, which is discussed below.

**PAR Program Provides Information But No Opportunity for Skill Development**

The PAR program did not appear to be equipped to thoroughly address the heterogeneous needs of women but rather, it was largely information based and stopped short of providing tangible skills that could be used to address the violence in their lives. The facilitators acknowledged that upon completion of the program, the women could identify whether they were in an unhealthy relationship but were often unable to improve their situation because they did not receive realistic methods to achieve this goal:

> We talk about how that’s not okay. We talk about how it’s totally normal to feel frustrated. […] We talk about how […] to receive the same respect and dignity. We don’t really give [anything] other than like healthy communication tips. […] We don’t really concentrate and talk about it in-depth.

Because there was a shortage of time, women were expected to self-reflect on the information given to them by the program and then figure out make it useful to their lives as another facilitator said:

> We just give them an idea for what power and control really is and they have to find it in their behaviours and recognize it. […] But because it’s only twelve weeks we’ve got
limited time to cover a lot of things. […] So, we just do a general cover. […] I don’t think it gives them enough support at all. Zero support to be perfectly honest.

The third facilitator summed up the challenges of relying on an information-based program to produce meaningful improvements:

The program is designed to address violent tendencies and behaviours in people and to stop it. So, it mostly focuses on where violence comes from internally with a slight detour into sort of your childhood and intergenerational stuff. […] Then skips over tools and things that people can use to change and goes straight into “This is what it’s supposed to look like”. […] Oftentimes, women will ask “Okay so what do I do? […] How do I not do that? […] How do I stop that?” I get that question a lot and nothing in the original curriculum actually addresses that. […] It’s a very, very common theme. […] I think if you were to come in and look at the curriculum it almost looks informational. […] It must be extremely frustrating to get all this information about essentially everything that’s wrong with you and then to just be told [snaps fingers], “Now don’t do it.”

According to the facilitators, the program omitted components that were necessary for positive changes to occur and this created challenges for women who made themselves vulnerable to the process in the hopes that this would lead to some sort of resolution that ultimately never surfaced:

A lot of the PAR program is about […] exposing some part of the woman to herself, […] so really breaking the person down in some ways, they’re starting to [break down their walls], but not leaving any suggestions for where to go from there.

Thus, while the program provided a lot of information, it fell short on delivering solutions. For Elsie, the program provided information about what to be aware of when choosing a partner; however, she believed that her lived experience with a toxic relationship made her acutely aware of what to look for in the future:

[Was there anything I learned in the program that was] particularly helpful? [Pause] I don’t think so. [All] of the things that they were telling us and teaching us […] I kind of do all those things anyways, so it’s not like I was learning anything new. […] The only difference is […] whether I had taken the PAR course or not, […] the person that I choose as my next partner, I’m going to be a lot more […] choosey? […] But I can’t say that I learned any new skills.

In essence, Elsie had already been using skills similar to what was suggested in the program with
no success which suggests that the advice given by the program may not always be realistic.

Similarly, Rayanne thought the program lacked substance which she believed was due in part to the time limitations and mandatory participation of all women within each session:

   No, I didn’t think the program really addressed anything, […] they scraped the icing off the layers but they didn’t get down. […] How could they get in depth about anything? […] You’ve got two hours and they’re going through at least three subjects each session […] and everybody […] has to say something.

One facilitator admitted in her interview that she found the information in the handouts to be uninteresting and illegible saying “I find that a lot of the readings are outdated, just completely dry. […] Some of the photocopies are so old that you can’t even read what is in there.” Denise believed that the program needed to provide tools and suggestions so that women could improve upon their circumstances:

   Everybody has a story in their lives and sharing it is great, but then again, those people are vulnerable at the time so the people that are running the program should give more tools. […] Not, “Okay, read this paragraph, oh great, okay next” and then, “What do you think about this? Okay.” [Instead of asking me] what do I think, [why don’t] you tell me what you think and how I’m going to react in this situation.

Denise’s criticism exposed another challenge of the program’s overreliance on reading instead of offering suggestions that developed out of the discussions. Rayanne recalled the facilitators having an open discussion about reading to pass the time which she discussed in her interview:

   I remember [the facilitator] going “You want them to read this?” and then [the other facilitator] going, “Yeah, I find it goes by faster” […] and I go, “Is that how you do things? You just get them to read it?”

This was despite the general criticism raised by women and facilitators that there was not enough time to go through the topics thoroughly while ensuring that all the women were participating as per MAG’s guidelines. Had the facilitator opted to review the important points in the handout, it
would have eased this urgency while providing the opportunity to discuss how the women could improve upon themselves in a safe and confidential forum.

Summary of Perceived Challenges Directly Related to the PAR Program

To summarize, one of the challenges noted in the interviews was that the PAR program provided information in the form of excess reading which the women felt was not an appropriate use of their time nor did it offer solutions to women’s concerns. More pointed conversations pulling from examples and lived experiences were needed so that women could learn about the appropriate ways of dealing with conflict and IPV to bring about positive changes in their lives.

This section described the perceived challenges of the PAR program that were directly related to the curriculum and women’s court-ordered attendance including: the curriculum containing confusing messages to women about abuse; women not identifying as batterers; victimizing women who didn’t identify as batterers; women holding the opinion that their partner needed to change; the program’s reliance on gender-neutral material; the use of monolithic curriculum on heterogeneous groups of women; and the program providing information but no real opportunity to develop skills to address future instances of IPV. Ignoring these direct challenges could create larger problems for women in the future in addition to the practical challenges discussed below.

Practical Challenges of the PAR Program

Being mandated to attend the PAR program created several practical challenges in the lives of women even though it was initially offered to divert them away from more punitive sanctions. These practical challenges were unanticipated but are nevertheless important since they were
frequently observed and raised in the interviews, including: the program creating a financial stressor; stringent rules; the inconvenience it created in the lives of women; the facilitators lacking lived experience; and, some participants facing language barriers.

**Financial Stressor**

The PAR program created a financial burden for women who were tasked with paying the enrollment fee even though the criminal justice system required their attendance. Women also expressed concerns that the program’s attendance rules complicated the reality that they oftentimes needed to work to pay for their expenses, including the program itself.

The associated costs of the PAR program often had a gendered impact on women, particularly those who conformed to more traditional roles in the relationship and were financially dependent on their partner. The financial stress of retaining a lawyer and having to take time off work made the decision to plead guilty to enroll in the program an obvious choice as Olivia said:

> I wasn’t eligible for legal aid […] [and hiring a lawyer was] out of my price range. […] That’s what lead me to […] the PAR program. […] I just felt like it would take so much more time, effort and money to possibly come up with the same outcome.

However, even though many of the women arrived at the program, in part, because they could not afford the legal fees, they were still required to pay program fees which were determined on a sliding scale based on the woman’s income. Some women brought up concerns that they had to pay program fees even though they could not afford to do so. Those with children or who had previously been financially dependent on their partner were particularly concerned with the financial stress that the fees were placing on them and one woman was observed saying to the group “I’m crying over having to pay $85 for this PAR program.”
Patrice survived on her OW allowance and scrambled to gather proof to have them cover the cost of the program which was time that she could have spent looking for stable employment:

I went to OW and I told them, “I have to do this program […] you need to cover it.” […] I have to pay $300 [in rent], I was only receiving $625. […] I’m now going to be spending close to $80 a month [to pay for the program]? […] I don’t think so.

While the program used to be free to all women, it appeared that the fees were not a requirement by MAG although its PAR program standards state that providers can charge a sliding scale fee to supplement any additional costs of the program and non-payment of this fee can result in participants being discharged (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014).

Consequently, women discharged for unpaid program fees would have to return to court to have their criminal charges reinstated and, at sentencing, they could face the possibility of imprisonment. The agency had recently begun charging them even though according to the facilitators, it was not going towards providing better services for the women:

I get in trouble for making copies for all the clients. […] I’m getting in shit for [it] and it’s like, this is material for the women. […] We charge these women for the program so why isn’t it covered? Like, they’re more worried about the bottom line. […] Let’s take care of the women, that’s what the fucking agency’s about.

Another facilitator noted:

Given that people are paying for this program, I think that […] there should be more changes and more materials and it should be a better program. […] That’s one of the reasons that I might discharge a person [for non-payment] […] and it’s really, really important for them to get this information. Like, is our goal to make the money […] or is our goal to get them this information to stop recidivism?

Echoing the facilitator’s concerns, Rayanne reflected on her own experience:

Being ordered by the court [to attend the PAR program] first and foremost, why should I have to pay for it then? […] I get a call from [an agency representative saying] “Well we want the money now.” I said, “Well, I don’t have enough.” [She replied,] “Get it now or we’re calling your probation officer on you.” You’re going to come down on me for owing you $20 bucks? […] You’re supposed to be there to help me with my legal conflicts not threatening to call my probation officer.”
To summarize, the women and facilitators discussed concerns relating to the PAR program fees creating an additional financial stressor on their lives of participants. Facilitators noted that the agency had recently implemented a program fee; however, they felt the quality of the program was deteriorating. Even though the program fees were implemented solely by the agency for the purpose of collecting further funding, at times the agency used the non-payment of fees as grounds to threaten to discharge the women. Thus, this was a coercive measure that came from the women-centred agency itself, and, who’s mission was to advocate on the behalf of women who were at risk of being in conflict with the law.

**Impact on Employment**

Many women were caught between attending the PAR program versus the need to work which, in some cases, was necessary to pay the fees associated with the charges. For instance, Ivy stated “Coming to this school [the PAR program]. […] I couldn’t work overtime.” And Lynne said, “It’s been a hard 12 weeks. […] I can’t go do other things that I would like to do, like work on a cash job. […] I can’t attend because most of them fall on a [PAR day].” Being unavailable to work created an added barrier for those with unstable employment and caused Evelin to ironically question her decision to leave the abusive relationship:

At least if I stayed I would have gotten beat up and hurt and probably died. But you have peace of mind, you have somewhat of an abusive mind, [but] you have somewhat of a free out […] because I would rather have that than having the system on my back. Because at least with […] that sort of situation I was in I could get a decent job. And now I can’t even get a job. Why? Because I left an abusive a relationship? And because I fought back? [Cries] He can work and he can travel if he wants to. [Cries] What’s the point of me leaving? I should have just stayed.

In sum, the women raised practical concerns about how the program had further complicated their ability to work which was often necessary to pay for their legal expenses.
including the PAR program and led some women to question their decision to leave their partners.

**Inconvenience**

The expectation that PAR participants attend all twelve sessions on time otherwise risk being discharged caused stress and inconvenience for women who had no other option but to commute long distances and make complicated childcare arrangements at their expense in order to be able to attend the program. Some participants were forced to travel extremely long distances to get to the agency to attend the PAR program. One woman was observed stating that her total commute almost tripled the time that she spent at the weekly sessions. Another woman had to travel from another city to attend the program and this stemmed in part, from the incident which left her with no fixed address and nowhere to temporarily live in the city. Specifically, Olivia stated that:

> I had to move to [another city where my mom lives] because I was completely kicked out, locked out of the apartment I was living in [with my common-law partner]. […] When I went to sign up for PAR they couldn’t find anything in [the city that I moved to] but they said there was an escalated program in [city where the incident occurred]. […] But then [after I agreed to do the escalated program, an agency representative] mentioned that they don't offer that program anymore [so now, even though I’m unemployed, I have to pay to take the train into the city every week to attend the PAR program].

Travelling far distances was not only inconvenient, but also created safety concerns as the program ended in the evening and the agency was located in a neighbourhood that women felt was unsafe. These issues were more difficult for mothers who had to arrange for childcare as discussed below.
Considering the distance that some women had to travel, adding childcare pick-up and drop-off to their list of responsibilities only complicated the realities of mothers, especially for those on a fixed budget. Marian described how complex it was for her to attend the program:

I would have to go from the shelter and drop him off [at one end of the city], come all the way back [to the other end of the city] for the program, go back to [the end of the city to] go pick him up and go back to the shelter [which was back at the opposite end of the city – all the while using public transportation which can be unpredictable at times].

One woman had to bring her child to the program because she was unable to secure a childcare. Missing a session would place her at risk of being discharged and incarcerated and these potential consequences took on a whole new meaning for this mother who was responsible for her young child. Rayanne took note of this incident when reflecting on the program made it a point to raise this concern in her interview:

I’m surprised a lot of the girls showed up […] and […] somebody with kids. […] That was really disruptive when that child was there. […] I do understand […] [that] women have children. […] [But children] should not be allowed or there should be a separate room. […] That was terrible, […] I wanted to get up and walk out. […] Don’t blame me because I’m not participating because […] I can’t even hear.

One facilitator agreed that childcare was a concern and that the agency should address this saying “If they have childcare issues they can’t get there. […] Providing things like childcare on site. […] I mean, especially if you’re looking at an organization like [this agency], it’s […] women-centered, come on! We need that.”

PAR participants and facilitators expressed frustration towards the inconvenience that the program placed women who had to commute long distances or who needed to find temporary childcare so that they could attend the sessions. Many women went to great lengths to follow the rules out of fear that a violation could result in a criminal record and incarceration which was the outcome they were trying to avoid when they pled guilty to enroll in the program.
Stringent Rules

Another common practical challenge throughout the PAR program was the stringent rules placed on women relating to sickness and weekly participation which was hard for some to follow due to competing life circumstances. The PAR guidelines as set out by MAG states that participants must attend all 12 sessions and will be given the opportunity to make up a missed session for reasons beyond their control including hospitalization, severe weather and incarceration (Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, 2014). For absences where the woman had some level of culpability, it was up to the PAR provider’s discretion to determine whether they could attend a make-up session or be discharged. However, during participant observation of the groups, the agency’s facilitators frequently warned women that MAG’s guidelines allowed women to miss a session only if they were in the hospital, jail, or dead.

At various points in the program, it was observed that some women were not in a suitable state to attend the session but did so anyways. One woman had a chronic medical condition that made it difficult to come to class but she attended looking gravely ill, unable to participate and it was unlikely that she was unable to gain insights from the session due to her state of health. Enforcing such stringent rules to encourage her to attend all of the sessions may not have facilitated the change in her behaviour that was ultimately hoped for by MAG. In the weeks to follow, the participant checked herself into the hospital due to her illness.

In another circumstance, a woman was instructed by her gynecologist to take a heavy pain killer and to remain on bedrest due to a serious medical concern. She ignored this advice because she was under a personal time constraint and had to complete the program as quickly as possible because she likely would not be able to finish it once this deadline had passed. These examples demonstrate the tremendous efforts that women with serious health complications went through
to attend the program since they did not want to risk being discharged and having to return to criminal court or face imprisonment. Another woman was more than halfway done the program when she suffered a severe injury which left her temporarily immobile and unable to attend the remainder of the sessions. Based on the stringent rules, her circumstance would require her to renegotiate the deadlines set out by the criminal justice system and she would have to restart and repay for the course when she recovered.

The Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General (2014) required that PAR agencies document whether each woman was actively participating in every session to determine whether they met the terms of their conditions. This created concerns among women when the content did not apply to their lives which was the case for Lynne who said, “[The facilitator] was like, “[Can] somebody else can give an opinion, somebody who hasn’t talked?” and I’m sitting there going, “Am I not going to graduate? Am I going to get penalized because I can’t answer?”

For others such as Evelin, having to actively participate reignited feelings of distress and trauma since they were forced to reflect on the abuse within the relationship:

I need to listen [even though the discussion brings up past trauma in my life]. I need to be able to answer a question if it’s thrown at me or I need to come [attend class] otherwise I’ll go back to jail. […] I have to be here and be present, I can’t be here and be zoned out because obviously this is going to go on the report and the report is going to be shown to the court people, […] it’s going to be like, “You know [Evelin]? She has no respect, she just sits there zoned out.” Nobody knows what I have to deal with internally. […] I have to try to be here, yet block it out. Because the things that they’re talking about brings stuff up and I can’t live there because if I live there, I can’t be here. [I’m trying to] […] fight with my demons and can’t participate.

To summarize, the PAR program court-mandated the women to follow a series of stringent rules to ensure that they not only attended the program its entirety, but also actively participated during each session. At best, doing so caused stress among those who could not relate to the content and at worst, it was harmful for those who had to reflect on extended periods of abuse.
Inexperienced Facilitators

The PAR program presented practical challenges for women who often received advice from facilitators with limited life skills and relationship experience. Some facilitators felt that having a lack of diverse lived experiences hindered their ability to facilitate aspects of the PAR program, such as “children witnessing abuse” since they were not mothers. Others lacked the positionality to relate to cultural, racial or ethnic nuances that some women deemed relevant to their force as one facilitator discussed in her interview:

How do you talk about something [that is culturally embedded] if you have no [cultural] experience in it? You don’t even know what it is. […] I don’t know if they’re equipped to talk about those things. […] It needs to be more diverse, definitely.

Many women gravitated towards facilitators who had similar life experiences as this made them more relatable and increased their feelings of safety when disclosing their concerns. Rayanne recalled an instance where she believed a less experienced facilitator oversimplified a discussion on communication:

[That one facilitator] […] doesn’t have […] the life experience. […] She’s going to [try to relate to us by sharing an example about how she] argued [with her partner] over crackers? Well holy shit, I mean, some of these girls have had guns to their heads. […] Let me put it to you this way, if […] I was experimenting with new drugs, I wouldn’t do it with somebody that didn’t know what they were doing. […] It’s life skills, right? […] You can say it over and over a thousand times, [but] until you’ve lived it.

Thus, the quality of relationship advice that the program provided women with was affected in part, by whether the facilitators came from similarly situated backgrounds and life experiences to be able to relate to the participants.
Language Barriers

Women who were not fluent in English faced obstacles from the very beginning of the process with the criminal justice system and the PAR program as one facilitator noted in her interview:

[One woman] could speak English but […] it took a while to understand […] and I’m not sure how much she got out of the program but she didn’t request an interpreter. […] I don’t even know if she’s aware of the fact that she’s eligible to get an interpreter.

The facilitator continued “There are new immigrants or refugees or have English as a second language […] and they often don’t know what’s happening. […] They didn’t even know why they were in the program in some cases.”

For women with interpreters, the level of interpretation they received was dependent on how skilled the interpreter was at translating. For instance, one woman was observed spending an entire session unaware of what was being discussed because the interpreter did not translate any of the material. A new interpreter was requested; however, the woman missed out on the information from that week which was not relayed to her.

Women who were not fluent in English may have had difficulties understanding the materials because as discussed previously, the program provided by the agency was heavily dependent on the participants reading the material out loud. Rayanne noted:

I know some of the girls didn’t understand what they were reading. […] They were like [puzzled face]. […] That poor woman with the interpreter. […] I think the interpreter picked up way more in the program than […] that poor lady did.

Further, the PAR homework was an additional complication for those with language barriers since incomplete work was grounds for being discharged. One woman was unable to complete the homework because her interpreter was paid only for time during the PAR sessions.

In another instance, the interpreter asked the researcher for clarification in understanding the
language used in the handout. Had the researcher not been there to assist them, the homework likely would have been incomplete which would have been grounds for being discharged.

This section suggests that the diverse experiences of women mandated to the program appeared to present challenges that were not directly related only to the limited scope of the program content, but also generated practical concerns. The following section will provide an analysis of the perceived benefits of mandating women to attend the PAR program as well as applying it to future incidents of IPV.

**Benefits**

Although the PAR program presented several challenges for the participants, nevertheless, there were also some benefits to court-ordering their attendance. These benefits include helping women participants to: (1) enhance their communication skills; (2) identify red flags in relationships; (3) identify healthy relationships; (4) increase their macro-level understanding of IPV; (5) increase their knowledge of existing resources available to them in the future; and, (6) increase their self-esteem.

**Enhanced Communication Skills**

Many women believed that the PAR program helped enhance their communication skills with their partner which was particularly useful when disagreements arose as one woman was observed as saying “Sometimes he says things to see my reaction. He knows I’m progressing. He’ll tell me the next day, “I like that you’re improving.””

Although Olivia was no longer in a relationship, she acknowledged that the program had helped her reflect on the errors of her approach to communicating:
What I have realized […] is that if I had taken on a different approach, a lot of the times it wouldn’t have been at the level that it was. We really did cross boundaries in terms of respect for each other.

Although Patrice relied on using “I” statements prior to the incident, she believed that the program enhanced her approach by suggesting that she repeat and paraphrase her feelings:

I already use a lot of “I” statements. […] Me repeating that I need him to respect my boundaries and that he can’t speak to me like that. I’ve noticed that he’s […] so much better […]. This morning he woke me up to have an argument and […] I used my “I” statements […] rephrasing the sentence differently so it didn’t come across [as repetitive]. […] That diffused him and I feel as though he heard me more.

Overall, many of the women believed that the PAR program strategies clarified how to improve upon their communication skills. Such strategies allowed women to address conflict in a productive manner without resorting to the confrontation or avoidance strategies that many of them had acknowledged using in the specific situation and more generally.

**Identifying Red Flags**

The PAR program raised women’s awareness about how to identify red flags within intimate relationships. Many women acknowledged they had been subjected to these signs but were unaware that this was a form of maltreatment. Others reported that they felt taken advantage of but lacked the confidence to acknowledge this was occurring. This was enabled in part by not having a strong support network that could have acted as a sounding board, as noted by one facilitator in her interview:

We do talk about […] one of the biggest signs of an abusive relationship is when your partner starts isolating you from your friends and relatives. So, for a lot of women that becomes like “Oh yeah, he does that to me.” So, then they’ll make an active effort to actually be with their own friends and families.

Identifying red flags allowed some women, such as Ana, to reflect upon their relationship:
It helped me understand that I was in an abusive situation because […] I didn’t realize that like he was controlling. […] It’s usually a guy controlling the female with money but he was taking my money and beating me and I felt like he was controlling me with the fact that he knew that I didn’t have that relationship with my family.

Two women also discussed how they were able to identify red flags in their new relationships which informed their decision to part ways. The first woman was observed as using the group as a sounding board to work through her suspicions of whether her new partner was showing signs of abusive behaviour:

This new relationship that I’m in has turned me off. I’ve only been with him for three weeks and already he’s gotten me a new outfit and has asked me to paint my nails a certain color and it’s scaring me. I feel like a stressful wreck before seeing him. I feel a lot of pressure.

The facilitator responded “You just mentioned a few points of control.” The woman then began to identify potential red flags in her new relationship saying, “Yes, and even when we are in a conversation that he brought up, he cuts me off even though he’s the one that has asked the question to begin with.” The facilitator encouraged her to further explore her instincts by noting “It seems like you see the flags, but you’re finding ways to excuse the flags away.” She responded “Yes, he’s obsessed. I got 19 calls from him.” The facilitator acknowledged the woman’s feelings by saying “Yes, that’s excessive.” This helped validate the woman’s feelings by her response “I’m giving my own answer, thank you!”

Laverne discussed in her interview how she ended her new relationship because of the red flags:

A guy […] had given me some money. […] It was just […] “Whenever you’re well or you’re okay [pay me back].” […] I didn’t call him for about two days because […] I wasn’t feeling well […] and he texted me […] calling me a bunch of names and I was like, “Nuh, uh, no, no, you do not get to do this to me.” Because of this program that I was able to do that because otherwise I would have been like, “I’m so sorry I didn’t text you, please understand I wasn’t well.” […] I was like, “Oh my god, red flag, red flag, red flag. I’m not doing this again!” […] I literally texted him […] “As you wish, I will never contact you again, please don’t contact me, I’m done.” […] A couple days later he texted me saying
“I’m so sorry, I was upset” and […] I’m like, “I want nothing to do with you!” Because clearly that’s in you and somehow, I bring that out and I don’t want no part of it! […] Had it not been for this program I don’t think I would have had the ability to do that.

Hence, one of the clear benefits of attendance at the program was that it provided some women with the knowledge to identify potential red flags; however, many women identified these red flags occurring in their partner’s behaviour rather than within themselves as the program was originally intended/designed to do. Nevertheless, doing so empowered them to determine the next steps in their relationships.

**Identifying Healthy Relationships**

On the flip side, many women believed that the PAR program helped them to identify healthy relationships by encouraging them to reflect on the relationship that led to them being charged, their current relationship, or having the women think about what they wanted in future relationships. Olivia noted:

Ultimately what I’m learning too was that even if I took […] a better approach and really did everything that I could on my end, the outcome may not have […] ended up in charges but […] we would have broken up for sure.

One facilitator described positive transformations among women who were in current relationships as it helped them identify unhealthy aspects so that they could begin to make changes:

[For one woman in particular], it took her a while to figure out how she was being mistreated and stuff, I don’t see very many women going back into their relationships and if they do, there’s an improvement. I always hear lots of positive things.

Elsie acknowledged that she now had higher relationship expectations; however, she felt that PAR program reinforced these feelings rather than being the cause of this revelation:
Whether I had taken the PAR course or not, [...] the person that I choose as my next partner, I’m going to be a lot more [...] choosy. [Laughs] [...] I’m not going to choose somebody that’s just so damaged. [...] I’m done trying to save people.

Lastly, Aurelia discussed how the PAR program was helping her to break the cycle of violence by being able to model what a healthy relationship should looked like to her children:

The past couple of weeks there have been a few things that have popped up in our lives that have been a source of conflict and we handled it with such style and grace because, for our kids. [...] They were used to seeing their parents not even sleeping in the same room, much less the same bed. So, the kids now have something to go off of [that is positive].

**Increased Macro-Level Understanding of IPV**

The women did not explicitly discuss how the program helped them understand the larger context in which their use of force occurred in. However, the facilitators believed that their efforts to modify MAG’s curriculum increased women’s understanding of their use of force as a response to broader gender and socio-political factors:

It’s almost like an “ah ha” moment, because they don’t understand their behaviours or because it was learnt behaviour, they saw the father beat up the mother and the mother never did anything so they think that’s their role they have to play and when we tell them differently that this isn’t acceptable it really opens their eyes. [...] I think we should go into that deeper to be perfectly honest. [...] In the majority of the cases these women being victims, there’s a reason for that, there’s a reason for them even picking that sort of partner. [...] A lot of these women [...] say “This happened, this happened” but they don’t understand [...] until we bring it up and we talk about it.

However, the potential for the program to increase women’s macro-level understanding of IPV was dependent on the facilitators’ knowledge and willingness to make these connections as one facilitator noted:

The only thing in the actual program [that acknowledges gender] [...] that I can think of right now is on the power and control wheel and it’s the slice of the pie that talks about using male privilege and that’s the only time the program addresses it. Facilitators address it all throughout because it’s very, very important. But that’s [...] our own knowledge that we bring, our own tools that we bring and it’s something that the women bring up themselves as well. But the program is not designed to address this at all. [...] I have worked with many facilitators that don’t cover it at all.
To summarize, the facilitators believed that the participants gained a greater awareness of the macro-level context in which their IPV may have occurred in than what MAG’s curriculum intended. However, the level of awareness likely varied both amongst facilitators and between agencies with some participants potentially receiving no insight in terms of understanding gendered violence within a greater socio-political context.

**Increased Knowledge About Resources**

One benefit of mandating women to attend the PAR program was that it provided them with opportunities to learn about resources and supports they would not have otherwise known about. For instance, Aurelia said:

> [Attending the PAR program] opened my eyes in terms of the help that is actually out there for me. […] They had given us handouts for legal reverses, financial aid assistance, shelter assistance, things like that, like a whole package.

Some women were given resources based on the concerns they brought up during the group which Olivia discussed in her interview:

> As soon as they hear somebody speak up about something specific, they will approach them personally. […] One of the counsellors approached me when I was talking about family stuff about more family counselling and she gave me all these resources.

However, although women were provided with referrals to other support programs, oftentimes there appeared to be a backlog in accessing these services. Waiting likely created lost opportunities for support interventions since women may have forgotten that they had signed up, lost interest, or had other priorities to attend to.

The PAR program often provided women with the opportunity to learn about how to navigate through basic criminal justice processes even though in many cases the information left them feeling like they had been initially misinformed. In all three groups the women became
upset upon learning more about their legal rights since they were too far into the process to explore alternatives to pleading guilty. One facilitator discussed this saying:

They report to me that they feel that the options presented to them were not presented to them […] as equal options, some options were not presented, or some were presented like “You could take it to trial, which means you’re going to get charged or you could just do this program.” […] In every single group we discuss, “Wait a minute, there were other options.” There are always women who had no idea.

Despite these shortfalls, women left the PAR program with a better understanding of their legal rights and resources available to them which could be beneficial in the future.

**Increased Support and Self-Esteem**

One of the clearest benefits of court-mandating women to attend the PAR program was that many of them formed bonds with others in the group. Some women reported feeling like they did not have anyone that could relate to what they were going through with the criminal justice system prior to attending the PAR program. Close friendships were formed upon meeting other PAR participants, and this gave some women social support and the confidence to leave their abusive relationships, with one facilitator saying:

I find going through the program women finally decide that they want to pursue the separation because they don’t see a future in their relationship. […] I’ve seen that in quite a few […] women. […] These women have been enduring abuse for such a long time and they finally got their self worth back and confidence. […] They saw their relationship for what it was and […] they weren’t hiding anymore because they got to share with twenty other women and heard everyone else’s story. That changes a woman big time considering she’s the one hiding in the closet.

During the final session, many of the women were observed expressing gratitude towards the support they gained from the group. Some examples included: “[I feel] a sense of belonging. We’re all in the same boat [Cries].” Another woman said, “I don’t feel more powerful, I feel more empowered.” Finally, one woman stated:
I never felt so much support, acceptance and love from complete strangers. Thank you for listening [Cries]. To the facilitators, thank you for your words and insight, I can’t thank you enough. We made it. For all of us, this is the worst experience but we pulled through. It happened for a reason. For the young people, we need you to tell your story to make an impact on others.

Patrice summed up her feelings during her interview:

I don’t feel like I wanted to the program to end, believe it or not […] because by the end of it I did not feel like it was a program for “women abusers”. […] The women in that group were not abusers. […] I felt like it was more of the support group for depressed women in shitty relationships. […] I left the group feeling like I have sisters, I have girls out there that I can talk to if I need to. […] I really want to make sure that I stay in touch with the girls because if there was one silver lining, it was the people that I met at that group […]. I love the girls in that group, everyone, you, [the facilitators], everyone.

Despite the negative circumstances that brought the women to the program, the majority left with a positive and relatable support system that many of them lacked when they first arrived.

This section described the findings relating to the perceived challenges and benefits of women who are mandated to attend the PAR program including their ability to apply what they learned to future incidents of IPV. A discussion regarding these findings is presented in the next chapter.
7: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses how women charged for IPV and enrolled in intervention programs perceive their use of force in the situation for which they were charged. Although it is acknowledged among feminist researchers and advocates that women can and do use force in their intimate relationships (Larance & Miller, 2016; Pence, 2012; Miller, 2005; Dasgupta, 2002), debates arise concerning the context in which women engage in IPV, their gendered use of force, and appropriate criminal justice responses to it (Larance & Miller, 2016; Larance, 2006; Pence, 2012; Dasgupta, 2002; Swan & Snow, 2002). The findings relating to the three research questions are presented below: the first section summarizes key findings relating to how women charged and mandated to an IPV intervention program perceive their use of force. The second section presents whether the women and facilitators felt the PAR program was effective in addressing women’s lived experiences that brought them to the program. Finally, a discussion of what the perceived challenges and benefits were in court-mandating women to attend the PAR program is presented. Next, policy implications from the study are discussed, followed by the research limitations and avenues for future research. Finally, concluding thoughts will be presented.

7.1: Research Question 1: How Do Women Charged with IPV and Enrolled in IPV Intervention Programs Perceive Their Use of Force?

As indicated in the analysis chapter, three women provided descriptions that met Johnson’s violent resistance (VR) category, while eight women were classified as using situational couple violence (SCV). Four women described force that did not fit Johnson’s typology, and four women denied using any force and instead, asserted that they had been charged and convicted
based on vexatious accusations made by their partner. There were no instances where women described themselves using coercive controlling violence (CCV) or separation-instigated violence (SV) in the situation for which they were charged.

Similar to Miller’s (2005) findings, none of the women interviewed in this study described their force occurring within a larger desire to exert coercive controlling violence over their partner which also coincides with general observations made by other researchers (Stark, 2007, 2006; DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2009). Considering that the PAR curriculum is designed to address typical male battering behaviours, this finding lends further support to those who argue that it is inappropriate to apply a male-centered curriculum to women charged with IPV.

**Women’s Violent Resistance**

Three women described using force that aligned with Johnson’s (2008) operationalization of VR where “the partner is violent and controlling—an intimate terrorist—and the resister’s violence arises in reaction to that attempt to exert general control” (p. 5); however, their actions were ultimately construed as offensive resulting in charges against them. Brooke, Laverne and Patrice all maintained that they used minimal or no force in the relationship prior to the charges. More specifically, Brooke and Patrice acknowledged using self-defence in response to their partners’ attempts to use physical and/or non-physical control tactics in a limited number of previous instances. The incident itself was the first time Laverne fought back after enduring years of CCV which, at times, resulted in charges being laid against her partner. Patrice and Laverne also acknowledged that there were instances where their partners would engage in sexual manipulation and assault as part of the physical abuse they endured.
When examining the broader forms of coercive control throughout the relationship, women shared extensive accounts of their partners using a variety of non-physical strategies to maintain control. All three women discussed their partners engaging in emotional abuse, coercion/threats/intimidation, financial abuse, and isolation throughout the relationship. In addition, Patrice discussed her partner’s tendency to assert male privilege to justify coercing her into sex while minimizing/denying/blaming her for his paranoia and jealousy. As the only mother in this category, Brooke acknowledged that her ex-partner would frequently use their daughter as a pawn and to make her feel inadequate as a mother.

Having the tables turned on them and being accused of assault by their abuser was just another example of the ongoing coercive control they faced which complicated their realities as they were already navigating their way through other competing concerns when the charges occurred. This included searching for/maintaining steady employment and scraping together funds to pay for their basic living expenses while trying to meet their partners daily expectations. The accusations resulting in their charges and mandated participation in the PAR program inadvertently gave rise to their partners’ increased power and control which was supported through the state power of the PAR program. In other words, the PAR program encouraged the women to be compliant and obedient towards their partner while the conditions placed upon them operated to enforce this (Osthoff, 2002). Collectively, this added to the repertoire of control tactics which the abusers previously did not have access to, but which they willingly used to their advantage since they could now legitimately carry out threats. This further confirms what women’s advocates have argued for years – that male batterers can and do manipulate the criminal justice system to their advantage (Larance & Miller, 2016; Dichter, 2013; Douglas, 2018; Gardner, 2008).
Patrice and Laverne discussed how their partners used the court conditions to their advantage to assert further financial control. Patrice’s partner backed out at the last minute from a prior agreement to pay half her legal costs as a gesture of accepting partial responsibility, instead leaving her scrambling to find a way to pay the remaining balance. Laverne’s ex-partner fraudulently made away with thousands of dollars in purchases on her credit card as he rightfully assumed that she would be bound by a no-contact order by the time she was granted bail and had discovered what he had done. She believed that his actions served two purposes: first, as a final act of vindictiveness for attempting to fight back, and second, to set her up to breach her no-contact order if she tried to contact him to retrieve the money. Both women were left with few options but to incur these costs because of a system that had failed to protect them and reinforced their partner’s coercive control. These realities were made even more difficult considering that all three women experienced financial difficulties at some point during the relationship. Financial hardships were exacerbated by legal expenses and/or loss of income incurred as a direct result of the charges. Others have documented how this affects women’s willingness to plead guilty and may be a consideration in their decision to accept responsibility in order to be diverted to the PAR program (Gardner, 2008; Larance & Miller, 2016; Pollack et al., 2005).

Taken together, these women’s experiences demonstrate that the threat of physical violence was only one component of the overall control they were responding to and their reactions were similar to the legal concept of “cumulative provocation.” Cumulative provocation is derived from English law and is typically used in cases of intimate partner homicide to explain situations of prolonged physical and psychological abuse by the deceased that ends in the victim killing her oppressor (Mousourakis, 2007; Carline, 2005). Cumulative provocation is distinct from the battered woman’s defence in that it excludes the possibility that the accused was
suffering from a mental abnormality at the time of the offence (Burton, 2001; Horder, 1999). Therefore, unlike the battered woman’s defence which has been critiqued on the grounds that it pathologizes women by explaining their actions as occurring as part of a syndrome, cumulative provocation views the defendant as a full moral agent (Burton, 2001; Horder, 1999). Women who have used this legal defence of provocation have done so by maintaining that they were incited by their abuser’s extensive cruelty which coincides with broader feminist research that argues that women frequently use force in response to ongoing victimization (Larance & Miller, 2016; Hamberger & Guse, 2005; Kernsmith, 2005; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Pollack et al., 2005; Ross, 2011; Poon et al., 2014).

Although cumulative provocation is a legal defence in Canada, the successful application has been limited which supports some feminists who believe that the criminal justice system is not suited to protect women; therefore, they caution that the exclusive reliance on the law to do so will likely continue to result in flawed outcomes (Mousourakis, 2007; Walklate, Fitz-Gibbon & McCulloch, 2018). Nevertheless, as a legal defence to intimate partner homicide, cumulative provocation may also be helpful in petitioning for the criminal justice system to recognize women’s VR as a reaction to longstanding physical and psychological abuse since the only thing separating the two acts is whether there are lethal consequences.

**Women’s Situational Couple Violence**

According to Johnson (2008), situational couple violence is:

Probably the most common type of partner violence […]. The violence is situationally provoked, as the tensions or emotions of a particular encounter lead someone to react with violence. […] The violence may be minor and singular. […] Or it could be a chronic problem, with one or both partners frequently resorting to violence, minor or severe. […]

236
The motives for such violence vary. [...] Thus, many of the separate violent incidents of situational couple violence may look exactly like those involved in intimate terrorism or violent resistance. The difference is in the general power and control dynamic of the relationship, not in the nature of any one assault. If it appears that neither partner is generally trying to control the other [...] then we are dealing with situational couple violence. (p.11)

The findings from the current research align with Johnson’s (2008) description and frequency of SCV, meaning that the majority of participants, eight of 19, described their use of force as a response to an escalating conflict not rooted in control. This is, in contrast, to previous qualitative research findings by Miller and Meloy (2006) who did not report any cases of SCV among the women in their study. It is possible that Miller and Meloy’s (2006) operationalization of SCV differed from the current study which sought to align itself closely to Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) theoretical framework. Therefore, this research produced findings reflecting Johnson’s general observations of SCV rather than that of Miller and Meloy’s (2006) work. However, the latter did not provide details regarding their operationalization and application of the typology, so this is only speculative.

Similar to Johnson’s (2008) observations of SCV, there was a wide range of causes and effects of the violence by those who fell under this category. For instance, Marian was charged for throwing a frozen bun partially as a joke to get her partner who was intoxicated to stop talking nonsense and her action did not result in any injuries. In contrast, Zara’s argument stemmed from her pretending that she had destroyed her partner’s property in the hopes that he would return to follow through with their previous plans to spend time together, which she maintained was not rooted in control. Instead, her plan escalated to him returning to his residence to confront her by spearing her head into a door and choking her. She reacted by throwing him off of her which resulted in no injuries to him, but a serious concussion for her which is an example of the opposite end of the severity continuum for SCV.
The spectrum of reasons given by women for using force and the ensuing consequences made it difficult to identify any definitive patterns to add to the existing research on SCV. These findings support existing critiques that the broadness of SCV appears to simply capture violence that fails to meet the requirements of VR thereby acting as a “catch-all” category (Meier, 2015; Pence & Dasgupta, 2006). Women who react in self-defence to general coercive control, but are miscategorised as using SCV, may have their lived realities trivialized and oversimplified by the criminal justice system, who may rely on inappropriate interventions. This could have dangerous consequences for women who may be formally recognized as perpetrators rather than victims in need of assistance to escape the violence (Meier, 2015; Zorza, 2011). With that said, further investigation is needed to ascertain what, if anything, makes this category distinct with the goal of refining it as identifying SCV as violence that falls outside of VR will not provide further insight into the relationship dynamics. Rather, it may promote outcomes that are uninformed and potentially dangerous for those involved.

**Absence of Separation-Instigated Violence**

There were no instances in the sample of women who fit Kelly and Johnson’s (2008) description of separation-instigated violence which is characterized as being:

[…] triggered by experiences such as a traumatic separation. […] The violence represents an atypical and serious loss of psychological control […], is typically limited to one or two episodes at the beginning of or during the separation period, and ranges from mild to more severe forms of violence. [It] is more likely to be perpetrated by the partner who is being left and is shocked by the divorce action […], is unlikely to occur again and protection orders result in compliance. (p. 487).

Three women described their charges stemming from their pending separations; however, they did not meet the specific conditions to be categorized as SV. Olivia felt that a separation was looming in the weeks leading up to the violence and Zara’s partner made comments that
suggested they were already broken up immediately prior to the violence; however, neither one of the women described their actions as an “atypical and serious loss of psychological control” (Kelly & Johnson, 2008: 487). Rather, Olivia described throwing water at her partner in a semi-joking manner and Zara described herself as reacting to her partner’s loss of control rather than her own after she repeatedly asked for clarity on the state of their relationship. Cristina and her partner were involved in an argument where they both alluded to separating which turned violent; however, they ultimately decided to stay together and work on their relationship thereby excluding her from this category since Johnson’s work does not discuss the possibility of reconciliation (Kelly & Johnson, 2008). Restricting SV to cases where the aggressor appears to uncharacteristically “flip out” resulting in a permanent separation creates a narrow window that ignores many of the realities that occur during separation. First, not all violence during separation occurs due to a loss of psychological control. Second, many couples go through extended periods of relationship discord including numerous trial separations rather than completely severing ties with one another (Halpern-Meekin, Manning, Giordano, & Longmore, 2013). Thus, SV as a category should be modified to recognize that violence occurring during separation may be triggered by the psychological loss of control as well as a range of other reasons. Further, it should also expand its scope to include violence that occurs during periods of ongoing and fluctuating separation and reconciliation between partners.

**Women’s Use of Force That Cannot Be Classified**

Four women reported using force that could not be captured under the four categories within Johnson’s typology and one of these women could not be categorized due to lack of information. The remaining three women described using force in response to their partner’s
physical and/or non-physical control tactics throughout the relationship rather than in the incident itself. Thus, these women fell short of Johnson’s definition of VR which requires the imminent threat of physical violence even though they described relationship histories involving extensive physical and/or non-physical abuse, thereby exposing a substantial shortfall within this category (Johnson & Leone, 2005). All three women shared stories of being charged for using force to protect or maintain their self-respect against their partner who displayed signs of coercive control in what Larance and Miller (2016) refer to as “asserting dignity”. Elsie slapped her ex-partner in response to him stonewalling her attempt to seek closure about his infidelity after enduring years of his physical and sexual violence and non-physical control tactics including threats of suicide. Aurelia felt trapped in her relationship and exploded by hitting her ex-partner over 100 times as a reaction to his prolonged use of coercive control tactics including financial abuse, threats and intimidation, and using their children against her. Lynne used force in response to her ex-partner’s efforts to monitor her whereabouts in an attempt to hold onto the relationship, similar to Johnson’s (2008) dependent coercive controller. However, because Johnson’s work emphasizes the presence of physical violence in CCV, Lynne’s ex-partner would fall short of being a dependent coercive controller since he relied exclusively on non-physical control tactics to control her (Johnson & Leone, 2005; Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014).

Although these women were subjected to extensive forms of coercive control, such conduct was not considered criminal since the criminal justice system is incident-based and the Canadian Criminal Code does not recognize multiple, ongoing non-physical tactics as a crime (Walklate, Fitz-Gibbon & McCulloch, 2018; Meier, 2015; Stark, 2006; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Pollack et al., 2005; Dobash & Dobash, 2004). Critics argue that this understanding of IPV is further supported by the fact that the criminal justice system tends to focus on individual
perpetrators and victims and their circumstances as abnormal or normal (Miller & Meloy, 2006; Walklate et al., 2018). In other words, the criminal justice system pathologizes these individuals rather than reflecting on the broader social, legal and political structures that operate to maintain male privilege and violence (Miller & Meloy, 2006; Walklate et al., 2018). Given these criticisms, it is not surprising that the women were reprimanded for attempting to assert dignity by using force as these actions are punishable by law even if it is in response to their partners’ coercive control (Larance and Miller, 2016).

Johnson’s operationalization of VR requires that, first and foremost, the resistor must be reacting to the threat of violence along with any controlling behaviours their partner may possess (Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014; Johnson & Leone, 2005). Using force to assert dignity could not be classified as VR since these women were not responding to the threat of physical violence, thus, exposing one shortfall of Johnson’s typology. Johnson’s reliance on the presence of physical force in VR is problematic since oftentimes the coercive controller does not need to resort to violence to achieve relationship-wide control (Mennicke, 2018; Stark, 2006). Research has only recently begun to focus on the need to include nonviolent control categories and the current study provides further support for this type of examination where one or both partners use a variety of control tactics without physical violence (Mennicke, 2018; Frankland & Brown, 2014). The absence of prior violence and presence of control could signify that, although the control tactics were sufficient in maintaining power, violence could be used if the effects of the non-physical tactics were to diminish in the future (Mennicke, 2018).

Relationships are fluid, and focusing on the immediate threat of violence to determine VR may result in some relationships being misclassified if the coercive controller no longer relies upon physical violence since the threat of prior violence is enough to maintain control.
(Mennicke, 2018; Stark, 2007). There is also increasing support that suggests that the level of control is better suited than prior assault in predicting severe future violence and sexual assault; and further, control can involve ongoing subtle threats in relationships where coercive control is present (Stark, 2012). Stark (2012) argues that this is because coercive control erodes the victim’s sense of autonomy, equality, freedom, support systems and self-worth in a manner that weakens their ability to make decisions that would otherwise effectively assist them in resisting and fleeing the abuse. Despite this, Johnson’s operationalization of VR is similar to the criminal justice system’s understanding of violence and abuse as both tend to place more emphasis on investigating the intended or actual injury rather than the larger context of control (Meier, 2015; Stark, 2006; 2007; 2012). Therefore, Johnson’s VR category may reinforce existing problems within the criminal justice system with respect to how such violence is conceptualized, understood, and addressed.

Elsie made it clear that she resorted to slapping her ex-partner because she had been subjected to years of his coercive control which included, but was not limited to, infrequent episodes of physical and sexual abuse that he then minimized, denied and blamed on her. However, she felt that she could not approach her partner to express her concerns because he made ongoing threats to commit suicide throughout their relationship. His threats of suicide are an important consideration given that such behaviour falls under the scope of “coercion and threats” as a control tactic in the Power and Control Wheel which is used to inform Johnson’s typology (Kelly & Johnson, 2008; Pence & Peymar, 1993) and is also an established risk factor for domestic homicide perpetration (Ontario DVDRC, 2017; Dawson & Piscitelli, 2017; Eke, Hilton, Harris, et al., 2011; Cavanaugh, Messing, Del-Colle, et al., 2011). As Stark (2009) argues, Johnson’s emphasis on physical violence in determining VR and CCV presents a serious
and potentially dangerous shortfall that needs to be reassessed to capture some of the most serious forms of coercive control.

Johnson reduces coercive control to a behaviour or act that accompanies the violence thereby emphasizing the primary importance of the physical abuse (Johnson & Leone, 2005; Johnson, Leone & Xu, 2014) and this ignores the fact that coercive control can be accomplished effectively through non-physical tactics (Mennicke, 2018; Frankland & Brown, 2014; Stark, 2006, 2009, 2012). For example, although Aurelia may not have been reacting to the threat of violence required in order to be recognized as VR, upon closer examination, her use of force was an attempt to assert dignity in response to her ex-husband’s control tactics. More specifically, she and her partner had mutually agreed that he would work in the public sphere while she stayed home to care for their children who had special needs since her earning potential and the cost of childcare did not make financial sense for her to pursue paid work. However, he used their gender roles to assert financial control over her by devaluing her unpaid domestic contributions, making her ask for money, limiting her access to bank accounts, excluding her from investments, and using his financial security to threaten to take the children away.

Despite its relevance to understanding IPV, Johnson’s conceptualization of CCV removes the greater socio-political context of women’s gendered subordination which is essential for understanding why women engage in violent resistance (Stark, 2006). Aurelia’s ex-partner used her gendered economic oppression in the public sphere coupled with her unpaid reproductive labour to his advantage, allowing him to assert financial control over her. This increased her dependency on him to survive and, ultimately, culminated in her VR in response to his coercive control which Johnson’s (2008) categorization does not acknowledge.
Evan Stark (2006, 2009, 2012) highlights the limitations of Johnson’s conceptualization of the dynamics of CCV and VR by arguing that coercive control is a gendered phenomenon. Women may become entrapped through tactics entrenched in male privilege and that overlap with traditional gender roles making it difficult to recognize aspects coercive control as abuse (Stark, 2012). For Stark (2012), identifying the harmful impacts of coercive control is complicated because oftentimes the control is so extensive that the abuser does not need to resort to force to maintain compliance. However, the legal standard of abuse is not met if physical violence is absent in the relationship even though control alone can restrict a woman’s autonomy and liberty and may be a precursor of their use force (Meier, 2015; Stark, 2006, 2007, 2012; Swan & Snow, 2003).

Stark’s (2012) critique is relevant to women whose use of force could not be classified as well as women that were captured in other categories within this research. Among those who could not be classified, Aurelia’s ex-partner did not need to resort to physical violence. Instead, he was able to subject her to economic abuse which was supported by social conditions that devalued her unpaid domestic work and left her defenseless to his coercive control with no legal recourse and ultimately caused her to explode using force against him. These conditions illustrate the importance of understanding how the broader social ecology of violence against women, including the role of individual, family, and community level factors may play a role in women resorting to force when they lack suitable alternatives (Lauritsen & Schaum, 2004; Dasgupta, 2002). Similarly, Stark (2006) maintains that coercive control should be reframed as less centred upon acts of physical violence and more focused on the socio-political structures that maintain the social power necessary to suppress women’s autonomy, liberty, and equality.
Women Wrongfully Convicted of Using Force

Although wrongful convictions were not directly relevant in determining the applicability of Johnson’s typology of violence to women’s use of force, a discussion about the larger context of control in which these false accusations occurred is warranted given the level of control used. Four women in this study described themselves as being wrongfully convicted which supports prior research that suggests that some male batterers use the criminal justice system to make false or vexatious accusations with the intent of having the women criminalized (Larance & Miller, 2016; Miller, 2005; Dichter, 2013; Pollack et al., 2005). Alternatively, the criminal justice system’s involvement raises the level of awareness among some male batterers who are now able to manipulate the system to their advantage, as observed by one facilitator:

It’s […] two sets of people. There’s the people who have the knowledge of the criminal justice system and abuse it at the beginning, so they […] know exactly what to say when the cops are called and threaten the woman before the cops are even called or pre-emptively call the cops themselves as a way of protecting themselves. […] Or there’s people who once this whole thing has happened [they become aware of their legal rights as “victims” and] they start to misuse the system and abuse the system in their favour.

According to their version of the events, Janine, Sophia, Ana and Evelin either accepted plea bargains to avoid facing potentially harsher sanctions, or were convicted at trial; and as a result, they were mandated to the PAR program based on false accusations. Being ordered to the program to address their non-existent violence provides further support that all four women were trapped in a web of coercive control which, according to Johnson and Leone (2005) includes being subjected to physical and/or sexual violence along with at least three control tactics. Their accuser’s vexatious allegations heightened the coercive control, granting them unprecedented power to carry out threats while having the criminal justice system act as a weapon to be used against the woman with no viable recourse for protection, as stated by Evelin:
I just thought that the cops would pull up his being arrested and see that “Oh, well you’re claiming that this woman beat you but we have something that says you beat her.” […] Nope, they didn’t do that. So, I really don't know how this justice system is supposed to be serving and protecting actual victims when right now I feel like he has a gun and the system is feeding him ammo and bullets for him to use back at me.

Again, the criminal justice system is designed to address incidents of violence rather than the context of the abuse thereby supporting privilege rooted in patriarchy as it has been well documented that such occurrences rarely occur in isolation (Stark, 2012; Ursel, Tutty & leMaistre, 2008; Meier, 2015; Zorza, 2011). Successful vexatious claims send a contradictory message to women in need of protection, one that is grounded in patriarchal power and privilege.

7.2: Research Question 2: Was the Program Effective in Addressing Women’s Lived Experiences That Brought Them to the PAR Program?

This section provides a discussion relating to whether the PAR curriculum was able to adequately address women’s lived experiences that brought them to the program. First, a discussion regarding whether and how the program addressed women’s gendered use of force is presented, followed by intersecting areas of oppression and, finally, pathological violence.

Gendered Use of Force

The findings from this study suggest that the PAR program was limited in its ability to address women’s lived experiences of using force against their partner which resulted in their charges. Some women felt the program was beneficial in helping them recognize their abusive behaviour, to identify and understand their anger, and to gain a greater sense of self-awareness of the situation that brought them into the program. Some facilitators also believed the program was successful in addressing women’s underlying reasons for using force to a certain extent, although
others did not agree the program was successful, nor did this appear to be the sentiment conveyed by the majority of the women in this research.

The predominant perception that the program was unsuccessful in addressing women’s use of force is not surprising. Many researchers and advocates argue that IPV intervention programs designed to address male battering behaviours cannot be easily transferable to women as they often have more distinct histories of victimization that need to be addressed alongside their use of force (Larance, 2012; Ontario DVDRC, 2012; Miller, Gregory & Iovanni, 2005; Osthoff, 2002; Dasgupta, 2002). Despite this, one facilitator noted that there was an agency-wide presumption that all women were victims of IPV and, therefore, they were treated as such. She believed that doing so silenced those women who viewed themselves as true perpetrators with no histories of victimization, and thereby created a gap in services needed to address their behaviour. Other researchers have echoed this concern noting that denial or refusal to engage in a dialogue which acknowledges women’s violence may perpetuate the naturalistic assumption that all women are incapable of engaging in such conduct (Damant et al., 2014; Kelly, 1996; Straus, 2009).

Women’s organizations are increasingly recognizing that some women do engage in IPV, that these women are in need of assistance, and to ignore their requests for help essentially excludes them from society since they are unable to validate and address their experiences (Damant et al., 2014). In recognizing women’s distinct histories involving victimization and abuse, the Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (2012) emphasized the need for intervention programs to be designed to specifically address the needs of women perpetrators of IPV. Among their recommendations, the committee has suggested that interventions be tailored
to female perpetrators who acted in self-defence, retaliation, or as the primary aggressor as there are few programs that aim to address these experiences, particularly within the latter category.

While there is limited research that examines programs that address women who are primary aggressors and not victims (Miller & Meloy, 2006; Tutty, Babin-Wagner & Rothery, 2006; Walker, 2013; Larance, Hoffman & Shivas, 2009; Larance & Rousson, 2015), one current example is Damant et al.’s (2014) mutual aid group program for women who use violence in Quebec, Canada. The program was created using the realities of women who use violence alongside an intersectional feminist analysis of women’s use of force and organized into a mutual aid group model that consists of three modules. Module 1 focuses on the theme of violence and aims to: (1) understand violence by defining it and discussing the causes and consequences, (2) discuss alternatives to the violence, and (3) have women live in a safe environment. Module 2 focuses on socialization including gender oppression that is derived from social norms and aims to: (1) connect stereotypes to sex roles, (2) discuss how socialization impacts their lives, and (3) identify how socialization is connected to violence. Module 3 focuses on life conditions to recognize how gender can interact with other oppressions that result in conditions that may promote violence. This module aims to: (1) discuss how their lives may be impacted by their living conditions, and (2) empower them with respect to these living conditions by fostering a sense of unity among group members (Damant, et al., 2014). Damant et al. (2014) suggest moving towards an intersectional approach that acknowledges other oppressions that feed and flow from gender oppression thereby creating conditions that may prompt women to use force, which is discussed in greater detail below.
Areas Reproducing Intersecting Oppressions

The findings from this study suggest that, although some women discussed their culture, race, ethnicity, immigration status, or religious background as being relevant to the wider context in which they used force, MAG’s PAR standards provided no real recognition of this, nor did the agency itself. Without time allotted for a formal discussion on the diversity of experiences with IPV, it appeared that MAG and the agency assumed that all participants’ experiences could be addressed using the dominant framework for understanding IPV without any regard for other value and belief systems. The facilitators were left with the task of determining whether and how to address women’s experiences that did not fit the North American context of White, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class women (Damant et al., 2014; Collins, 1994). As frontline providers, the facilitators had firsthand knowledge that instructing all women to address relationship conflict in the same manner was unrealistic and potentially dangerous for many women who diverged from the dominant group’s experiences with IPV.

Addressing the diverse realities of women in the PAR program was entirely dependent on whether the facilitator was willing or had the personal knowledge and experience to address the role of cultural understandings in normalizing the abuse which prompted some women to use force. Most facilitators admittedly did not come from diverse backgrounds and were limited by their experiences relating to their race/ethnicity, social class, and/or sexual orientation, to name a few. These limitations made it difficult for some facilitators to be able to acknowledge, let alone, speak to the intersecting concerns raised by women in a practical manner. This was particularly problematic given that the city where the agency was located was highly multicultural and comprised of various ethnic and cultural communities which was also reflected among the women in the PAR program. Further, a core finding of this study is the frequency of women who
discussed the relevance of their cultural upbringing in normalizing the violence which deterred them from seeking help and ultimately resulted in their use of force. Thus, although Carney & Buttrell (2006) found no difference in the level of change among Black and White women who completed treatment which led them to conclude that Black women’s experiences could be captured using standardized curriculum, this study’s qualitative findings provide preliminary support for curriculums that recognize the diversity of experiences among women (Roy, 2012; Swan & Snow, 2002; 2006; Caetano et al., 2004, Ontario DVDRC, 2012).

As Crenshaw (1991) argues: “Strategies based on the experiences of women who do not share the same class and race backgrounds will be of limited utility for those whose lives are shaped by a different set of obstacles” (p. 86). Such obstacles are assumed by practitioners and traditional intervention strategies to be rooted in the cultural group’s dissonance from the predominant White group rather than arising from the power dynamics of dominant structures and institutions (Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999). When group identity is threatened by racist othering from dominant powers of oppression including intervention programming, traditional social norms and oppressive customary practices are further reinforced by group members in an effort ensure cultural perseverance. However, ignoring the role of culture within the PAR curriculum serves to compound obstacles present in women’s lived experiences with violence, creating a “violent space” where they are marginalized by the patriarchal organization of their culture as well larger dominant society (Razack, 2003; Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999).

Intervention strategies must understand the role that dominant power structures, including the criminal justice system, play in prompting some families and communities to reinforce insular conditions to safeguard themselves from institutional oppression. Those who identify as
cultural minorities may perceive the criminal justice system’s programs and policies as reflecting only the values of the dominant culture while diminishing the validity of other perspectives. Thus, being ordered to attend interventions that ignore their cultural beliefs may push these individuals and their support systems to be less receptive to change while enhancing their commitment towards their cultural values. This in turn may make them less receptive towards criminal justice programming since it lacks recognition towards their diverse values and experiences with intimate partner violence. Gondolf (2012, 2008, 2007) builds on this point by suggesting that culturally-driven community services should be delegated to provide tailored interventions rather than seeking solutions within the criminal justice system because the former may be more effective in reducing recidivism. The dominant group framework may be comprised of highly-foreign concepts and assumptions making it difficult for participants to identify with the content as a cultural minority. Culturally-centred curriculum can focus on dismantling assumptions about violence being part of a normative pattern that is necessary for maintaining cultural perseverance. It can then work towards revealing how in reality, it is a patriarchal practice that is rooted in violence (Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999).

Assumptions about wife battering exemplify this point because they are embedded in practices supported by longstanding patriarchal traditions, but cannot be regarded as culture in and of itself (Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999).

The unique experiences of disabled women and their use of force were also absent from MAG’s PAR standards as well as the agency’s adapted curriculum as neither attempted to acknowledge this intersection. This was problematic since Rayanne had no choice but to firmly hold onto her partner in the moment to compensate for her physical disability which was then viewed as an offensive action by the arresting officers. She then made the conscious decision to
conceal her disability from police to appear as the primary aggressor since she was aware of the pro-charging policy in IPV and wanted to protect her partner whom she relied upon for financial support, in part, due to her disability. This finding corresponds with Chang et al. (2003) who caution that disabled women may refrain from disclosing violence as they fear the implications of legal intervention. This occurs despite the consistent finding that women with disabilities are at greater risk of physical and sexual abuse by an intimate partner compared to able-bodied women (Statistics Canada, 2018; Barrett et al., 2009; Brownridge, 2006; Casteel et al., 2008; Ballan & Freyer, 2012).

Violence against women with disabilities can be discreet and the coercive control that they may experience may not be easily detected, yet it may have serious implications for their lived realities requiring modified interventions to respond in an appropriate manner. For example, a disabled woman could respond with force when her abuser limits her access to necessary medications, medical devices or mobility aids (Statistics Canada, 2018; Harpur and Douglas, 2014). More specifically, she may use force in response to her abuser compromising the well-being of her service animal which is a direct threat to her physical safety and independence. However, investigating officers may overlook this form of abuse since it is unique to the context of her disability thereby making it difficult to appreciate its relevance to her use of force (Ballan & Freyer, 2012). As a result, women with disabilities who resort to force in response to forms of sexism and ableism may not only be at risk of being charged, but these oppressions also may create circumstances that promote other forms of abuse to complicate their lived realities with IPV (Ballan & Freyer, 2012).

Statistics Canada (2018) found that in 2014, more than one in five (23%) women living with a disability had experienced emotional, financial, physical or sexual violence at the hands of
a current or former partner within the past five years, and almost half (46%) of women who faced homelessness in Canada had a disability (p. 3). In the current study, Rayanne acknowledged that she did, in fact, mention her physical disability when sharing her incident with the PAR group. However, the lack of a follow up discussion resulted in a missed learning opportunity for both herself and other women who may have disregarded their own physical impediments as irrelevant. Had there been follow-up, this could have empowered women living with disabilities by incorporating realistic safety planning along with tools to enhance their communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making skills to work towards living free of violence (Copel, 2006; Ballan & Freyer, 2012).

Although Patrice was the only woman interviewed that acknowledged identifying with the LGBTQ+ community and discussed how her bisexual orientation was used against her to exert coercive control in the relationship, this finding is worth discussing given the paucity of literature on the bisexual community. The lived experiences of bisexual people are frequently overlooked in IPV research as they do not fit neatly within the experiences of heterosexual or same-sex relationships (Israel & Mohr, 2004; Li, Dobinson, Scheim, & Ross, 2013; Vincill & Israel, 2018). However, the fact that Patrice had to constantly reassure her male partner of her commitment to their monogamous relationship while fending off his accusations of infidelity with both men and women is consistent with the literature that discusses intersections of sexual orientation and sexism (Li, Dobinson, Scheim, & Ross, 2013; Turell, Brown & Herrmann, 2018).

Research suggests that a prevailing heterosexist myth is that those who identify as bisexual are highly promiscuous and unable to maintain monogamous relationships (Li et al., 2013; Turell, Brown & Herrmann, 2018). This is complicated by biphobia from intimate partners who may perceive being left for someone of the opposite sex as worse than being left for someone of
the same sex. Possessing these homophobic fears coupled with the assumption that bisexual women are highly promiscuous and deceitful may increase suspicion among male partners, leading to an escalation in conflict and potential for violence against bisexual women in heterosexual intimate relationships (Li et al., 2013; Klesse, 2005; Turell, Brown & Herrmann, 2018).

In the current research, part of the isolation Patrice experienced as a result of her partner’s efforts to exert greater coercive control stemmed from his jealousy which was heightened by his beliefs about bisexual women. Bradford (2004) indicates that mixed orientation couples may require further education, resources and support to be able to effectively communicate their feelings and reach a mutual understanding of what they perceive their intimate relationship to look like given their differences in sexual identity. Facilitating a safe, open and informed discussion about bisexuality as well as myths stemming from biphobia and sexism that were used to exacerbate Patrice’s partner’s insecurity could be a starting point to providing context-specific programming that is tailored to her needs. By engaging in this dialogue with Patrice, she could be better situated to make an informed decision about whether and how to approach the jealousy stemming from his biphobia, while assisting her in creating a suitable safety plan in case she should decide to leave the relationship (Li et al., 2013).

Pathological Violence

Two women described circumstances where they were generally not violent or controlling but appeared to have resorted to force against their partner stemming from their altered mental state at the time of the incident in what Pence and Dasgupta (2006) refer to as “pathological violence” whereby:
Individuals who abuse alcohol or drugs, suffer from mental illness or physical disorders, or have neurological damage, may use physical violence against others, including their intimate partners. Sometimes there is a causal link between their use of violence and the pathology from which they suffer. In those cases, when the pathology ends so does the violence. (p. 13).

First, Madeline did not believe that she had an abusive or controlling personality but rather, she identified her force as stemming from her alcohol dependency and wanting to drink despite her partner’s disapproval. However, as Madeline indicated, although the agency’s PAR program and MAG’s general program guidelines recognized the role of substance abuse in IPV, simply acknowledging the relationship was not sufficient to help her to overcome her alcoholism given that she believed it was central to her use of force. Research has found that women court-mandated to intervention programs often have substance dependency concerns that intersect with their IPV (Crane, Oberleitner, Devin, Easton, 2014; Stuart, Moore, Ramsey, Kahler, 2004; Stuart, Meehan, Moore, Morean, Hellmuth, Follansbee 2006; Miller and Meloy, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial to provide these women with meaningful treatment and supports that are integrated into IPV intervention programs in a manner that directly addresses this intersection as this could potentially affect recidivism (Stuart et al., 2004). By integrating proper substance abuse supports into IPV intervention programs, it is reasonable to expect that this will, at the very least, assist women such as Madeline who acknowledge their use of pathological violence, in living free of substance abuse and violence.

Neda was encouraged by an investigating officer to see a doctor who diagnosed her with postpartum depression after she described using force in response to the mounting stressors of caring for an ill infant while lacking supports from her partner and his extended family. However, the role of postpartum depression and IPV was non-existent in both MAG’s general guidelines and the agency’s PAR curriculum even though the agency publicizes itself and its
program as being women-centred. Postpartum depression is a women-centred issue that needs to be addressed in the program for a number of reasons: First, women are at an increased risk of IPV victimization during pregnancy and postpartum (Hellmuth, Gordon, Stuart & Moore, 2013; Kita, Haruna, Matsuzaki, Kamibeppu, 2016). Second, this period is often challenging, with couples experiencing declines in their ability to adjust to the changing nature of the relationship thereby increasing women’s relationship distress, stress, depression and thoughts of wanting to harm their children (Flanagan, Gordon, Moore, Stuart, 2015; Whisman, Davila & Goodman, 2011). As there was no discussion on the intersecting role between postpartum depression and women’s use of force, Neda’s lived experience remained unaddressed. There is currently only one study that examines women’s force against an intimate partner during the postpartum period. The study found that a small subset of women had not been victimized by their partner and thereby concluded that they were the perpetrators in the violence (Hellmuth, et al., 2013). This suggests there is a limited but distinct population of women who could benefit from further investigation and support during the postpartum period.

Overall, both Neda and Madeline believed that they were generally non-violent individuals, and they described their use of force as occurring solely due to their mental state at the time of the offence which could be identified as pathological violence. If their altered mental states were the only reasons for using force, then according to Pence and Dasgupta (2006), effective interventions should include relevant treatment and support for Madeline's alcoholism and Neda’s postpartum depression, neither of which was adequately addressed, if at all, by the PAR program.
7.3: Research Question 3: What Are the Perceived Challenges and Benefits for Women Being Court-mandated to Attend the PAR Program as Well as Applying the Content to Future Instances of IPV?

The women in this research did not enroll in the PAR program on their own accord and, therefore, this section discusses the various challenges and benefits that surfaced from being court-mandated to attend, including the challenge of applying the content in future instances of violence.

Challenges of Mandating Women to Attend a Program That Does Not Fit Their Needs

Overlapping with the discussion above, the clearest challenge of court-mandating women to attend the PAR program stemmed from the general belief by women PAR participants and facilitators that the curriculum typically did not align with women’s lived experiences and, therefore, it did not address their needs. As indicated previously, the PAR program was originally designed to address male battering behaviours grounded in power and control and commonly captured within Pence and Paymar’s (1986; 1993) Duluth Model, but due to the increase in women being charged for IPV under pro-charging policies, the program has since expanded to include women (Holmes, 2015).

Expanding the court-mandated program to include women raises the concern that women often do not view themselves as batterers even though they are being mandated to attend a program rooted in addressing such beliefs. Although the same could be said for some men mandated to the PAR program, women’s perceptions that they were not batterers is particularly relevant here considering that the research supports that women are more frequently victims than offenders of IPV (Larance & Miller, 2016; Hamberger & Guse, 2005; Hamberger et al., 1994;
Similarly, women who use force rarely perpetrate the severe and frequent types of violence typically conceptualized as “battering” (Gondolf, 2014; Miller, 2005; Osthoff, 2002). As indicated in the literature and in the findings of this research, there are a variety of intersecting circumstances that push women to admit responsibility for using force even though they perceive themselves to be victims including: being pressured or coerced by their partners or family to do so; lack of financial support to take the accusations to trial; lack of knowledge to be able to navigate the legal system; fear of the possibility of more punitive sanctions; and wanting the quickest route possible to return home so that the charges do not affect their employment or children, to name a few (Pollack et al., 2005; Larance, 2012; Miller, 2001). Many women believed their male partners needed to change their desire for power and control to make the relationship dynamic an equitable one. Because the women lacked power and control over their partners, they viewed themselves as victims and felt re-victimized by being mandated to attend a program for perpetrators.

Facilitators expressed concerns that the agency’s program was being touted by as gender-neutral, or worse women-centred, which they believed was a misrepresentation. From their perspective, they were facilitating content that the agency adapted from the men’s program by switching the pronouns to appear gender-responsive. Further, the curriculum’s monolithic approach to addressing IPV cannot be made applicable across the diverse experiences of women in the program, resulting in some participants being less receptive towards the content depending on how they self-identified or saw their role in the incident. Because of the highly-diverse
experiences of women entering the program, it could not fit the needs of all participants which resulted in curriculum that relied heavily on providing general information rather than meaningful solutions. Although similar arguments can be made for some men who are mandated to participate in PAR groups, again, given that women mandated to these programs are often victims upon closer examination, and their victimization is often intertwined with their racial, ethnic and religious identities, a more tailored response is needed to provide them with the practical skills necessary to improve upon their circumstances (Larance & Rousson, 2015; Larance & Miller, 2016; Hamberger & Guse, 2005; Kernsmith, 2005; Miller & Meloy, 2006; Swan & Snow, 2003).

These findings support the existing literature that points to the overall dilemma of mandating women to attend intervention programs that are designed to respond to male battering behaviours and, as such, may not capture the type of force women use (Larance & Miller, 2016; Miller, Gregory, Iovanni, 2005; Larance, 2006; Pence & Dasgupta, 2006). A balance is needed that recognizes that women do use force, albeit in ways that are often different than men. As such, it may be beneficial to move away from gender-neutral interventions which, in reality, are typically male-centred. To acknowledge women’s gendered use of force, including self-defence or retaliation to previous or ongoing forms of control, interventions need to recognize that women lack the entitlement as well as the support of larger social structures that place male batterers in a privileged position to maintain control of their partner through violence (Larance & Miller, 2016; Miller, Gregory, Iovanni, 2005). Further, the curriculum should take into account the multiplicity of gendered experiences; that is, how gender and patriarchy intersect with other systems of power and inequalities to reinforce multiple forms of domination in the lives of marginalized women which may compel them to use force (Damant et al., 2014; Collins, 2000).
From there, we can work towards providing more streamlined interventions that are applicable to their lives.

It is likely unrealistic to create streamlined groups that capture every women’s experiences who enter the justice system for using force. A more manageable alternative may be to provide part of the intervention in a group setting that is tailored to the predominant type of force used such as violent resistance in response to general forms of coercive control (Stark, 2007; Mennicke, 2018) and the remainder through individual counselling sessions with culturally-specific community service providers. If, upon participating, the facilitators believe a woman would be better served elsewhere, she can be referred to a more appropriate group while the one-on-one sessions can provide ongoing support during this transition for a more holistic response that is tailored to reduce recidivism. This follows the recommendations made by Tutty, Babins-Wagner & Rothery (2006) who suggested that interventions should be provided in group and individual counselling stages to ensure that each individual’s specific needs are addressed.

However, it is recognized that irrespective of the differences in the experiences of women’s use of force, the root of the problem for those charged for responding to coercive control rests on the criminal justice system’s failure to provide adequate protection for victims. In other words, charging women for circumstances occurring in the context of coercive control strengthens their batterer’s ability to exert power and control and likely will not be helpful in promoting safety within the relationship or reducing the likelihood that the woman will recidivate.

Benefits of Mandating Women to Attend the PAR Program

Despite the challenges, there were some clear benefits that developed from court-mandating women to attend the PAR program. First, many women found the program taught
them how to identify healthy relationships and relationship red flags which they were unaware of prior to their court-ordered attendance. Upon completing the program, women were able to more confidently determine whether a relationship was a healthy or unhealthy, including the one that resulted in their charges and/or their current relationships. For example, Ana was able to reflect back on her relationship to determine that her ex-partner displayed behaviours that were red flags and coincided with his physical abuse which culminated to her being falsely accused of being violent towards him and charged based on his allegations. Laverne ended a new relationship after her new partner exhibited red flags early on when he loaned her money and then berated her for not being in constant communication with him. Although he later attempted to apologize in an attempt to reconcile with her, she recognized his behavioural pattern as a warning sign of an abusive relationship.

Women who were no longer in a relationship acknowledged that the program better equipped them to enter into future relationships as they were now aware of what to look for in the early stages of dating. For example, Olivia believed that the program helped her understand that she could only do so much to try to make the relationship work since ultimately her partner had a role in the dynamic and, therefore, she needed to reteach herself to be cognizant of this in her future relationships.

Prior research has not highlighted identifying healthy relationships and red flags as a benefit derived from interventions specifically; however, these results coincide with Walker’s (2013) general findings that upon completing the program, women were more aware of the different forms of violence and abuse in their relationships, including their own. The women in Walker’s (2013) study were better positioned to utilize the tools and suggestions from the program to control the violence. When intervention programs increase women’s awareness about
IPV, they are able to make more informed choices about their personal safety and the sustainability of their relationships. This could, in turn, reduce repeat victimization as well as recidivism which provides further support for the need for intervention programs that are designed to be women-centred.

Women in this research also reported that being court-mandated to attend the PAR program resulted in increased self-esteem and feelings of support in their lives. Many women indicated that they felt alone and ashamed of their actions throughout the criminal justice process which made them apprehensive to attend the PAR program out of fear that they would be further stigmatized. However, upon attending the program and meeting other women in similar circumstances, they no longer felt alone and were able to build friendships based on their shared experiences. Patrice said she felt that she now had “sisters” and girls that she could “talk to” if need be. These findings correspond with prior research that reported women feeling increased self-esteem and support in a group setting from others who had experienced similar circumstances (Macy, Ermentrout, & Rizo, 2012; Walker, 2013; Miller & Meloy, 2006).

Peer-support has been cited as one of the most beneficial and defining elements for women who are court-ordered to attend intervention programs because it allows participants to realize that they are not alone in their experiences with IPV and the criminal justice system (Macy et al., 2012). When women feel supported by others who are empathetic to what they are going through, this reduces the stigma around using force as a woman, gives them a safe space to share their concerns, and enhances their receptiveness towards the program as well as their desire to learn how to live violence-free (Walker, 2013).
7.4: Implications

There are clear implications for women who are court-mandated to attend IPV intervention programs that do not align with their lived experiences of using force in their relationships. Specifically, providing curriculum that is seemingly gender-neutral may have negative repercussions for women who have no choice but to attend and must ignore their gendered realities of using force so that they can participate in a program that decontextualizes their lived experiences. Not only does this send the wrong message, particularly to those who are not batterers, but in some circumstances, it provides potentially dangerous advice for women who are subjected to ongoing forms of coercive control. As Evelin stated, the use of “I” statements to express her feelings to her ex-partner would likely have serious consequences as she felt “I’m literally digging my grave if I were to say, “I said that I don’t like this and you need to stop.””

These findings lend support for policies and programs that are gender-responsive to the needs and experiences of women who use force, including culturally-appropriate adaptations of the curriculum as a crucial component to ensuring women’s safety (For example, see Damant et al., 2014) (Larance & Miller, 2016; Ontario DVDRC, 2012).

Given the increased prevalence of violence against women with disabilities (Statistics Canada, 2018; Ballan & Freyer, 2012; Brownridge, 2006), intervention programs need to be cognizant of the various indicators of abuse in their lives rather than omitting it from discussions as this may negatively affect their quality of life (Copel, 2006). Service providers should thoroughly interview women at intake to determine their unique needs and facilitators should be trained to remain cognizant of any discussions that may insinuate that the woman has a disability so that they can take the necessary steps to inquire further.
Intake assessments need to more thoroughly investigate the broader context of the violence in the relationship including whether sexual orientation is a factor. Having facilitators and curriculum that is culturally sensitive to common contentious issues that may onset IPV in bisexual relationships may assist women who identify as a sexual minority. These women may have resorted to force in part because they are reluctant to seek help due to fear of being stigmatized by such services (Carvalho, Lewis, Derlega, & Winstead, 2011). Identifying whether the role of sexual orientation was relevant at intake may be a suitable opportunity to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive of women who do not necessarily identify themselves as heterosexual. Overall, adapting the curriculum to recognize and address the gendered realities that prompt women to use force within any culturally-relevant contexts will likely yield more positive outcomes in the lives of women while maintaining the criminal justice system’s goal of such programs reducing recidivism.

7.5: Limitations

This research has added to the limited body of literature on women who have been court-mandated to attend intimate partner violence intervention programs as perpetrators; however, it is not without its limitations. First, the interview sample size was small in terms of women PAR participants (n = 19), and PAR facilitators (n = 3). Therefore, the discussions regarding their experiences of the types of force used and the challenges and benefits of the program likely provide a partial view that has yet to reach saturation since it is possible that there are other perspectives that the current study did not encounter (Larance & Miller, 2016; Baker, Edwards & Dojdge, 2012). However, in-depth interviews often require sample sizes that are smaller due to available resources as well as the time needed to allow participants to adequately respond to the
questions. Therefore, the themes drawn from this sample represent a small, yet in-depth contribution to the area and future research should continue to expand upon these lived experiences to give voices to those women who typically have been silenced.

Second, the site where this research was conducted represents one PAR program that was made available to women within a group setting in an urban city in Ontario, Canada. Therefore, the experiences and outcomes of women and facilitators connected to the agency’s program may not reflect those in other PAR programs both within or outside the jurisdiction, including what is commonly done in rural areas and in one-on-one interventions. While this particular agency’s focus was to provide programs to women who have come into conflict with the law, this may not align with the mission and values of other PAR agencies which could ultimately influence how they interpret and implement MAG’s guidelines into their curriculum.

Finally, although this study sought to examine women’s lived experiences using force, this represents only one partner’s perspective of how the incident transpired within the larger context of the relationship. In addition, women’s narratives could be influenced by their ability to accurately recall both the incident in the short term which may have transpired in a fleeting moment and longer-term events of the relationship. This may affect their ability to accurately reflect upon what prompted their actions, thus, making it difficult to correctly recall all details (Stuart et al., 2006; Caldwell et al., 2009). This is even more challenging for women who wish to forget about the events altogether in order to move forward with their lives.

### 7.6: Future Research

In light of the findings and limitations, there are various avenues for future research that examine women’s use force and court-mandated intervention programs. First, additional
qualitative research is needed to begin to capture a variety of other contexts and various intersections that prompt women to use force and result in their court-ordered participation to intervention programs for women. Race/ethnicity/culture, bisexual orientation, and disability were among some of the important identity categories that were relevant to how women perceived themselves to experience control and/or why they resorted to force in their relationships. However, research examining these intersections is limited and there is a need for qualitative research to better understand how these categories uniquely influence women’s use of force (Roy, 2012; Swan and Snow, 2006; Turell, Brown & Herrmann, 2018; Vencill & Israel, 2018; Ballan & Freyer, 2012).

Additional interviews with PAR facilitators are also needed to provide a larger overview of the types of experiences being brought forth in IPV intervention programs for women. Doing so will provide a broader picture of the challenges faced by facilitators who are tasked with carrying out program directives from policy makers, but may be more complicated to implement as front line workers. By examining this, we can gain greater insight regarding the inconsistencies and/or disagreement between the program goals versus the facilitators’ perceptions of its ability to respond to the needs of women who use force in intimate relationships.

Future research should also examine the experiences of women criminalized for allegations that appear to go hand-in-hand with their accuser’s attempt to exert coercive control. This study suggested that there were many similarities among women who were classified as violent resistors, wrongfully accused, and asserting dignity. These women described their partners as maintaining a pattern of general coercive control throughout their relationships which included patterns of intimidation, isolation and constraint of their everyday activities that were often connected to their traditional gender roles (Stark, 2012; 2009; 2007; 2006). When examining the
experiences of women who were wrongfully accused or used force to assert dignity, what separated them from violent resistors was that their partner did not need to resort to physical violence to achieve control. Thus, further research examining the effects of relationship-wide control in the absence of physical violence is needed considering that victims often discuss this as restricting their liberty and impacting their overall physical and mental well-being (Mennicke, 2018; Stark, 2007; Crossman, Hardesty & Rafaelli, 2016; Katz, 2016; Velonis, 2016). By examining how these victims’ experience patterns of general coercive control, we can provide research-based evidence that can promote the criminal justice system to formally recognize the seriousness of this form of abuse, provide support to these victims, and programs that are aligned to address such perpetrators.

Lastly, it is important that future research continues to examine the suitability of the categories in Johnson’s typology of violence in capturing women’s use of force before it can be relied upon to inform criminal justice interventions with confidence. Recent research by Mennicke (2018) found support for Johnson’s (2008) categories while also expanding on the typology by creating three new control-related categories based on her findings: Unidirectional Control, Bidirectional Control, and Control Resistance. Importantly, although Mennicke’s (2018) findings provided support for Johnson’s typology, the analysis did not account for gender differences. The absence of a gendered analysis in Mennicke’s (2018) study could explain the deviation in findings from the current study where there were no women in the sample that met Johnson’s criteria of using CCV. This could be interpreted as further evidence that coercive control is a form of violence against women that is reinforced by patriarchal social systems; and therefore, it should not be viewed as a gender neutral category when differentiating IPV (Stark, 2006). Further, the findings from the current study support those who have critiqued SCV as
simply being a broad, “catch-all” category, capturing cases that do not fit the terms of CCV or VR (Meier, 2015; Zorza, 2011) and more research is needed to investigate whether there are other central patterns of violence and control that can help narrow this category.

7.7: Recommendations

To summarize, the findings from this study provide the opportunity for a number of recommendations to be made to address the theoretical framework in understanding women who engage in intimate partner violence as well as intervention program curriculum for women. First, it is recommended that Johnson’s (2008) typology of violence be revised because the categories were not suitable in capturing women’s use of force. A broader understanding of CCV and VR is needed with less emphasis on the imminent threat of physical violence since many of the women who did not meet this requirement had been subjected to physical violence throughout the relationship or were responding to their partner’s continued use of non-physical control tactics.

Second, it is recommended that more research be conducted on SCV as the findings could not identify any patterns that made it distinctly identifiable. Further, as a subcategory of SCV, the operationalization of SV needs to be modified so that it recognizes that the period of separation oftentimes fluctuates and the violence may not necessarily be the end of the relationship. Considering that separation is a known risk factor for domestic homicide (Ontario DVI, 2012), without further detailed investigation into SCV and SV, using these categories can lead to highly uninformed criminal justice policies and program responses that have a detrimental impact on women.

Third, criminal justice policy makers must recognize that women’s use of force is often intertwined with their histories of victimization and therefore women-centred programs are
needed (Larance, 2012; Ontario DVDRC, 2012). Such programs need to be trauma-informed, meaning that they acknowledge that female perpetrators often have extensive histories of victimization which may include sexual victimization that needs to be addressed in the curriculum.

Fourth, programs should also acknowledge that women are heterogeneous in their use of force and may be responding in self-defence, retaliation, or as the primary perpetrator (Ontario DVDRC, 2012). Depending on how a woman describes her use of force, she may require distinct program responses that are tailored to address her needs rather than being mandated to a one-size-fits-all program.

Fifth, intervention program curriculum for women should address their intersecting realities that are relevant to each woman’s use of force. For instance, issues relating to race, ethnicity, culture, immigration and citizenship status, sexuality, religion, substance abuse, postpartum depression and children should be acknowledged in the PAR curriculum. Although addressing intersecting oppressions may be difficult since it is highly individualized, one way could be to consult with the woman at intake regarding what she perceives to be her immediate needs to address her use of force. Based on these consultations, it may be worthwhile to conduct half of the program through an appropriate community-based agency who can support some of her central concerns in a group setting with other similarly situated women. Intervention groups can be organized in a number of ways including the type of force some women identify themselves as using, or alternatively, culturally-centred groups with women from similar backgrounds. The remainder of the program can be conducted in a one-on-one setting and tailored to some of the more unique and sensitive issues that are better suited to be discussed on an individual basis. This mixed approach may allow women benefit from the support of their
peers by feeling less isolated and stigmatized while providing them with the opportunity to focus on their unique needs through individualized counselling.

Lastly, programs should also be equipped to acknowledge concerns relating to housing, employment, financial literacy and legal advocacy as women frequently discussed lacking these supports in their lives which may have otherwise assisted them rather than resorting to force due to a lack of alternatives to their unhealthy relationships. Further, some women described themselves as enrolling in the PAR program strictly due to their personal circumstances that impeded them from being able to take their case to trial. Therefore, providing women with the necessary resources could help in the future should they find themselves in a similar circumstance.

7.8: Conclusion

This research has aimed to provide insight into how women charged with IPV and court-mandated to attend intervention programs perceive their own use of force relative to how the criminal justice system responds to their lived experiences. The findings lend further support to those who assert that women lack the individual desire and support from social structures needed to exert coercive control, and that their experiences with using force are highly gendered and heterogeneous (Miller, 2005; Miller & Meloy, 2006). Therefore, women require distinctly different intervention responses – responses that are not gender-neutral, nor borrowed from male batterer intervention programs. In addition, intervention programs for women must also be tailored to address intersecting oppressions that are relevant to their use of force such as racial/ethnic/cultural considerations, sexual orientation, and disabilities in order to be gender-responsive with the goal of reducing the violence in their lives.
By bringing women’s lived realities to the forefront, this research has given these marginalized voices a space to describe the full context in which their force occurred, including any intersecting oppressions that may have compounded their experiences. Listening to the voices of women who have used force in IPV also furthers our understanding of the appropriateness and applicability of the current state of existing typologies in capturing women’s IPV. It also demonstrates the need for further development, scrutiny and reassessment of these categories rather than treating them as rigid classifications (Larance & Miller, 2016; Meier, 2015; Zorza, 2011). Further investigations into the differentiation of IPV among women will position researchers and advocates to raise broader challenges regarding the criminal justice system’s gender-neutral response to a highly gendered social and political problem. This research highlights the current challenges within the criminal justice system in responding to women’s IPV using a gender-neutral approach and it supports the need for policy makers to modify program standards so that they are gender-responsive and relevant to the needs of women that it is intended to serve. When these elements are put into action, we can be more confident in the criminal justice system’s ability to respond in a manner that is aimed at reducing recidivism among women who have used force in their intimate relationships.
REFERENCES


277


Criminal Code of Canada. R.S., 1985, c. C-46, s. 34; 1992, c. 1, s. 60(F); 2012, c. 9, s. 2.


286


House, E. (n.d.). When women use force: An advocacy guide to understanding this issue and conducting an assessment with individuals who have used force to determine their eligibility for services from a domestic violence agency. Ann Arbor, MI: Domestic Violence Program/Safe House.


R v Lavallée, [1990] 1 SCR 852.


Appendix A: Consent to Participate in Research (Participant Observation)

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Julie Poon, from the Sociology and Anthropology Department at the University of Guelph. The results of this study will contribute to a dissertation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Julie Poon (Student Investigator) at 416-300-0225, Dr. Myrna Dawson (Faculty Supervisor) at 519-824-4120 x56028 or Sandy Auld (Director, Research Ethics) 519-824-4120 x56606.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to examine how women describe their actions in the incident that brought them to the Partner Assault Response (PAR) program compared to whether and how the curriculum is designed to address their lived realities. The goal of the study is to identify whether the curriculum deals with concerns that are important to the lives of women so that recommendations can be made to improve the program. We will be speaking to women who have completed the PAR program, as well as program leaders.

You are being asked to consent to be a part of the participant observation phase of this study. Your consent will allow the student investigator to observe you taking part in the agency’s PAR program. We will be collecting your personal information including demographic information (e.g. age, racial/ethnic background, country of origin, employment status, and marital status) through the agency and there are steps taken to ensure your participation is confidential. You must be enrolled in the agency’s PAR program group that is selected in this phase of the study in order to be part of the participant observation. This study is not linked to the criminal justice system or any court ordered conditions that you may have on your file. Therefore, by participating in this study you will not be gaining any benefits nor will you be losing any rights relating to the conditions of your court order.

PROCEDURES
If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
- Please allow the student investigator to observe you as part of the weekly PAR program group.
- You will be observed during the entire program (once a week for two hours for 12 weeks).
• I will contact you through the phone number you gave me after the study is done to offer you a mailed copy of the final report.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
Because you are being observed in a setting that discusses very personal events, you may feel uncomfortable, upset, worried, or embarrassed when talking about the subject. Please let us know if there are any precautions that you would like us to take to help with your participation. You can withdraw from the study at any point during your weekly PAR sessions up until the findings are published. Once the findings are published your participation cannot be withdrawn. If you wish to withdraw during the program sessions, we will not make any observations or take any field notes on you. However, your contributions from previous group discussions cannot be removed since we do not document names or any other identifying information in the field notes. If you feel upset and would like to speak to someone, please contact one of the following services:

- Counterpoint Counselling Services  416-920-6516
- Family Services Toronto Counselling  416-595-9618

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY
• Some participants may find it beneficial to share their experiences and opinions on this sensitive matter since for some women this may be the first time they have been able to do so.
• This study may also benefit the scientific community as the study seeks to learn about the types of actions women may use towards their partners to show whether current domestic violence intervention programs are helpful in dealing with the types of force that these women say they have been using.
• The findings may help to create best practices for intervention programs that are more helpful to women and will hopefully reduce the future incidents of force.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION
You will receive a $20 grocery store gift card at the end of your participation in the study. You will be asked to sign and confirm that you have received the gift card.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.
• To ensure confidentiality, a master list with the participant’s name will be kept in a secure location which only the research team will have access to. The names and contact information of the participants will be retained for the purposes of following up to provide each participant with a copy of the results of the study.
• The names of the participants will not be identified in the field notes and only the research team will have access to these notes. In order to keep the data as close to the original responses as possible, participants will not be able to review the notes. If this causes stress to the participant, they may still withdraw from the study at any point during program sessions and the researcher will stop taking field notes on the participant. However, previous observations that may include the participant cannot be destroyed because field notes do not include any names or other identifying information on the participant.
• All field notes will be typed into Microsoft Word and will be kept on an encrypted and password protected computer. The original field notes will be destroyed. All information
including consent forms and master list of participants will be retained following a five year period after the study has been published after which point this information will be destroyed.

- To ensure confidentiality when writing up the final report, the research team will take careful steps to ensure that no identifying information is reported that could possibly link any observations to a specific participant. The researcher will use caution to make sure that no demographic or specific cultural identifiers will be used in the final report.
- For facilitators: Although your name will not be given in the final report, we cannot be guarantee confidentiality due to the small number of program facilitators that will be observed within the specific group that is selected for participant observation.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Your participation in this study must be voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty to you. Please be aware that if you withdraw during the study the research team will not make any further observations of you, however, any previous observations that may relate to you cannot be removed because the field notes do not contain the identifying information of any of the participants. The investigator may withdraw you from this research by choosing not to make any observations on you if circumstances arise that call to do so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
You may withdraw your consent and end your participation at any time without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Director, Research Ethics; Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606;  
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca  
437 University Centre Fax: (519) 821-5236  
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT
If you have any questions about the information we discussed please feel free to ask me now. If not, please confirm that you have read the information provided for the study “Examining whether and how educational intervention programs reflect the lived experiences of women who perpetrate intimate partner violence”. Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, you are giving free and informed consent to participate as part of the participant observation phase of this study and you have been given a copy of this form.

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Name of Participant (please print)  Date

__________________________________________
Signature of Participant  OR  □ Oral Consent by Participant

CONFIRMATION OF PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION
Grocery store gift card received

Parking reimbursement $________  □ Participant initials or checkmark ______

□ Participant initials or checkmark ______
Appendix B: Interview Guide – Former PAR Participants

INTERVIEW GUIDE: FORMER PAR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

As I mentioned in the consent form, I’d like to get your perspective on what happened that led to you being enrolled in the PAR program, the relationship dynamic between you and your partner, what you thought of the program and what recommendations you have for those who put this program together. I’m interested in YOUR perspective, YOUR point of view, no one else’s, so please feel free to voice your opinions. We can discuss these topics in any order, but maybe we could start by sharing some background information about yourself followed by you talking about the nature of your relationship and some of the general disagreements within your relationship with your partner.

Demographic questions

To begin, I would like to ask you a few questions about your background:

What year were you born? (Age) __________

What racial/ethnic background would you describe yourself as? (For example, East Asian, South Asian, Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Black, White) _________________________

What country were you born in?

- o Not in Canada (specify place of birth)__________________
- o Canada

Warm up

Now I’d like to ask a few questions about your relationship with your partner who was involved in the case that lead you to the PAR program.
It’s not unusual for couples to argue at times and these arguments may lead to bigger disagreements which may or may not become physical. If you and your partner in this case ever had disagreements, how did it start and what was it about?

**Women’s use of force that lead to their enrollment in the PAR program**

If you are comfortable, please share the incident that led you to enroll in the PAR program.

[Probe] What was the situation about?

[Probe] Did the situation even turn physical? If so and if you are comfortable, please share your point of view on how the incident turned physical.

How did the police get involved?

[Probe] What about the events that led to you being charged or arrested by police? Please tell me about that.

[Probe] What did the police charge you with?

[Probe] Were you held for bail?

[Probe] Was this the first time you were charged with an offence?

[Probe] What, if anything, happened with your partner who was involved in the incident?

In other words, was he charged with anything and if so, what was he charged with?

[Probe] If he was charged, was he held for bail?

[Probe] If he was charged, was he held for bail while awaiting trial?

In your opinion, do you feel you were unnecessarily charged with an offence?

Do you feel you were treated unfairly when you were charged and sent to the program, and if so, why?
Based on your experience with this situation, was there ever a time that you felt you had been misinformed of your legal rights by police, lawyers or the judge?

How did being charged impact your life, if at all?

Now I would like to hear about the PAR experience or experiences you had. Please tell me about them [e.g. how you learned about it, how it was offered to you, was it early intervention, parole, etc].

[Probe] How many times have you completed the PAR program? __________

**Men’s use of force**

M1: You’ve told me about the incident that led to you enroll in the PAR program. Now I would like to discuss your partner’s role in the relationship that resulted in you being charged. If you are comfortable, can you describe other situations over the course of that particular relationship where your partner used physical actions towards you? [If none, go to M3]

[Probe] In your opinion, what were some typical reasons that would cause your partner at the time to turn physical towards you, if any? [If unsure of themes, provide examples: his or your drinking, money, family members, his or your friendships, jealousy, trying to get each other’s attention, unrealistic expectations of each other in terms of responsibilities within the relationship, how to discipline children, reacting to the oncoming threats to you or your children, separation, *any of the above, all of the above, nothing specific, or perhaps you’ve come across women who never know why they have triggered him?* (which becomes more frequent as the cycle of violence repeats itself)]

M2: Was there ever a time that *he* used physical force against you without any prior warning or disagreement? If so, can you take me through those situations?
M3: When thinking about the partner who was involved in the incident, were there any strategies other than physical force that he would use towards you? [e.g. control, financial and/or emotional threats and manipulation, sexual violence]

[Probe] In what ways, if any, would your partner who was involved in the incident try to control you?

[Probe] How would you describe any emotional abuse he would use towards you, if at all?

[Probe] In what ways would your partner who was involved in the incident use sexual violence against you, if at all?

[Probe] In what ways, if any, did your partner who was involved in this incident use his knowledge of the criminal justice system against you? (For example, did he ever threaten to phone the police on you previously?)

How would you react towards you partner who was involved in the incident when he would use these strategies on you?

[Probe] From your perspective, how did these situations typically end?

[Go to W1 if male has never used force] In thinking about your partner who was involved in the incident, how would you describe his role in becoming physical towards you compared to your own actions?

**Women’s use of force**

W1: You’ve shared some insight into the specific incident that led to your enrollment in the PAR program as well as how your partner at the time typically became physical towards you. If you are comfortable, I’d like to know more about the physical actions you used throughout your relationship with your partner who was involved in this incident. By sharing your story, I can gain
a better understanding of your perspective on how these situations unfolded. Can you describe other situations that occurred over the course of that particular relationship where you resorted to using physical actions towards your partner? [If none, skip to W3]

[Probe] In your opinion, what, if any, were some of the reasons that lead to you using physical actions towards that partner? [If unsure of themes, provide examples: his or your drinking, money, family members, his or your friendships, jealousy, trying to get each other’s attention, unrealistic expectations of each other in terms of responsibilities within the relationship, how to discipline children, reacting to the oncoming threats to you or your children, separation]

W2: In your opinion, how would you describe your role compared to his role when you would use physical actions against him in the relationship?

[Probe] What reasons or evidence caused you to become physical towards him throughout your relationship?

[Probe] From your perspective, what feelings or thoughts were you acting on when you became physical towards him during these disagreements? [e.g. self-defence, anger, control]

[Probe] How would your partner at the time typically react towards your physical actions in these disagreements?

W3: Did you use any other strategies to try to get what you wanted? For example, did you try to control him in any way, or use financial and/or emotional threats and manipulation, or attempt to physically leave, if at all?

[Probe] In what ways, if any, would you attempt to control him?
[Probe] How would you describe any emotional strategies you would use towards him, if any?

[Probe] What was his reaction towards the strategies that you used, if any?

[Probe] From your perspective, how successful were you in using these strategies to put an end to the situation or disagreement?

Other contextual factors

Now I would like to discuss some of the areas that women often say are important to consider when discussing the disagreements that occur with their partner. Some of these questions may not apply to your situation so let me know and we can move on. For those that do apply, please expand on how it relates to you:

Intergenerational/Childhood conflict

Some people believe that the way we deal with conflict in a relationship has to do with how we saw our parents or other caregivers dealing with conflict. How, if at all, does that apply to how you’ve dealt with conflict in your relationships or how your partner has dealt with conflict towards you?

[Probe] In your opinion, did watching your own parents deal with conflict when you were a child have an impact on how you dealt with the incident that led you to the PAR program?

Race/Ethnicity/Immigration concerns

[If applicable] Some people have experienced racism and other forms of discrimination in the justice system. How, if at all, do you think being of a racial or ethnic minority had a role in how your situation played out?

[Probe] In other words, how, if at all, do you feel that being a [    ] woman played a role in why you used force in the situation that lead you to PAR?
[Probe] How do you feel that your identity as a [   ] woman may have impacted how you were treated by the police, lawyers and the judge?

[If applicable] Some people believe that women with less-than-full citizenship status, for example women who have been sponsored by their husbands such as you were [if applicable], are less likely to report abuse in a relationship because it might affect either their own, or their husband’s chances of getting Canadian citizenship. How, if at all, do you think your citizenship status as [   ] played a role in your situation?

[Probe] In other words, how did your citizenship status as a [   ] play a role in the situation that occurred between you and the partner that had you charged?

_Socio-economic status_

How, if at all, do you think your use of physical actions towards your partner at the time were tied to your own fears about financial hardship?

[Probe]: To what extent did the program address these concerns relating to how your financial difficulties were tied to the conflict within this relationship?

_Substance dependency_

Based on your experience, did the role of alcohol or drugs (either by you, your partner at the time, or the both of you) influence your actions in the situation?

[Probe]: Did the program address your concerns relating to alcohol/drug use and the conflict within your relationship? If so, how?

_Mental health_

Based on your experience, were there mental health concerns (either by you, your partner at the time, or the both of you) that influenced your actions in the situation?
[Probe] Did the program talk about mental health concerns such as depression and how this may have impacted women who used physical actions towards their partner?

*Physical ability*

Did the program deal with the concerns of women living with physical disabilities and the impact this may have on women who became physical against their partner?

*Pregnancy*

Did the program address any concerns relating to women who were pregnant at the time of the incident?

*Sexual orientation*

Some women may identify themselves as a lesbian, bisexual or transgendered person while in a relationship with a male partner which may cause conflict. Did the program address how some women’s physical actions towards their partner may be related to identifying as a lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered person?

*Reflection of intersecting oppressions*

Oftentimes the factors that I just questioned you about operate in ways that are connected. In other words, one factor may have a domino effect on other factors in our lives. [For example, a woman grew up watching parents fight and as a result she left home to live with her partner at an early age. She had little money or job prospects which impacted her financial situation and caused stress on her relationship leading to an incident that resulted in her being charged. Since the charges, she faced more financial stress because she had to get time off of work and pay for a lawyer.] Can you reflect on whether there were any interconnected factors that affected your situation? How did these factors affect the rest of your experience within the criminal justice system?
Whether and how the PAR program addresses women’s use of force

I’m interested in knowing if you learned or gained any skills in the program that might have helped you resolve tension in your relationship with the partner who was involved in the incident, or, if you are no longer in contact him, then your current partner (if you have one). If you could, please share with me what you learned and how if at all, have you have been able to use what you learned.

[Probe] What, if anything, have you learned and/or gained in the program that you find helpful in addressing situations with your partner?

[Probe] Is there anything that you’ve learned and got from the program that you didn’t find to be that helpful in resolving situations with your partner? If so, can you share this with me?

I’d like to hear your opinion of the PAR program to find out whether there are areas that the program can be improved. What aspects of the program, if any, do you feel could be reworked to be more helpful to you?

[Probe] What content, if any, do you feel the program would be better off removing and why?

I’d like to take this time to talk about any other details that you feel are important to share but were not discussed. What other information or details would you like to share with me, if any?

Cool Down

The experience of enrolling into the PAR program can be intimidating for newcomers who do not know what to expect. Now that you have finished the PAR program, what advice would you give to women who are enrolling as new participants?
Now that you have given me the opportunity to learn more about your experience with the PAR program, if you are comfortable, I’d like to find out more about your personal situation. How would you describe your current employment status? [Researcher checks all that apply]

- Employed full time
- Employed part time
- Unemployed and looking for work
- Student
- Taking care of children or other family members
- Retired

How would you describe your marital status?

- Single and never legally married
- Dating and not living together
- Legally married (and not separated)
- Separated, but still legally married
- Divorced
- Common law (and not separated)
- Separated common law
- Widowed

You have provided me with a lot of insight into the questions I asked you today. Now, do you have any questions for me?

**Conclusion**

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me today. I’ve learned a great deal from your insights and it will be really helpful for this research project. I’ll be in contact with you if you indicated on the consent form that you would be interested in having a copy of the final report to see how you have contributed to the overall findings of the study. In the meantime, if you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me.
Appendix C: Interview Guide – PAR Program Facilitators

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PAR PROGRAM FACILITATORS

Introduction

I would like to discuss your experiences as a facilitator for the women-only PAR program. I’ll be asking you some questions to gain a better understanding of your point of view and to learn more about the program. I would also like to gain your perspective on the different contexts and reasons that women may use violence against their partner which you may have come across in your role as a facilitator. If there are any details that you feel are important to share or expand on, please do so. As I discussed in the consent form, this interview provides you with limited confidentiality as this study involves a smaller number of interviews from program facilitators such as yourself. With that in mind, your name will not be linked to this interview, nor the final paper so please feel free to speak as openly about your experiences as you are comfortable with. May we begin?

Warm up

To start, would you be able to give me a sense of how you became involved in this type of work and how you began facilitating the PAR program itself?

[Probe] How long have you been facilitating the PAR program? ______

Please provide me with some background information about the PAR program, its objectives and the content that is covered in the sessions?

Facilitator perspective on women’s use of force that lead to PAR enrollment

As a PAR program facilitator, you have a bird’s eye view of the types of situations that result in women enrolling in the PAR program, men’s and women’s use of force and control in the relationship as described by the women enrolled in the program, and the areas of the program that could be improved upon based on your experience. I’d like to learn about the types of incidents
that you frequently hear about that result in women enrolling in your program. In your opinion, what are some of the typical incidents that result in women enrolling in the PAR program?

[Probe] What are your observations, if any, of women enrolling in the program because they used coercive controlling violence or in other words, they battered their partner?

[Probe] What share of women enrolled in these programs are here because they physically reacted to the threat of violence from their male partners?

[Probe] How typical is it, if at all, that you find women enter the program because they used force against their partner for the only during a separation?

[Probe] How common is it, if at all, that women will enroll in the program because they responded to an escalating conflict situation by using force towards their partner, but not in self-defense or to gain power and control?

How often have women enrolled in the program for using force that started when they became pregnant?

How often, if at all, do you find that women are in the program as a consequence of being inappropriately charged instead of their abuser being charged?

From your perspective, how often, if at all, do you find that women in the program as a consequence of being inappropriately charged or misinformed of their legal rights as perpetrators within the criminal justice system?

I’ve just asked you about your observations regarding typical incidents that result in women enrolling in your PAR program. In your opinion, which is the most predominant type of incident/reason for their use of force, if any?

**Facilitator’s perspective on men’s use of force**
You’ve discussed your observations on the types of incidents that typically result in women enrolling in the PAR program that you facilitate. Now I would like to discuss your observations of men’s use of force in these incidents as the women in the program have shared with you. In your opinion, which is based on what the women have told you about their relationships, what are some of the common themes that have triggered men to use force against their partner? [Give examples: his or her drinking, money, family members, his or her friendships, trying to get each other’s attention, unrealistic expectations of each other in terms of responsibilities within the relationship, how to discipline children, reacting to the oncoming threats towards him or their children, separation, any of the above, all of the above, nothing specific, women never know why they have triggered him (which becomes more frequent as the cycle of violence repeats itself)]

When the women in the program share experiences about men using force against them, what kinds of controlling strategies do you find men are using other than just physical force, if any? [e.g. control, financial and/or emotional threats, manipulation, sexual violence]

[Probe] From your observations, how do women respond to these forms of abuse by men? Do the women raise concerns about their partner using his knowledge of the criminal justice system against her? If so, how do they describe men doing this?

**Facilitator’s perspective on women’s use of force**

Now I would like to discuss your observations from the program regarding women’s use of force when discussing their overall relationship with their intimate partner. In your opinion, based on what the women in the program have told you about the history of their relationships, what are some of the common themes that you feel have triggered women to use force against their partner in the past? [e.g. his or her drinking, money, family members, his or her friendships, trying to get each other’s attention, unrealistic expectations of each other in terms of responsibilities within the relationship, ...]
relationship, how to discipline children, reacting to the oncoming threats towards him or their children, separation]

Other than women resorting to the use of force, what other kinds of strategies do hear about women using to get their male partner to do what they want them to do, if any? For example, do women in the program typically speak about their efforts to control their male partners, perhaps through financial and/or emotional threats or manipulation?

[Probe] From you observations, how do the women in your program describe their partner’s response to the strategies that they are using?

How frequently is this the first official report of women using force within the relationship?

[Probe] In contrast, how often do you come across women in the program with a long history of violence in the relationship resulting in the criminal justice system intervening on multiple occasions?

How often, if at all, have you come across women who were sent to the program after they survived an episode of violence from their partner, but they returned to the abusive relationship?

[Probe] Based on your observations, how often do you see women brought to the program because they used force after trying to leave a violent relationship only to return voluntarily multiple times?

[Probe] In contrast, how often have you observed women in the program who have used force against their partner but have not reported prior attempts to leave the violent relationship?

**Whether and how the PAR program address women’s use of force**

I would like to discuss some of the different types of incidents where women may use force and how you feel the program addresses these situations, if at all. How, if at all, does the program
address the issues of women who have used coercive control or severe violence in their intimate relationships?

[Probe] What benefits and/or challenges have you faced when using the program content to address situations where women have used coercive control or severe violence towards their partner?

What, if anything, does the program do to address the issues of women who have used physical force to defend themselves?

[Probe] What advantages and/or limitations have you faced when using the program content to address women who have used force to defend themselves, if any?

How, if at all, does the program address situations where women used force against their partner only during a separation?

[Probe] What benefits and/or challenges have you faced, if any, when using the program content to address situations where women have used force towards their partner only during a separation?

How does the program do to address women who have used force in a specific conflict situation that escalated to physical violence, but their actions were not rooted in self-defense nor did they have a desire for control over the relationship?

[Probe] What are the benefits and/or drawbacks of using the program content to address situations where women use force in response to a lingering point of contention within the relationship, rather than for the purposes of self-defense or exerting power and control?

Additional concerns
I’d now like to hear about some of the areas of concern that you may encounter among the women enrolled in the PAR program that you facilitate. First, what tools do you use to specifically address women’s gendered use of force, if any?

[Probe] To what extent, if at all, does the program provide suggestions and support for women who are feeling isolated from friends and family as a result of their relationship with their partner?

**Intergenerational/childhood violence**

From your perspective, how common is it that the women will discuss the role of witnessing violence between their parents in relation to the intergenerational violence they have experienced with their own partners?

[Probe] How, if at all, does the program address women who may be affected by their own childhood exposure to violence in their family?

[Probe] To what extent, if at all, have you encountered women in the program discussing their use of force stemming from their attempts to protect their children?

[Probe] How, if at all, is the program designed to address women’s concerns about the impact of the violence on the well-being of their children?

**Racial/Ethnic/Immigration concerns**

Based on your observations, what role does race and ethnicity play in women’s use of force against their partners, if at all?

[Probe] To what extent, if at all, is the program designed to be sensitive towards women of various racial or ethnic backgrounds?

How frequently, if at all, do you encounter women in the program raising concerns relating to how their experience with using force has impacted their immigration status?
[Probe] How, if at all, does the program address any concerns among women participants with precarious immigration status; that is, women who are less-than-full citizens?

*Socio-economic status*

How often, if at all, do you see women in the program discussing how their use of force against their partner was tied to their own fears of financial hardship?

[Probe]: To what extent does the program address women’s concerns relating to their economic safety?

*Substance dependency*

Based on your experience, how often do you observe women in the program discussing the role of substance abuse (either by themselves, by their partner or both) influencing their use of force?

*Mental health*

To what extent is does the program content address concerns relating to women’s mental health and how this may impact their use of force in their intimate relationships?

*Physical ability*

How does the program content address concerns relating to women with different levels of physical ability and how this may impact their use of force in their intimate relationships?

*Other questions about the program*

How does the program increase women’s understanding of how social structures operate alongside men’s violence against women to reinforce gender inequality?

From you observations, what areas of the program curriculum do you feel the women find most beneficial when learning how to address their use of force, if any?

What areas of the program curriculum do you find most challenging to facilitate when addressing women’s use of force and why?
Cool down

We’ve discussed the different ways that women may use force which you may have come across as a facilitator. Are there any other types of intimate partner violence that you’ve observed women using that we didn’t discuss, but that you think would be good to share with me?

What changes should be made to the program and/or criminal justice policies so that we can be in a better position to address women’s use of force?

Ultimately the program encourages women to take responsibility and change their behavior which can often be difficult - not only for the person who is asked to change, but also for those who are put to the task of providing programs to facilitate this change. With this in mind, what advice would you give other professionals who are entering the field?

Conclusion

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me today. I’ve learned a great deal from your insights and it will be really beneficial for my research project. I will be in contact with you if you indicated on the consent form that you would be interested in having a copy of the final report to see how you have contributed to the overall findings of the study. In the meantime, if you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me.
Appendix D: Pence and Paymar’s (1993) Power and Control Wheel

Pence and Paymar’s (1993) Power and Control Wheel
Appendix E: Research Ethics Boards – Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research

Involving Human Participants

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:
- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report any change in the source of funding.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for accounting and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:
- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit a Status Report to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature: [Signature]
Date: December 24, 2014

L. Kuczynski
Chair, Research Ethics Board—General
Appendix F: Consent to Participate in Research (PAR Participant Interview Consent Form)

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (PAR PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM)

Examining whether and how educational intervention programs reflect the lived experiences of women who perpetrate intimate partner violence

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Julie Poon, from the Sociology and Anthropology Department at the University of Guelph. The results of this study will contribute to a dissertation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Julie Poon (Student Investigator) at 416-300-0225, Dr. Myrna Dawson (Faculty Supervisor) at 519-824-4120 x56028 or Sandy Auld (Director, Research Ethics) 519-824-4120 x56606.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to examine how women describe their actions in the incident that brought them to the Partner Assault Response (PAR) program compared to whether and how the curriculum is designed to address their lived realities. The goal of the study is to identify whether the curriculum deals with concerns that are important to the lives of women so that recommendations can be made to improve the program. We will be speaking to women who have completed the PAR program, as well as program leaders.

PROCEDURES
If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Please come for a private one-on-one interview to share your story where you used force towards your partner. Also, please share if you feel the program has taught you how to stop using force in a way that works for you. Lastly, let me know what you think the program’s pros and cons are—Have you been able to use what you learned in a way that works for you?
- Please note that in order to participate in the one-on-one interview you must have completed the PAR program through the agency.
The one-time interview will take around 1.5 hours. We can meet at the agency located at [address], or in a private room at the library.

I will contact you through the phone number you gave me after the study is done to offer you a mailed copy of the final report.

**POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

As an interview participant you are being asked to share sensitive and personal information and there may be potential safety risks if your (ex) partner learns and disapproves of your participation in this study. We will take extra precautions to ensure your safety including only contacting you through the phone number or method of contact that you prefer. When phoning we will only speak to you directly over the phone and we will not leave phone messages with others. We will leave voicemail messages that note that we are calling to speak to you, stating the name of the person who is phoning and that we are from the University of Guelph as well as a phone number to call back. However, if you would prefer for us not to leave a message or if there are any additional safety measures you would like to add, please let us know. There may be social risks if were to be identified through your personal information or interview responses. To reduce this risk, your personal information and responses will be given a unique code so that your name will not be directly attached. A separate master list will have your code and your name will be kept separately in a locked cabinet in a secure location. The final report findings will be written in aggregate form (e.g. group percentages) and participants will be given fake names if quotations or examples are used. Other possible identifying information such as a specific race will be generalized (e.g. racial minority).

Domestic violence can sometimes be difficult to discuss and you may feel uncomfortable, upset, worried, or embarrassed when talking about these experiences. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You can also withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview is over and up until the findings are published. Once the findings are published your participation cannot be withdrawn. If you feel upset and would like to speak to someone, please contact one of the following services:

- **Counterpoint Counselling Services** 416-920-6516
- **Family Services Toronto Counselling** 416-595-9618

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

- Some participants may find it beneficial to share their experiences and opinions on this sensitive matter since for some women this may be the first time they have been able to do so.
- This study may also benefit the scientific community as the study seeks to learn about the types of actions women may use towards their partners to show whether current domestic violence intervention programs are helpful in dealing with the types of force that these women say they have been using.
- The findings may help to create best practices for intervention programs that are more helpful to women and will hopefully reduce the future incidents of force.

**PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

You will receive a twenty dollar grocery store gift card at the end of your participation in the study. We will also repay you for street parking or we will give you TTC bus tokens for you and any children who may have had to travel with you to participate in the study. You will be asked to sign and confirm that you have received the gift card and TTC/parking funds.
CONFIDENTIALITY
Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.

- To ensure confidentiality, each participant will be assigned a unique code. A separate master list with the participant’s name will be kept in a secure location which only the research team will have access to. The names and contact information of the participants will be kept to follow up with each participant to offer a copy of the results of the study.
- To ensure your responses reflect what was said in your interview, participants will not be able to review their audio recordings or transcripts. You may still withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview and all of your personal and interview information for this study will be destroyed and will not be used in the final report. This option is available up until the point of publication after which, you can no longer withdraw from the study. If you remain in the study, audio recordings will be transferred onto an encrypted and password protected computer within 24 hours and the original recording will be deleted from the encrypted recorder. Audio recordings loaded onto this computer will be deleted after six months to allow time for the interviews to be transcribed. All participant information including consent forms, master list of participants and their codes and interview transcripts will be kept for five years after the study has been published after which point this information will be destroyed.
- The names of the participants will not be identified in the audio recordings or transcripts. Only the research team will have access to identifying information. Identifiers such as demographic or cultural identifiers will not be included in the final report to ensure that your responses cannot be linked back to you.
- Under certain circumstances, confidentiality may not be guaranteed. For your own safety, please do not share information with me that must be reported under the law. As a researcher, I am required by law to report any recent or ongoing child abuse that you may discuss during your interview if it has not has been reported to police. Also, although it is unlikely, a court may order me to provide them with information you gave during your participation in this study and I must do so under the law.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Your participation in this study must be voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty to you. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that call to do so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
You may withdraw your consent and end your participation at any time without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:
Director, Research Ethics; Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606;
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
437 University Centre, Guelph, ON N1G 2W1
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT
If you have any questions about the information we discussed please feel free to ask me now. If not, please confirm that you have read the information provided for the study “Examining whether and how educational intervention programs reflect the lived experiences of women who perpetrate intimate partner violence”. Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, you are giving free and informed consent to participate in a one-on-one interview for this study and you have been given a copy of this form.

__________________________________
Name of Participant (please print) Date

__________________________________
Signature of Participant OR □ Oral Consent by Participant

CONFIRMATION OF PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION
Grocery store gift card received □ Participant initials or checkmark _______
TTC tokens received (Adult_____ Children_____ ) □ Participant initials or checkmark _______
Street Parking reimbursement $________ □ Participant initials or checkmark _______
Appendix G: Consent to Participate in Research (PAR Program Facilitator Consent Form)

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
(PAR PROGRAM FACILITATOR CONSENT FORM)

Examining whether and how educational intervention programs reflect the lived experiences of women who perpetrate intimate partner violence

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Julie Poon, from the Sociology and Anthropology Department at the University of Guelph. The results of this study will contribute to a dissertation.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Julie Poon (Student Investigator) at 416-300-0225, Dr. Myrna Dawson (Faculty Supervisor) at 519-824-4120 x56028 or Sandy Auld (Director, Research Ethics) 519-824-4120 x56606.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to examine how women describe their actions in the incident that brought them to the Partner Assault Response (PAR) program compared to whether and how the curriculum is designed to address their lived realities. The goal of the study is to identify whether the curriculum deals with concerns that are important to the lives of women so that recommendations can be made to improve the program. We will be speaking to women who have completed the PAR program, as well as program leaders.

You are being asked to consent to participate in a one-on-one interview as a program leader of the PAR program. Only a limited number of program leader interviews will be conducted and therefore, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed so please disclose information that you are comfortable sharing. You must be currently employed by the agency as a PAR program facilitator in order to participate in the interview. You will not gain any added benefits from your employer for your participation in this study.

PROCEDURES
If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- Please come for a private one-on-one interview to share your views on women’s use force towards their partner during your time as a PAR facilitator. Also, please share if you feel the program is able to teach women how to stop using force in a way that works for them. Lastly, let me know what you think the program’s pros and cons are– Do you think women are able to use what the program has taught them in a way that works for them?
- Please note that in order to participate in the one-on-one interview you must currently be a PAR program facilitator at the agency.
• The one-time interview will take around 1.5 hours. We can meet wherever works best for you. Some facilitators may want to meet at the office of the agency, others may want to meet in a separate space such as a private room at a library.
• I will contact you through the phone number you gave me after the study is done to see if you want a copy of the findings mailed to you.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
You are being asked to share experiences related to your employer that you may find difficult to speak about and you may feel uncomfortable, upset, worried, or embarrassed when doing so. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. We will take extra precautions including only contacting you through the phone number or method of contact that you prefer. When phoning we will only speak to you directly over the phone and we will not leave phone messages with others. We will leave voicemail messages that note that we are calling to speak to you, stating the name of the person who is phoning and that we are from the University of Guelph as well as a phone number to call back. However, if you would prefer for us not to leave a message or if there are any additional concerns you would like to add, please let us know. You can also decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview is over and up until the findings are published. Once the findings are published your participation cannot be withdrawn. Because you are an employee of the agency and we are working with this agency to conduct this study, it is important that we are able to minimize any potential conflict of interest. Therefore, if you have any questions or concerns regarding your participation in this study, please contact Julie directly by phone (416-300-0225) or email (jpoon@uoguelph.ca).

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY
• Some facilitators may find it beneficial to share their experiences and opinions on this sensitive matter since it could result in some necessary changes to the program that they are required to facilitate.
• This study may also benefit the scientific community as it seeks to learn about the types of actions women may use towards their partners to show whether current domestic violence intervention programs are helpful in dealing with the types of force that these women say they have been using.
• The findings may help to create best practices for intervention programs that are more helpful to women and will hopefully reduce the future incidents of force.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION
You will receive a twenty dollar Tim Hortons’s gift card at the end of your participation in the study. We will also repay you for street parking or we will give you two TTC bus tokens if you had to travel to participate in the study. You will be asked to sign and confirm that you have received the gift card and TTC/parking funds.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Every effort will be made to increase confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.
• Although the names of the facilitators will not be revealed during the interview and in the final paper, we cannot guarantee confidentiality due to the small number of facilitator interviews being conducted. With that in mind, please speak as openly about your experiences as you are comfortable with given that your responses could potentially be linked back to you.
Each participant will be assigned a unique code. A separate master list with the participant’s name will be kept in a secure location which only the research team will have access to. The names and contact information of the participants will be kept to follow up with each participant to offer a copy of the results of the study.

The names of the participants will not be identified in the audio recordings or transcripts. Only the research team will have access to identifying information. To ensure your responses are a correct reflection of your interview, participants will not be able to review their audio recordings or transcripts. Should this cause stress to the participant, they may still withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview and all of your personal and interview information for this study will be destroyed and will not be used in the final report. This option is available up until the point of publication after which, you can no longer withdraw from the study.

If you remain in the study, audio recordings will be transferred onto an encrypted and password protected computer within 24 hours and the original recording will be deleted from the encrypted recorder. Audio recordings loaded onto this computer will be deleted after six months to allow time for the interviews to be transcribed. All participant information including consent forms, master list of participants and their codes and interview transcripts will be kept for five years after the study has been published after which point this information will be destroyed.

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because of the limited number of facilitator interviews being conducted for this study. However, careful steps will be taken when writing up the final report to ensure identifying information that could link the responses back to the participant is used as little as possible. This information will only be used if the responses are relevant and there are no other reasonable alternatives available.

For your own safety, please do not share information with me that must be reported under the law. Although it is unlikely, a court may order me to provide them with information you gave during your participation in this study and I must do so under the law.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
Your participation in this study must be voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty to you. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that call to do so.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
You may withdraw your consent and end your participation at any time without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

Director, Research Ethics; Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606;
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
437 University Centre Fax: (519) 821-5236
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

If you have any questions about the information we discussed please feel free to ask me now. If not, please confirm that you have read the information provided for the study “Examining whether and how educational intervention programs reflect the lived experiences of women who perpetrate intimate partner violence”. Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction, you are giving free and informed consent to participate in a one-on-one interview for this study and you have been given a copy of this form.

______________________________________  _______________________
Name of Participant (please print)               Date

______________________________________
Signature of Participant

CONFIRMATION OF PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Coffee gift card received               □ Participant initials or checkmark ________
TTC tokens received (Adult______) □ Participant initials or checkmark ________
Street Parking reimbursement $__________ □ Participant initials or checkmark ________