

# Do Battering Intervention Programs (BIP) Work?

What the research says and does not say

Eric Mankowski, Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Psychology

Affiliate Faculty, Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies

Portland State University

[www.pdx.edu/psy/eric-mankowski](http://www.pdx.edu/psy/eric-mankowski)

[mankowskie@pdx.edu](mailto:mankowskie@pdx.edu)

# My Background



- Community Psychologist
- Professor at Portland State University
  - Researched masculinity and abuse interventions for 20+ years
    - Discovered new forms and impacts of work-related abusive behavior (Mankowski, Galvez, et al., 2011)
    - Developed BIP Proximal Outcomes Survey (BIPPOS) used in evaluations in California, Delaware, Oregon, Texas
    - Evaluated implementation of battering program state standards (e.g., Boal & Mankowski, 2014)
    - Assessed survivor impact panels as part of BIPs (Sackett & Mankowski, 2020)
  - Co-chair the Oregon Attorney General's Batterer Intervention Program Standards Committee
  - Serve on the Oregon DV Fatality Review Team
  - Teach courses and advocacy trainings on gender and violence

# My Background



- 2<sup>nd</sup> generation American
  - Father's family fled wars in Palestine, where he was born after Jewish-Christian parents fled Nazi Germany in mid-1930's
- Multi-generational experience of DV and of stalking
- Father (22 year old daughter and 17 year old adopted Korean son) and husband (wife is a Portland public school teacher)
- Enjoy music, backpacking, and car mechanics

# Your Background

- Work Experience?
- Knowledge of Research on BIP?

# Overview

- Research on BIP is not well-understood or utilized
- Significant erosion of gains from early decades of advocacy movement to end DV (e.g., Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009)
- Evidence for BIP effectiveness has important qualifications, but often shows reliable small to moderate positive effects (Babcock, 2004; Cheng et al., 2019; Gannon et al., 2020)
- Research can help improve your program
- Biased critiques of BIPs need to be proactively engaged with policy makers, criminal justice system workers
- Providers can organize, exchange information, educate, and advocate based on knowledge of research

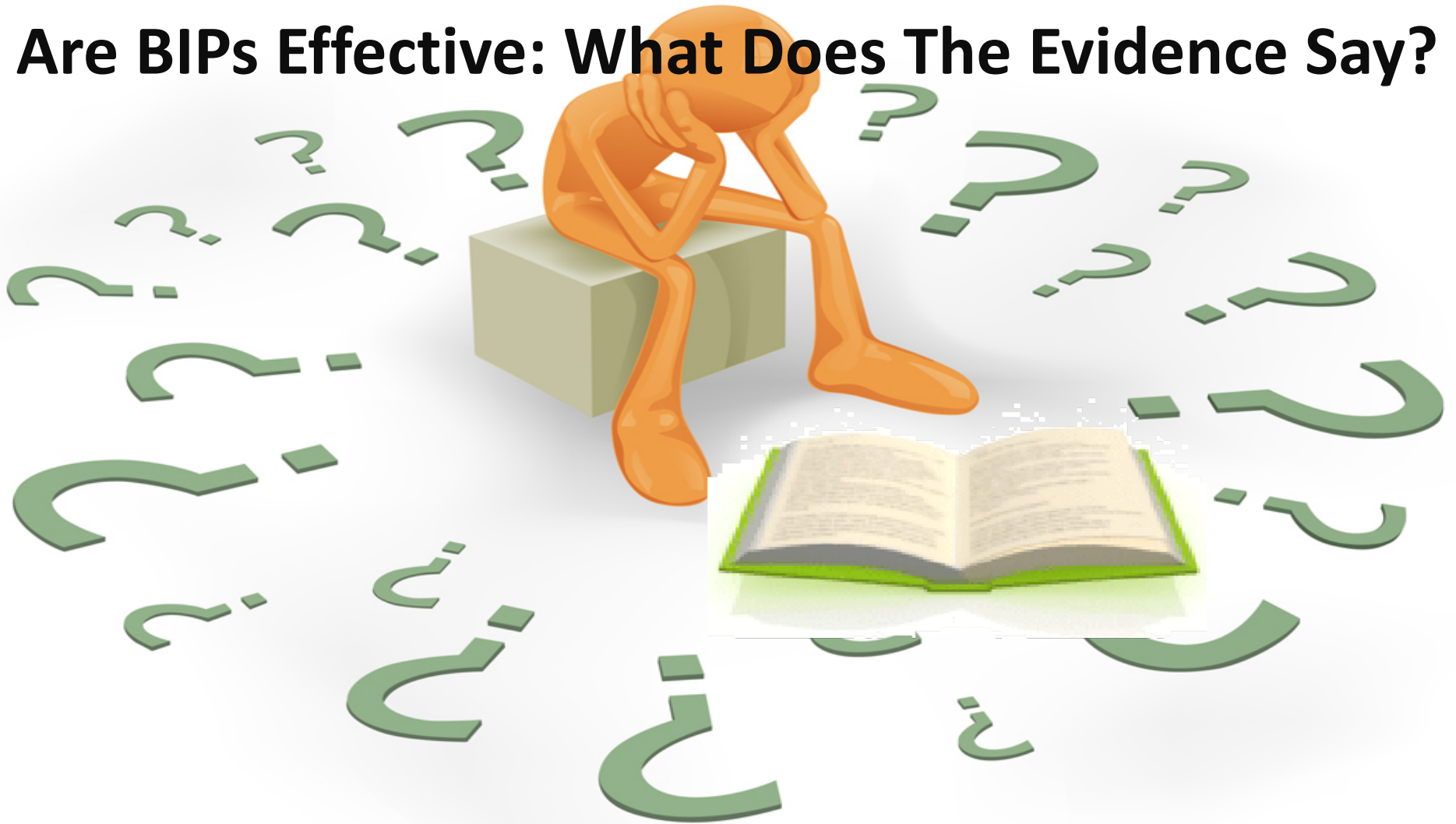
# Historical Context

- Lessons from women's movement against DV
  - Abuse and violence are gendered phenomena
  - Power and control motives underlie DV
  - Believe accounts of survivors
  - Educate and hold abuser accountable for behavior and impacts
  - Importance of coordinated community response

# Battering Intervention Program (BIP)

- First established late 1970's by battered women's movement as part of community response
- Criminal justice mandates led to program growth
  - Estimated 2,500 BIPs and ½ million men per year in U.S. BIP (Boal & Mankowski, 2014)
  - Guidelines or regulations in almost all U.S. states (n=47)
- Format and Structure
  - Weekly, same-gender group of participants for 12-51 weeks
  - Feminist, cognitive behavioral, psychoeducational, social learning curricula (e.g., Duluth)

# Are BIPs Effective: What Does The Evidence Say?





# Historical Context

- Several generations of studies on BIPs (Kelly & Westmarland, 2015)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> gen: individual programs, recidivism and participant report show positive outcomes but flawed study designs
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> gen: experimental and multivariate designs and multi-site evaluations, broadened outcomes including survivor report, mixed findings on effectiveness
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> gen: fewer outcome studies, more process evaluations; more meta analyses, varying curricula studied

# Are BIPs Effective?

- Answer is increasingly reported as “no” among policy makers and clinical researchers
- Significant research and practice evidence indicates otherwise
- Important to understand research methods, and the qualifications and context of findings

# Be an Informed Consumer of Research

- Asking “Are BIPs effective?” is not a simple question
  - What is a BIP? (Studies and findings vary)
    - What was the fidelity of the implementation?
    - What was the training and experience of the facilitators?
    - What is the larger, community context?
  - How is ‘effective’ measured? (Studies vary, without reliable difference in findings)
    - Whose voices were included? Survivor? Abuser? Recidivism? Racial bias in criminal reports?
    - How long after the intervention?
    - Compared to what alternatives?
  - Who was studied? (Studies vary in design)
    - E.g.: Were untreated cases counted as “treated”?
  - What evidence is provided for any alternative or adjunct to BIP?

# How is Success Defined?

- Whose reports?
  - Sources differ
    - Survivor
    - Offender
    - Police
    - Others?
- What behavior?
  - Criminal recidivism
    - Illegal forms of IPV only
    - Misses all other forms of IPV
    - Arrests
    - Bias in policing
    - Overall: partial and biased
- How long is follow-up?

# Who is in the Study?

- Many experiments use “intention to treat” research design
  - Treatment assignment vs. actual participation
- **Intention to treat does not ensure treatment**
  - No show
  - Drop out
  - Evaluation usually include cases who never received intervention
- **Evaluation of the BIP vs. Criminal Justice System**

# What Defines a BIP?

Most programs implement a diverse and variable combination of strategies and curricula

- Program labels or “types” (e.g., CBT, ‘Duluth’)
- Components of different curricula
- Fidelity and quality of program implementation varies
- Amount and type of facilitator training and experience
- Extent of coordination in community response

# Research on “BIPs” Includes

- Programs with mixed gender groups (e.g., Mills et al., 2019)
- Couples groups or counseling (e.g., Miller, 2013)
- Programs as short as 12 sessions (e.g., *Strength at Home*; Taft et al., 2013)
- Programs from the 1980s to 2010's

# Evaluating Meta-Analyses

- Meta – Analysis: A study of studies
- Which studies were included and excluded?
- Who were participants and programs in the studies?
- What outcomes are assessed (e.g., DV recidivism, all recidivism)?



# Meta Analyses and Some Major Reviews of BIP Effectiveness

- Babcock et al., 2004
- Feder & Wilson, 2005
- Smedslund et al., 2007
- Eckhardt et al., 2013
- Miller, 2013\*
- Arias et al., 2013
- Cheng et al., 2019
- Gannon et al., 2020

\* Not published in a peer-reviewed journal

# Unsubstantiated Soundbite Claims

- “BIPs don’t work”
- “No study demonstrates Duluth is effective”
- “State standards are not evidence-based”
- “Scientifically-Based, Proven Effective”  
(regarding online anger management classes; Hamel, 2020)

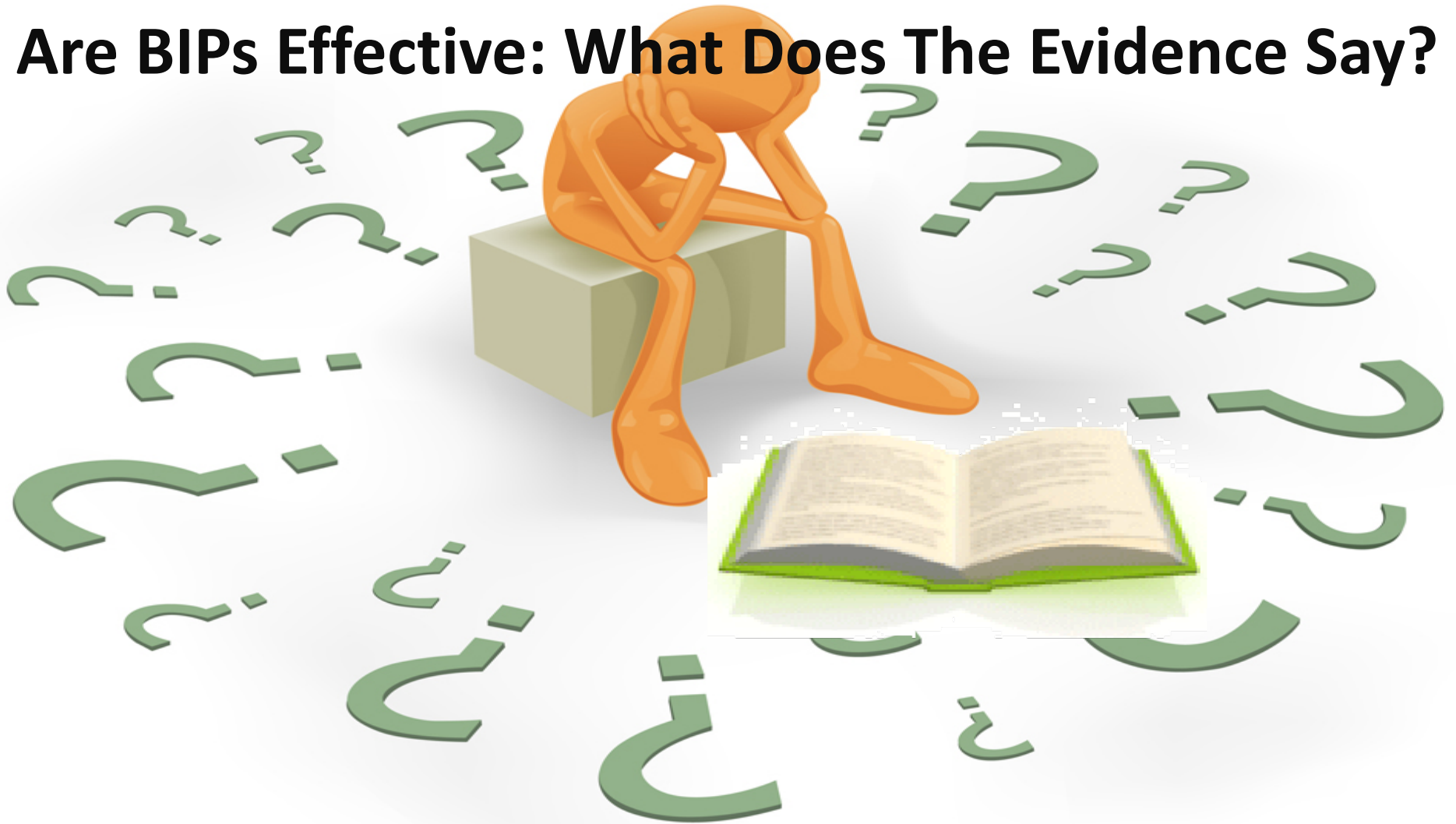
*“The limitations of BIPs are due, in large part, to the limitations of current state standards regulating these programs and, furthermore, that these standards are not grounded in the body of empirical research evidence or best practices.”*

Babcock et al., 2016 (p. 355)

# Development of Current Crisis

- Implementation of interventions ->
- Research on effectiveness ->
- Conclusions drawn despite lack of definitive evidence ->
- Undoing, revision of state standards ->
- Implementation of alternative theories and programs with no better, or worse, evidence

# Are BIPs Effective: What Does The Evidence Say?



A short answer:

The most comprehensive study to date shows 50%  
[relative] reduction in violence vs non-completers  
based on partner report.

#TruthSquad #Aquila #BISC-MI

Source: Source: Gondolf, E. (2002). *Batterer Intervention Systems*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gondolf (2002) evaluated 4 programs (Pittsburgh, Dallas, Houston, and Denver) using more than 12,000 interviews of offenders and their current and new partners

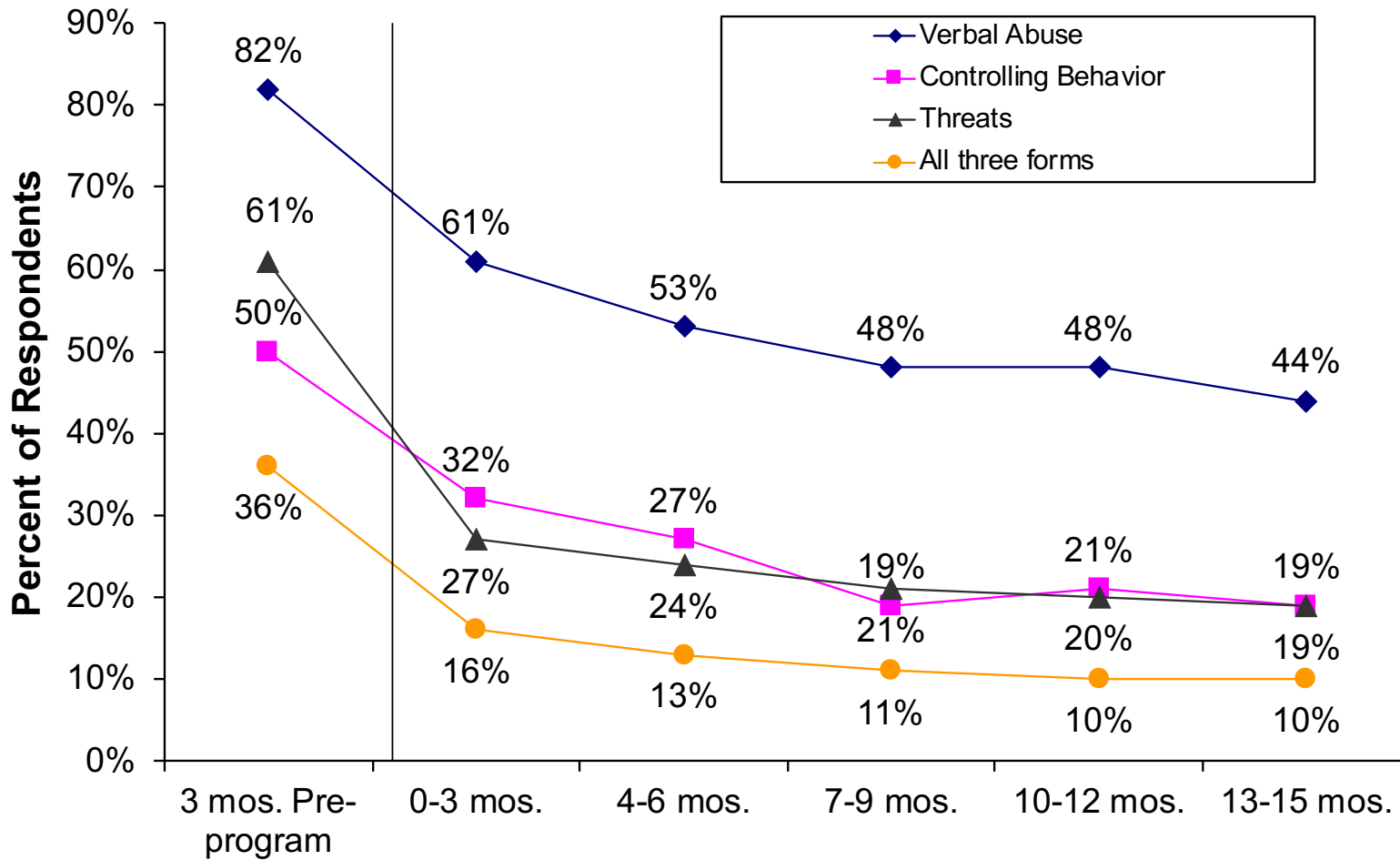
- Substantial (50%) de-escalation of assault over time
  - 30 months after intake, 80% were non-violent for at least the past year
  - 48 months after intake, 90% were non-violent for at least the past year
  - 75% were non-violent in prior 2 ½ years
- Note: Analysis includes all court-referred men assigned to the program

- Evidence of program effect (Gondolf, 2002)
  - 50% less likely to re-assault (at 30 months) if program completed
    - 36% re-assault among men attending at least 2 months versus 55% for men who dropped out
    - Finding holds when statistically controlling for demographics, personality and behavioral differences



# Non-Physical Abuse During Follow-up Intervals

Gondolf, 2002



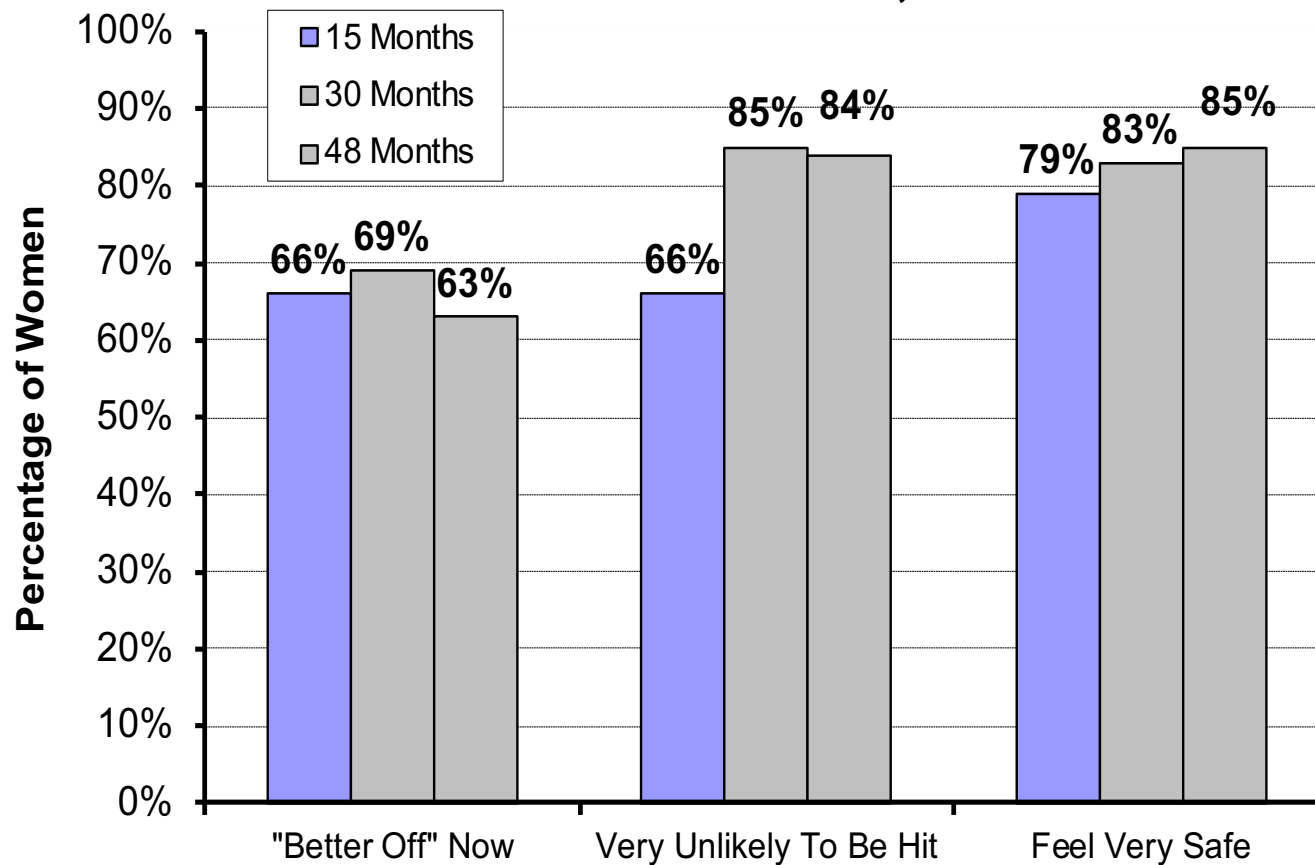
# Do BIPs improve survivors' lives?

- Compared data from interviews with partners at intake and at 15-48 months
  - 63-69% of initial partners indicated they were “better off”
  - More than 79-86% of initial partners reported feeling “very safe”

Source: Gondolf, 2002

## WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF QUALITY-OF-LIFE, LIKELIHOOD OF REASSAULT, AND SAFETY

Source: Gondolf, 2002



# A Longer, More Qualified Answer

- Approx. 60+ single site studies; quality varies substantially
- 7+ meta analyses
  - Rely mostly on criminal recidivism
  - Show no or mixed and modest findings (Babcock, Green & Robie, 2004; Cheng et al., 2019; Feder & Wilson, 2005; Gannon et al., 2020)
    - About a 5% reduction in recidivism
- RCT experimental studies – typically smaller or no effect; challenges to implementing rigorously
- Naturalistic, quasi-experimental studies - small to moderate effect sizes but many with significant method flaws (Smedslund et al., 2007)
- Comparisons vary across studies
  - Reliable difference between program curriculum types rarely found, but programs are often diverse and eclectic by design (e.g., Duluth, CBT, gender-focused)
- Implementation studies not conducted – e.g., facilitation quality
- Better alternatives to same-gender, group curriculum modality not yet demonstrated

# Cheng et al., 2019 meta-analysis

- 14 studies
- Heterogenous program curricula
- Included treated to untreated comparison studies
- Included both survivors' reports, where available, and criminal justice DV and non-DV recidivism

# Cheng et al., 2019 meta-analysis

Findings: “Results indicated that BIP participants were about 3 times less likely to have DV recidivism and about 2.5 times less likely to have general offense recidivism, compared to nontreated control/comparison groups. *However, these results varied depending on the study design, with increased rigor associated with decreased impact.*”

Conclusion: “Similar to prior summative reviews, our results indicate that the effectiveness of BIPs is inconclusive.”

# Gannon et al., 2019 meta-analysis

- Domestic violence programs led by professionals ( $k = 14$ ) generated a “significant treatment effect”
- Over an average 62-month follow-up, domestic violence recidivism was 15.5% (SD = 8.4) for individuals who received treatment and 24.2% (SD = 16.0) for untreated comparisons.
- This represents an absolute decrease in recidivism of 8.7% and a relative decrease of 36.0%.
- Programs for sex offenders and general violence had comparable levels of recidivism.
- Recommended attending to staffing and fidelity of implementation to improve outcomes.

# What About Survivor Perspectives?

1. Barriers to Offender Change	2. Offender Accountability Mechanisms	3. Perceived Changes in Offender Behavior and Belief Systems
Alcohol dependency	Survivor validation	Use of conflict interruption techniques
Mental health challenges	Judicial measures and motivational impacts	New communication skills
Relationship dynamics	Peer interaction and group facilitation	Adopting new perspectives on abuse and violence
Families of origin	External more than internal forces of change	Positive but cautious changes in survivor feelings of safety
Patriarchal culture		Negative changes in blame or manipulation

Source: McGinn, T., Taylor, B., McColgan, M., & Lagdon, S. (2016). Survivor perspectives on IPV perpetrator interventions: A systematic narrative review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 17(3), 239-255.



# What About Evidence from Practitioners?

## Overall:

- Self-aware and self-examining rather than dogmatic.
- Program approaches much more sophisticated and complex than the overgeneralizations about battering intervention.
- Striking commonalities across programs despite variations in emphasis and autonomy.
- View that “evidence-based practice” claims narrowly conceived.

Source: Gondolf, 2015. *Gender-Based Perspectives on Batterer Programs: Program Leaders on History, Approach, Research, and Development*. Lexington Books.

# Findings from Studies of Practitioners

## On Research:

- Directly observe programs and their group process to understand what is actually being evaluated
- Develop more nuanced and complex outcome measures to capture the array and progression of the change process
- Conduct more qualitative studies of women's experience over time noting changes in their well-being and agency, as well as safety
- Develop case studies of men in programs identifying their change process and what “works” for them
- Study successful programs and the program components associated with change
- Address the program context and its influence on outcomes for the individual program participants and the community at large
- Examine the impact of violence toward women in the community at large and efforts to change community norms
- Consider practitioner input and experience in interpreting results, as well as formulating projects
- Establish collaborative and mutual researcher-practitioner partnerships (with genuine give-and-take), and use practitioner-initiated and action research designs
- Involve community representatives and organizations in interpreting, discussing, and implementing research findings

Source: Gondolf, 2015. *Gender-Based Perspectives on Batterer Programs: Program Leaders on History, Approach, Research, and Development*. Lexington Books.

# Findings from Studies of Practitioners

## Recommendations:

- National meetings or association to share information and concerns.
- More discussion and dialogue to support and learn from each other.
- Ongoing practice-driven research for feedback and documentation of program accomplishments.
- Communication of current clinical developments and research, such as motivational interviewing and trauma-informed treatments.
- Use more case management and staff supervision to improve quality of service.

Source: Gondolf, 2015. *Gender-Based Perspectives on Batterer Programs: Program Leaders on History, Approach, Research, and Development*. Lexington Books.

## Observations from Recent Literature Review

- Increased evaluations of specific and new programs in single localities and process evaluations
- Increased evaluation and research from European countries

# Noteworthy Recent Outcome Studies

- Mills et al., 2019 – found promise in restorative justice-informed practices in Utah
- Kelly & Westmarland, 2015 – project Mirabel in U.K. found positive outcomes across variety of novel, proximal indicators of success
- Cox & Rivolta (2019) – evidence for positive effect of Duluth program from Connecticut
- ACT-V study (Zarling et al., 2019; Gondolf, Bennett, & Mankowski, 2019) – compared acceptance commitment therapy principles applied to abusers had some better outcomes compared to Duluth/CBT; despite methodological flaws, “preliminary findings” led Iowa corrections to replace Duluth curriculum statewide
- Cotti et al., 2020 – direct comparison of Duluth and CBT curricula in Wisconsin found CBT performed better

# Typical BIP Evaluation Study

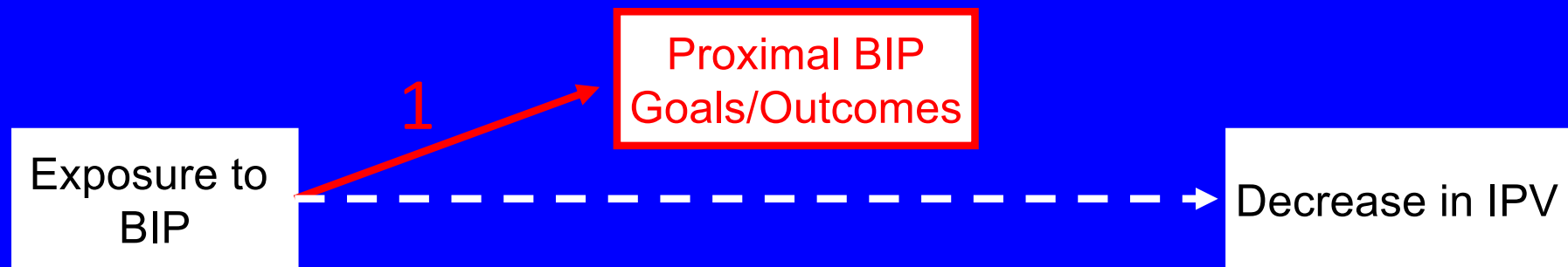


- Assesses outcome, often problematically
- Does not assess how change may occur or how the program is implemented

# Typical BIP Evaluation Study

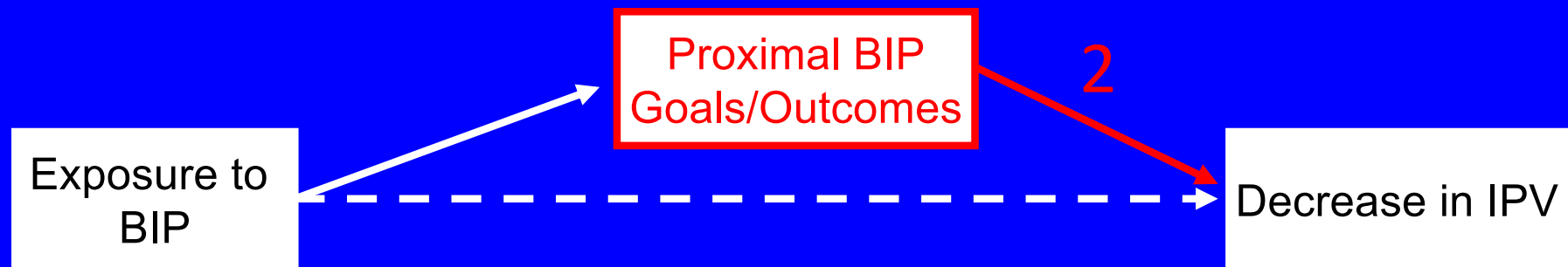
- Focus on distal outcomes
  - criminal recidivism and abuse
- Neglects process of how change may occur
- Theories of change not closely linked to outcome measures
  - predominant theory -- power & control motives -- largely untested
- Proximal processes can better tell us how programs work and how to improve them

# Proximal Change Evaluation: Logic Model





# Proximal Change Evaluation: Logic Model



# Proximal Program Goals Identified in Common Curriculum

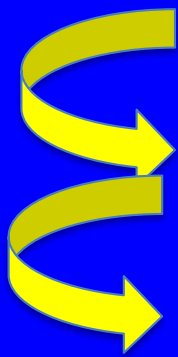
1. Accept **personal responsibility** for abuse and overcoming denial
2. Reduce **power and control beliefs** and motives
3. Understand the **effects of abuse** on victims (and on the self)
4. Manage and control **anger** effectively
5. Reduce feelings of **dependency** on partner/spouse

# BIPPOS Instrument

- 42 questions; completed in 10 minutes
- Scores on five distinct proximal program goals
- Available in English and Spanish language
- Preliminary evidence of sensitivity to change and predictive validity in BIPs in California (MacLeod, et al., 2009; Romant, 2007), Delaware (Goldberg, 2017), and Oregon (Mankowski, 2017).

# Process Evaluations

- Study of BIPs effectiveness should link definitions of success to theories of change



- explanations of IPV (e.g., power and control beliefs and motives)
  - proximal goals (e.g., acceptance of responsibility for abuse)
  - program components (e.g., abuse logs; narrate abuse in group)
- Implication: Increase components and processes identified as critical to change, when it occurs

# Components worthy of further evaluation and experimentation

- Motivational interviewing, trauma informed practice (e.g., Eckhardt et al., 2013)
- Restorative-justice-informed practices (e.g., Mills et al., 2019; Sackett & Mankowski, 2020)

# Conclusions and Implications

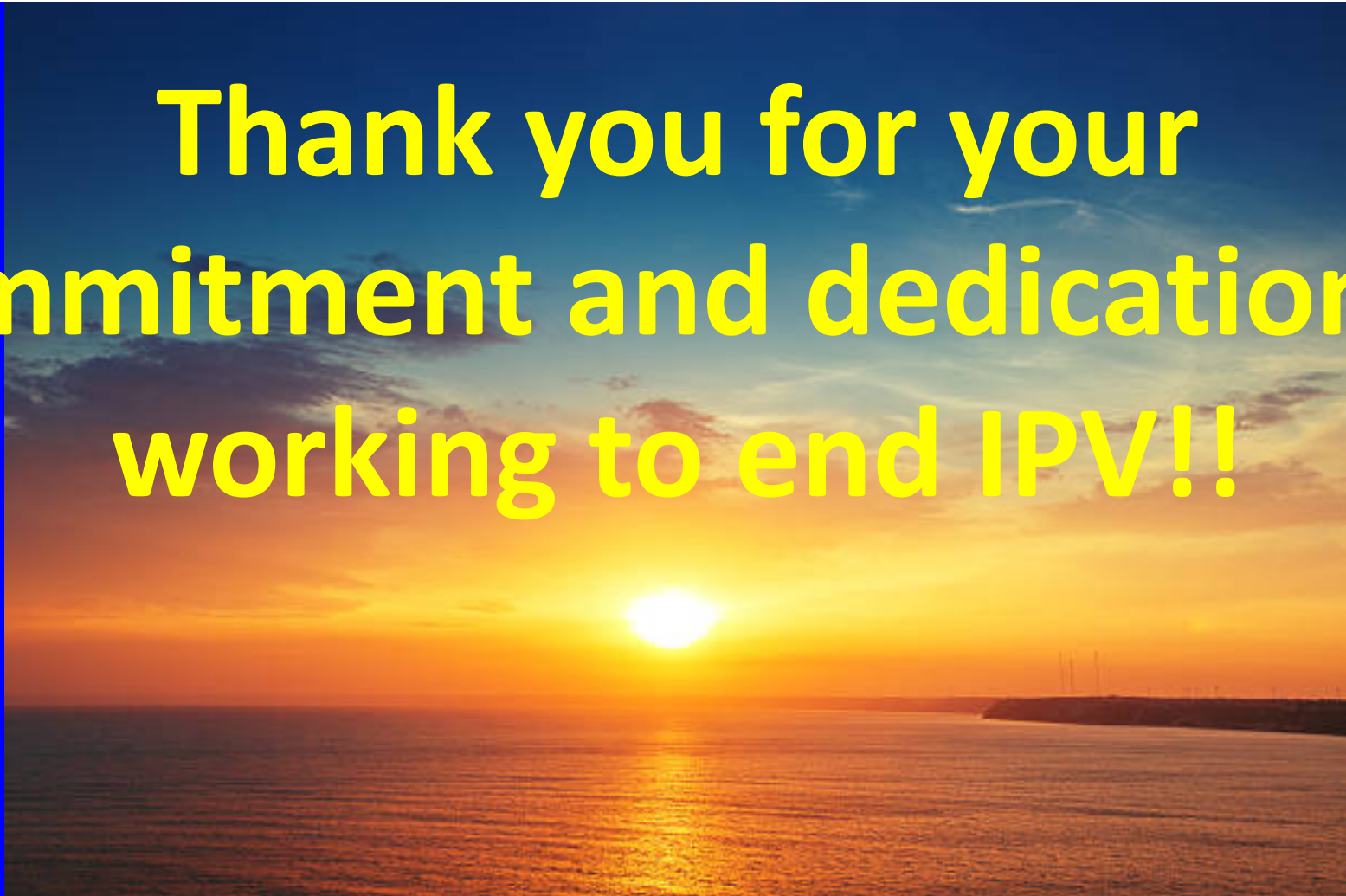
- Read and critically evaluate research on BIPs
- Dialogue, organize and develop response to organized critiques of BIP theory and evaluations (e.g., ADVIP)
- Partner with trusted researchers to conduct responsible, ethical program evaluations

# Wrapping Up

- Reflect back on the past 90 minutes
- What was most significant and memorable for you?
- Are there any ideas that you want to write down to remember, or to act upon?



**Thank you for your  
commitment and dedication to  
working to end IPV!!**





# References

- Babcock, J., Armenti, N., Cannon, C., Lauve-Moon, K., Buttell, F., Ferreira, R., ... & Lehmann, P. (2016). Domestic violence perpetrator programs: A proposal for evidence-based standards in the United States. *Partner Abuse*, 7(4), 355-460. DOI: 10.1891/1946-6560.7.4.355
- Babcock, J. C., Green, C. E., & Robie, C. (2004). Does batterers' treatment work? A meta-analytic review of domestic violence treatment. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23(8), 1023-1053. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2002.07.001>
- Boal, A. L., & Mankowski, E. S. (2014). The impact of legislative standards on batterer intervention program practices and characteristics. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 53(1-2), 218-230. DOI 10.1007/s10464-014-9637-3
- Boal, A. L., & Mankowski, E. S. (2014). Barriers to compliance with Oregon batterer intervention program standards. *Violence and Victims*, 29(4), 607-619. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-12-00135>
- Cheng, S. Y., Davis, M., Jonson-Reid, M., & Yaeger, L. (2019). Compared to what? A meta-analysis of batterer intervention studies using nontreated controls or comparisons. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838019865927>
- Cotti, C., Foster, J., Haley, M. R., & Rawski, S. L. (2019). Duluth versus cognitive behavioral therapy: A natural field experiment on intimate partner violence diversion programs. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 26(2), 384-395. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xap0000249>
- Cox, S. M., & Rivolta, P. M. (2019). Evaluative Outcomes of Connecticut's Batterer Intervention for High Risk Offenders. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2019.1581862>
- Eckhardt, C. I., Murphy, C. M., Whitaker, D. J., Sprunger, J., Dykstra, R., & Woodard, K. (2013). The effectiveness of intervention programs for perpetrators and victims of intimate partner violence. *Partner Abuse*, 4(2), 196-231. DOI: 10.1891/1946-6560.4.2.196

# References

- Feder, L., & Wilson, D. B. (2005). A meta-analytic review of court-mandated batterer intervention programs: Can courts affect abusers' behavior? *Journal of experimental Criminology*, 1(2), 239-262. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11292-005-1179-0>
- Gannon, T. A., Olver, M. E., Mallion, J. S., & James, M. (2019). Does specialized psychological treatment for offending reduce recidivism? A meta-analysis examining staff and program variables as predictors of treatment effectiveness. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 73, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2019.101752>.
- Goldberg, Barbara & Associates (2017, May). *Evaluation of the batterer's intervention program (BIP) of the Delaware Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC)*. [https://dvcc.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/87/2017/09/FinalReport\\_Evaluation\\_BIP2017-1.pdf](https://dvcc.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/87/2017/09/FinalReport_Evaluation_BIP2017-1.pdf)
- Gondolf, E. W., & Gondolf, E. W. (2002). *Batterer intervention systems: Issues, outcomes, and recommendations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gondolf, E. W. (2015). *Gender-based perspectives on batterer programs: Program leaders on history, approach, research, and development*. Lexington Books.
- Gondolf, E. W., Bennett, L., & Mankowski, E. (2019). Lessons in program evaluation: The ACTV batterer program study and its claims. *Violence Against Women*, 25(5), NP1-NP10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801217741994>
- Hamel, J. (2020, July 13). *Online anger management classes*. Retrieved from <https://angermanagement.site/>
- Kelly, L. and Westmarland, N. (2015) *Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes: Steps Towards Change*. Project Mirabal Final Report. London and Durham: London Metropolitan University and Durham University.
- Kerrigan, K. S., & Mankowski, E. S. (2020). How surrogate impact panels function in the context of intimate partner violence: A mixed-methods study. *Victims & Offenders*, 1-31. DOI: 10.1080/15564886.2020.1764427
- Lehrner, A., & Allen, N. E. (2008). Social change movements and the struggle over meaning-making: A case study of domestic violence narratives. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 42(3-4), 220-234. DOI 10.1007/s10464-008-9199-3
- Lehrner, A., & Allen, N. E. (2009). Still a movement after all these years? Current tensions in the domestic violence movement. *Violence Against Women*, 15(6), 656-677. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801209332185>

# References

- MacLeod, G., Pi, R., Smith, D., & Rose-Goodwin, L. (2009). *Batterer intervention systems in California: An evaluation*. California, Judicial Council of California/Administrative Office of the Courts.
- Mankowski, E.S. (2017, April). *A broader view: Using proximal program goals to evaluate batterer intervention prevention program participant success*. Invited talk to the Texas Batterer Intervention Prevention Program conference of the Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin, TX.
- Mankowski, E. S., Galvez, G., & Glass, N. (2011). Interdisciplinary linkage of community psychology and cross-cultural psychology: History, values, and an illustrative research and action project on intimate partner violence. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 47(1-2), 127-143. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-010-9377-y>
- McGinn, T., Taylor, B., McColgan, M., & Lagdon, S. (2016). Survivor perspectives on IPV perpetrator interventions: A systematic narrative review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 17(3), 239-255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838015584358>
- Mills, L. G., Barocas, B., Butters, R. P., & Ariel, B. (2019). A randomized controlled trial of restorative justice-informed treatment for domestic violence crimes. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 3(12), 1284-1294. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-019-0724-1>
- Romant, S. (2007). *Batterer's intervention program evaluation: Beyond recidivism rates*. [Unpublished master's thesis]. California State University, Long Beach.
- Smedslund, G., Dalsbø, T. K., Steiro, A. K., Winsvold, A., & Clench-Aas, J. (2011). Cognitive behavioural therapy for men who physically abuse their female partner. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 7(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2011.1>
- Taft, C. T., Macdonald, A., Monson, C. M., Walling, S. M., Resick, P. A., & Murphy, C. M. (2013). "Strength at home" group intervention for military populations engaging in intimate partner violence: Pilot findings. *Journal of Family Violence*, 28(3), 225-231. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-013-9496-y>
- Zarling, A., Bannon, S., & Berta, M. (2019). Evaluation of acceptance and commitment therapy for domestic violence offenders. *Psychology of Violence*, 9(3), 257-266. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000097>