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Vicarious Battering: The Experience of Intervening at a Domestic Violence-Focused Supervised Visitation Center

Tracee Parker
Antioch University Seattle

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VICARIOUS BATTERING: THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERVENING AT A DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE-FOCUSED SUPERVISED VISITATION CENTER

A Phenomenological Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Antioch University Seattle
Seattle, WA

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree
Doctor of Psychology

By

Tracee Parker

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VICARIOUS BATTERING: THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERVENING AT A DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE-FOCUSED SUPERVISED VISITATION CENTER

This dissertation, by Tracee Parker, has been approved by the committee members signed below who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of the Antioch University Seattle at Seattle, WA in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dissertation Committee:

Patricia Linn, Ph.D.
Chairperson

Anne Ganley, Ph.D.

Joan DuBuque, J.D.

Date

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ABSTRACT

VICARIOUS BATTERING: THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERVENING AT A DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE FOCUSED SUPERVISED VISITATION CENTER

Tracee Parker

Antioch University Seattle

Seattle, WA

This descriptive phenomenological research illustrated the experience of women who worked in a supervised visitation program (SVP) specifically developed to address safety concerns related to allegations of domestic violence. The SVP policies and procedures were designed not only to prevent physical assault and abduction but also to intervene in vicarious battering—a term introduced to describe the attempts by men who battered to exert control over, undermine, and/or intimidate the mothers of their children via interactions with their children and the visitation staff. The results of this research demonstrated the challenges of intervening in the context of court-ordered supervised visitation. Data for this study were collected via semi-structured interviews with ten individuals who worked at the SVP for over a year and participated in regularly scheduled case consult meetings. The phenomenological methods of reduction and imaginative variation were used to analyze participant interviews and answer the question: How did the staff of a specialized supervised visitation and exchange program experience the assigned task of increasing safety for survivors of intimate partner violence and their children while decreasing opportunities for further battering? Data analysis revealed three important elements of the task: Being grounded in the mission of increasing safety and decreasing opportunities to batter, knowing they were safe and supported, and feeling connected to the work of addressing domestic

violence. The electronic version of this dissertation is at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, <http://aura.antioch.edu/> and OhioLINK ETD Center, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu>

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the late Ellen Pence. Thank you for boldly and persistently challenging outdated paradigms, for relentlessly demonstrating that there is always more to learn, and for teaching me the importance of asking good questions.

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Thank you to my esteemed Committee, Dr. Linn, Dr. Ganley, and Judge DuBuque. Your wisdom, knowledge, and commitment to doing good work continually motivate and inspire me. To Pat, Anne, and Joan, your faith in me and your encouragement throughout this process kept me afloat when I found myself thinking I couldn't do it. Words can't express how much I appreciate the three of you. Thank you to Alaina, Amanda, Cody, and Clayton for tolerating my return to school and all the distractions and stress that accompanied this journey. I apologize for the ways it limited my resources (time, finances, energy, and attention) and I am looking forward to more time for family fun and adventure. Thank you to my friends— old and new—who commiserated, conspired, cried, laughed, and drank wine with me when I needed it! And finally, I am forever grateful to my study participants. Your courage and fierce advocacy on behalf of battered women and their children is something to which we should all aspire. I thank you for so eloquently sharing your stories and your time with me. I am honored to have worked alongside you and I know I am a better person for having done so.

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Introduction

The Research Question

Historically, supervised visitation has been utilized by child protective services in order to evaluate parenting skills, prepare families for reunification, and ensure safety for children in cases of child abuse and neglect (Pearson & Thoennes, 2000). Visits typically occurred in the family home, the foster care location, or in a social worker's office. In the 1960s to 1980s, due to the rise in divorce rates, the popularity of no fault divorces, and increasing requests for visitation in response to child support enforcement actions, reliance on family courts increased. Visitation services and centers became a venue to ensure ongoing contact between non-custodial parents and their children during high conflict divorce cases and in cases where children had not yet bonded with their non-custodial parents (Straus, 1995). In the 1990s, judges, attorneys, child protective services, and battered women's advocates began calling for the use of supervised visitation programs in cases of domestic violence to prevent exposure to ongoing abuse via access to children (Clement, 1998; Sheeran & Hampton, 1999; Straus, 1995). Congress responded to that call in the 2000 Violence Against Women Act by establishing the Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Grant Program (U.S. Department of Justice, 2007). The grant program prioritized the safety of battered women and their children and funded numerous visitation programs across the country to identify, develop, and implement promising practices in the field of supervised visitation.

This descriptive phenomenological study illustrated how the staff of one of those Safe Havens grant-funded programs experienced having to directly intervene with individuals and families who were referred to the program due to concerns about domestic violence. The study participants described overt and subtle post-separation battering behaviors and coercive control

they witnessed as professionals tasked with ensuring physical and emotional safety in the context of court-ordered visitation between children and their non-custodial parent. The data for the study were collected via in-depth interviews with individuals who were employed by the program for a minimum of one-year during its operation from January 2005 through December 2012 to answer the following question (adapted from the SVP's Philosophy of Service—see Appendix C):

How did the staff of a specialized supervised visitation and exchange program experience the assigned task of increasing safety for survivors of intimate partner violence and their children while decreasing opportunities for further battering?

The policies and procedures of this particular visitation program—herein after referred to as the SVP—were based on the understanding that for many victims of domestic violence (DV), abuse continues after separation and for some women, the risk of physical danger actually increases (American Psychological Association, 1996; Dalton, 1999; Fleury, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2000; Hardesty, 2002; Hayes, 2012; Shalansky, Erickson, & Henderson, 1999). When there are children in common, court- and socially sanctioned fathers' rights can make it extremely difficult for survivors¹ with children to safely escape their batterers² (Fleury-Steiner, Miller, Maloney, & Bonistall Postel, 2016). Access to children provides opportunities for ongoing harassment, intimidation, threats, stalking, and/or assault. Additionally, children can be used to pass along messages or threats to the survivor, monitor and report the survivor's activities and whereabouts, and sadly, they may be abducted, seriously harmed, or even murdered by the batterer as the ultimate act of aggression against the survivor (Dalton, 1999; Fleury et al., 2000; Hardesty, 2002; Hayes, 2012; Shalansky et al., 1999).

¹ The adult victim of domestic violence

² The adult perpetrator of domestic violence, interchangeable with abuser

Domestic Violence Defined

Legal definitions of domestic violence (DV) used by law enforcement and legislators generally consist of language regarding the infliction of physical harm (or imminent fear of such) by or between individuals residing in the same household, regardless of their relationship status (siblings, parents, roommates, spouses, etc.). For example, in Washington State, the legal definition is as follows:

"Domestic violence" means: (a) Physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or the infliction of fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury or assault, between family or household members; (b) sexual assault of one family or household member by another; or (c) stalking as defined in RCW 9A.46.110 of one family or household member by another family or household member. (Revised Code of Washington 26.50.010)

Behavioral definitions utilized by the battered women's movement refer specifically to intimate partner relationships where one partner dominates the other via numerous means (physical, sexual, economic, etc.). This understanding is reflected in Chapter 2 of the *Washington Courts Domestic Violence Bench Guide for Judicial Officers* (Ganley, 2015) where domestic violence is described as:

- A pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors
- Including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion
- That adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners

The chapter provides a list of tactics including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, economic coercion, and use of children to control the victim.³ Specific tactics described in the Use of Children category included:

- a. Threats of use of physical or sexual attacks against children to control the other adult;
- b. Forcing child to participate in the physical or psychological abuse of adult victim;

³ This kind of domestic violence is also referred to as battering, coercive control, intimate partner violence (IPV), spouse abuse, partner abuse, etc.

- c. Using children as hostages, using visitation with children to monitor adult victim or to send messages to victim through children, interrogating children about victim's activities, being under- or over-engaged with children in order to control the victim, etc.;
- d. Undermining parenting of adult victim, prolonged custody or visitation conflicts, seeking parenting plans that allow them to maintain control over the adult victim post separation or divorce, etc.;
- e. False reports to Child Protection Service, refusal to participate in Child Welfare proceeding. (Ganley, 2015, pp. 2–7)

The supervised visitation program central to this dissertation based its policies and procedures on the understanding that batterers could carry out tactics such as those listed above while utilizing its services. Though child safety was extremely important, protection of the adult survivor was equally paramount. The primary focus of the SVP was to increase safety for survivors and their children and prevent DV perpetrators from using visitation to continue battering.

Rationale for Study

During my eight years as director of the SVP, I witnessed countless demonstrations of controlling, coercive, and abusive behaviors by fathers using the program. These behaviors occurred despite the highly restrictive setting of the locked, on-site, one-on-one, DV-focused supervised environment with clearly defined and thoroughly explained behavioral guidelines and expectations. While many of the fathers visiting their children at the SVP complied with center guidelines during the actual visit, they often attempted to exert control over the staff and/or the mothers of their children via tactics including but not limited to scheduling manipulation, attempts to send messages to survivors through children or staff, arguing with staff about rules or interventions, blaming the survivor or the court for their problems, etc. Many made statements indicating lack of remorse or responsibility for their battering behaviors and many persistently demonstrated more serious behaviors such as blatant defiance of program rules, stalking outside

or near the facility, threats to file contempt charges against the program or to call child protective services, and other violations of center guidelines that resulted in repeated staff intervention and extensive safety planning.

Study objectives were:

- To explore and articulate the experiences of the SVP personnel who were expected to identify and consistently address behavior that might compromise the emotional and/or physical safety of DV survivors and/or their children.
- To provide information that can assist those working within the family law system (visitation supervisors, mental health evaluators, attorneys, parenting evaluators, Court Appointed Special Advocates [CASAs], guardians ad litem [GALs], judicial officers, etc.) to recognize and account for post-separation battering tactics.
- To contribute to the existing body of research on post-separation battering, coercive control, and supervised visitation in the context of DV.
- To discuss future directions for research and practice.

This particular SVP was selected because of its very specific focus on DV as defined by the program policies and grant requirements. The SVP staff members were ideal participants because they were trained specifically to implement the SVP policies and procedures designed to directly address risks to safety before, during, after, and between visits. They were expected to be professional, fair, and able to articulate their reasons for interventions. They were specifically tasked with intervening in any behaviors that could potentially compromise the physical and/or emotional safety of survivors or their children in relation to service provision (see Appendix C). The staff members were in a unique position for five reasons:

1. Most service providers (such as therapists, attorneys, advocates, and perpetrator treatment providers) interact with individuals and therefore only hear about battering retrospectively and from just one perspective.
2. This particular supervised visitation program was established specifically to serve only families who were impacted by domestic violence and where the children resided with one of the parents. The goal was not to promote reunification but to increase safety for survivors and their children after separation from their batterers.
3. All SVP personnel were trained to be transparent with all clientele about the assumption of inherent risks to the safety of DV survivors and their children before, during, after, and between visits.
4. The SVP staff members were expected to directly intervene as potentially harmful behaviors occurred and with individuals with whom they would likely continue to work for extended periods of time.
5. The SVP staff worked directly with batterers and their victims—the mothers of their children—and were regularly exposed to post-separation battering behaviors in real time that were largely unseen by others.

The professional role of each participant was to identify, prevent, and intervene in behaviors that could compromise the emotional and/or physical safety of domestic violence survivors and their children. This research can help to increase awareness of the insidious nature of DV by illustrating the challenges of direct intervention and identifying the skills and resources that effective intervention required.

Research Approach

For this descriptive phenomenological study, ten individuals who worked at the SVP (including myself) were interviewed about their experiences of intervening at the program. All of the SVP policies and procedures were developed with possible battering tactics in mind and concerns about DV were required for any family to be accepted into the program. I used a semi-structured interview approach to obtain in-depth descriptions of each participant's experience of directly intervening with battering as it occurred in relation to supervised visitation. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analyzed to identify common and overarching themes and categories. Direct quotes were included as necessary for maximum understanding of how results were derived. Though this study focused only on the SVP staff experiences, general SVP client demographic statistics (Appendix B) and program policies and forms related to service provision such as mission, purpose, and intervention procedures (Appendix C) were provided to help establish a comprehensive understanding of the program.

I chose to use a qualitative approach for this project because it is about the lived experience of witnessing and directly addressing coercive control and battering that I think was best described by those who were tasked with doing so and in their own words. I was interested in illustrating the essence of intervening, of interrupting abuse, and of having to intentionally and consistently put oneself between a batterer and the intended outcomes of his behaviors. I believe my findings have illuminated the challenges and importance of this task and highlighted the need for specialized and extensive training for practitioners who work with batterers, survivors, and/or their children. The participant interviews illustrated the insidious and tenacious nature of domestic violence and can help professionals working with DV cases, particularly in family law

settings, to better understand and account for the impact of battering prior to, during, and after separation.

Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation consists of five main sections, references, and appendices. The Introduction describes the research question, design and methodology, and rationale for this study. The Literature Review includes relevant background, a review of scholarship relevant to this pursuit, and my conceptual framework. The Methods section provides a description of the SVP setting, the study design, participant selection, and methodology: an explanation of participant selection, a description of the context in which the participants were situated during their employment at the SVP, the role of the researcher, researcher assumptions, the methods of data collection and analysis, standards of trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations. The Presentation of the Data provides an aggregate summary of the participant descriptions of the experience—the essence of intervening—and the overarching themes that arose throughout the interviews. The Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion section includes a discussion of possible meanings of the results supported by additional scholarly literature and recommendations for further research. A complete reference list is provided. Appendices include the summary phenomenological descriptions for each participant, general SVP client demographics, relevant SVP documents, guiding interview questions, the participant consent form, and the participant demographics form.

Literature Review

Introduction and Context

While best practices for increasing victim safety and perpetrator accountability have been identified and implemented in criminal courts nationally and internationally, battered women and their advocates consistently report frustration, anger, disappointment, and even shock at what seems to be an overall minimization or even dismissal of battering when it comes to the family law system (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012; Johnston & Ver Steegh, 2013; Przekop, 2010; Stark, 2007). In regard to custody and visitation decisions, it often appears that unless a father has committed an egregious act of violence against his child, the father-child relationship is more highly valued and supported by the court and its auxiliaries (mental health evaluators, attorneys, CASAs, GALs, etc.) than are the mother's attempts to regain safety and autonomy for herself and her children (Bancroft et al., 2012; Stark, 2007). Many abuse tactics and efforts by batterers to control the mothers of their children often appear to go unnoticed in the family law arena. This lack of understanding of the nuances and dynamics of coercive control post-separation can greatly impact the survivor and make it especially difficult for those with children to safely end the relationship and move forward with healthy parenting (Bancroft et al., 2012; Johnston & Ver Steegh, 2013; Przekop, 2010; Stark, 2007, 2009).

Salem and Dunford-Jackson (2008) authored an overview of the struggles between professionals in the family law arena (judges, lawyers, mediators, custody evaluators, parent educators, and mental health professionals) and those in the domestic violence arena (shelter advocates, legal advocates, and victim attorneys). They opined that while both professional arenas shared similar goals of "safe and healthy families, empowerment, self-determination, and homes that nurture children," (Salem & Dunford-Jackson, 2008, p. 440) and both groups

believed that abuse is wrong and batterers should be held accountable for their abusive behaviors, DV advocates tended to have a unified focus on victim safety and empowerment and batterer accountability. Such focus has been especially effective in criminal courts where legislation has emerged nationally over the past four decades acknowledging that partner abuse is indeed a crime requiring a coordinated community response by criminal justice professionals, law enforcement, attorneys, probation, treatment providers, etc. However, DV advocacy has not been so successful in family law cases where the goals tend to be focused on relationship preservation and equitable division of resources. Family law professionals do not operate under a unified understanding of their purpose and often disagree amongst themselves. Litigation may be discouraged and families are frequently encouraged to settle disputes outside of court and plan for the future rather than focusing on the immediate conflict. Shared and cooperative parenting is promoted strongly and persistently. These practices are contraindicated in cases of domestic violence (Salem & Dunford-Jackson, 2008). For example, family law professionals focused on negotiating a reasonable and equitable agreement between the parties strongly encourage mediation. Conversely and historically, DV professionals have opposed mediation due to concerns that it sets up the victim and her children for further abuse and manipulation by the abuser. The authors reported that discussion of gender is perhaps the most contentious discussion of all because, "It taps directly into issues of gender equity; fairness; neutrality of courts and court personnel; and fundamental, conflicting, and often unarticulated values and assumptions that form our society's underpinnings," (Salem & Dunford-Jackson, 2008, p. 446). They explained that family law professionals often incorrectly assume that DV advocates believe women unconditionally, which does not acknowledge the possibility of false allegations.

In a comprehensive literature review on family law and domestic violence, Przekop (2010) concluded that despite several decades of advocacy on behalf of battered women and their children, family courts remained problematic with regard to identifying and effectively responding to abusive tactics by fathers. The author noted that abusive men were two times more likely to pursue sole custody than were non-abusive men and often used ongoing custody issues to continue harassing and abusing the mothers of their children. Przekop identified the following problems that allowed abusive men to use the family law system to maintain control over their victims: (a) adherence to a limited legal definition of domestic violence rather than adoption of the more comprehensive behavioral definition developed by the battered women's movement and utilized by most social service agencies, (b) failure to see the relevance of domestic violence between the parents in issues of custody, (c) the complexity of these types of cases and limited resources to deal with them, (d) ongoing bias against women, and (e) outdated perspectives of DV as a family problem requiring gender neutrality. The author concluded that ongoing use of custody issues resulted in multiple harmful consequences for survivors and their children such as emotional trauma, financial burden, loss of parental authority, forced settlements, and even return to the batterer (Przekop, 2010).

Post-Separation Battering⁴ and Access to Children

In a 1996 report, the American Psychological Association's (APA) Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family concluded that while women are often encouraged to leave their abusive partners, this does not necessarily result in an end to violence and for some, separation (or attempts to separate) may actually initiate violence or lead to its escalation (American Psychological Association, 1996). The report noted that some batterers use the family

⁴ Battering or coercive control that occurs during or after a survivor's attempts to end the intimate relationship with the abuser that is intended to undermine or prevent autonomy

courts and other systems as a way to continue their abuse. Despite this recognition of potential danger, court-enforced access to children continues to facilitate ongoing abuse of women and harm to children as demonstrated by the research below.

Using a phenomenological approach, Shalansky et al. (1999) interviewed five women who were separated from their abusers regarding their experiences of custody and child access. The women in their study described numerous examples of harassment, intimidation, and threats that took place in relation to the abusers' rights to visitation such as during child pick up or drop off or at courtroom hearings. They described situations that left them feeling vulnerable and hopeless as they tried to break away from the abuse. Additionally, the participants were confused when family court judges determining visitation schedules seemed to ignore blatant acts of violence. The participants expressed ongoing fear, persistent stress, frustration with the family law system and other professionals, and inability to heal and move on with their lives (Shalansky et al., 1999). It should be noted that the participants for the study had all resided at a battered women's shelter for a limited time. Given that shelter is generally available only to women in highly dangerous situations and with limited resources, their post-separation experiences may have been more extreme than those of survivors who had not utilized emergency shelter services.

Wuest, Ford-Gilboe, Merritt-Gray, and Berman (2003) interviewed 36 mothers and 11 of their children for a feminist grounded theory study of the effects of women abuse on family health processes. Participants were recruited through ads in local newspapers, posters in various community locations, and through personal and agency contacts. All of the women had separated from an abusive partner between 9 months and 20 years prior to the first interview and none had reunited at the time of second interviews 4 months to 2 ½ years later. Post-separation battering emerged as an obstacle to health promotion and was described as *intrusion*—defined by the

researchers as “external control or interference that demands attention, diverts energy away from family priorities, and limits choices” (Wuest et al., 2003, p. 600). The study participants reported long-term efforts by their abusers to control them and these efforts often intensified in relation to changes in circumstances such as when extra financial assistance was needed for child-related expenses or when visitation schedules were being negotiated. The data revealed three common avenues of intrusion: (a) use of the children via contact with them and threats to pursue custody; (b) undermining and destabilizing the new family structure by stalking, violating expectations, disrupting the children’s relationships and understanding of the separation, disrupting routines, and withholding child support; and (c) using various system rules against the women such as making false child abuse reports or withdrawing immigration sponsorship. The researchers found a pattern of persistent chronic health problems among the mothers that resulted from past physical abuse, psychological and economic abuse, and aggravation of existing conditions. Intrusion was also linked to a number of losses—loss of financial stability, loss of employment, loss of social support, loss of personal property, and loss of social standing (Wuest et al., 2003). The study did not include participant demographic statistics that might have helped to increase transferability and the possible implications beyond this particular research setting. Additionally, the article did not include a clear audit trail that would increase confirmability. However, the behaviors described by the participants were extremely consistent with those outlined by several of the studies in this literature review (Dalton, 1999; Fleury et al., 2000; Hardesty, 2002; Hayes, 2012; Shalansky et al., 1999).

Much of the research on post-separation battering is focused primarily on levels of physical violence and does not necessarily describe how batterers use their parenting rights to maintain control over their children’s mothers. This may be due to a lack of understanding of

what constitutes battering—the behavioral definition described previously that includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic coercion (Ganley, 2015). Despite this narrow focus, the literature demonstrated that child visitation created opportunities for post-separation contact, which could result in further abuse. For example, Brownridge (2006) used a review of the literature on lethal and non-lethal post-separation violence to identify common risk markers for survivors post-separation. Using an ecological framework, the author identified a number of factors that appeared correlated to post-separation violence. Among these were batterers' tendencies to associate separation with a threat to the masculine status of husband and father, proximity of the survivor, and child support and custody issues (Brownridge, 2006). Based on these conclusions, battered mothers were at increased risk of ongoing abuse by the fathers of their children. In another literature review of post-separation assault, Hardesty (2002) concluded that while there were sufficient data to demonstrate that many survivors are indeed at risk after leaving their abusive partners, the issue was likely underreported and merited further research as well as increased attention on the family law system that often leaves battered women vulnerable to further harm.

In a study of mothers who had been abused, Beeble, Bybee, and Sullivan (2007) used structured interviews and a seven-item scale developed to identify the use of children by batterers to maintain control while in an intimate relationship or after separation. Of the 156 participants, 88% reported that their batterers had used one or more of the behaviors on the scale. Use of children was defined as using them to keep the mother in the relationship (70%), using them to harass the mother (58%), using them to intimidate the mother (58%), using them to keep track of the mother (69%), using them to frighten the mother (44%), turning the kids against the mother (47%), or convincing the kids that the mother should take the batterer back (45%).

Independent variables were the batterer's familial relationship to the child, prior physical abuse, prior emotional abuse, current status of relationship between the mother and batterer, and the batterer's visitation status. Multiple regression revealed that biological fathers who had used emotional abuse and who had court-ordered visitation were much more likely to use children to control their mothers than were stepfathers, father figures, or non-father figures. The analysis also revealed that prior physical and emotional abuse increased the likelihood of the use of children to maintain control (Beeble et al., 2007). The study demonstrated the multiple ways batterers had used children in their attempts to control their victims. The researchers developed the scale used in the study, but the article did not describe how they did so. Construct validity might have been increased if the researchers had stated where the items on the scale came from such as anecdotally from common concerns voiced by survivors to advocates or in prior research of women in shelters or from mothers in family law cases.

Davies, Ford-Gilboe, and Hammerton (2009) used structured interviews and multivariate analyses in an attempt to demonstrate the gendered nature of post-separation abuse. The authors hypothesized that women with children, who had higher socioeconomic status (or perceived as having autonomy) and who had greater emotional investment in their relationships were more likely to experience ongoing abuse after separation. They interviewed 309 women who had left an abusive partner within the prior three years using measures to identify patterns of abuse, relationship investment, relations of power and control, socioeconomic status, and mother status. Initial interviews were followed by a second interview ten weeks later, then four more interviews at 6-month intervals. Their study results indicated that of the 287 participants that met all study criteria, nearly 90% reported ongoing abuse or harassment by their ex-partners in the first year after leaving. While only 74% of the participants were mothers, they accounted for 86% of those

who experienced post-separation abuse (Davies et al., 2009). The researchers also found higher rates of post-separation abuse among the participants who were married to their abusers and those with lengthier relationships (over five years). The authors noted that the rates of abuse reported in this study were much higher than indicated in earlier research and this was likely due to their inclusion of the word *harassment* in their definition. The methodology of this study appeared to be sound and the researchers' varied sampling strategies were impressive. They recruited through shelters, health care providers, social media, local advertising, and snowballing to obtain a diverse sample of women who had left abusive partners. Unfortunately, the article did not include descriptive statistics of the final pool of participants so it is difficult to determine external validity.

In a study using data collected between 2002 and 2005 from a New York City family court for a research project about visitation decisions when abuse had occurred, Hayes (2012) conducted structured follow-up interviews with 168 women whose batterers currently had ongoing contact with their children. The author hypothesized that due to court involvement there would be a decrease in physical violence but an increase in controlling behaviors. Post-separation controlling behaviors were identified as lying to the children, keeping the children longer for visitation than agreed, and contacting the survivor's friends and/or family. Control variables were identified as level of education and employment status of both the survivors and the batterers. Answers were compared to those given during baseline interviews conducted two-and-a-half to 18 months earlier. Using three, stepwise logistic regressions to estimate the odds ratios associated with the identified controlling behaviors based on previous abuse, the author found that just fewer than 4% reported ongoing physical abuse while controlling behavior was ongoing for over 45% of the participants. Additionally, data analyses indicated post-separation

controlling behaviors were more likely to occur in cases that included multiple incidents of physical abuse prior to separation (Hayes, 2012). Hayes noted that her results were inconsistent with previous research indicating increased violence during post-separation but suggested that this may have been due to the court's involvement with her participants. Additionally, the variables measured (lying to children, keeping them longer, and contacting friends and family members) were limited to items that had been addressed during the first interview. This is a construct validity issue because the initial interview was not about post-separation control tactics and did not address the broad range of ways that abusive men might exert control over their partners and children. A qualitative component (such as an open-ended question about their experiences with these men since the first interview) would have likely provided a wider array of examples of post-separation battering. Hayes also introduced educational and employment status into her study but then did not include an analysis of those variables within the article other than to note that the women interviewed were typically more highly educated than their batterers. The report did not reveal whether or not those particular variables had any impact on level of ongoing control. Such information might have supported the findings of Davies et al. (2009).

Supervised Visitation

Despite the court's increased reliance on supervised visitation programs, there has been very little research regarding what they actually do, how they do it, or what they understand their role to be (Birnbaum & Alaggia, 2006; Pulido, Forrester, & Lacina, 2011). This may be due to the fact that there are no standard models of service provision. For example, many programs accept referrals from child welfare agencies and family courts without a clear understanding of what these different referral sources expect regarding the goals of supervision (Saini, Van Wert, & Gofman, 2012). In child welfare or dependency cases, visit supervisors are expected to take an

evaluative role in order to determine the best placement for the child. Conversely, in child custody cases the court expects the visit supervisor to be neutral and ensure the child is kept out of the parental conflict and allowed to have ongoing contact with the non-custodial parent (Crook & Oehme, 2007; Saini, Van Wert, et al., 2012). When domestic violence has been identified, the visit supervisor may be expected to prevent or intervene in behaviors that could compromise the safety of the non-offending parent as well as the child (Oehme & Maxwell, 2004; Sheeran & Hampton, 1999; U. S. Department of Justice, 2007).

In a survey study of supervised visitation program administrators, family court judges, and child protective service (CPS) administrators, Thoennes and Pearson (1999) sought to provide, “a portrait of the scale and scope of organizations that offer supervised visitation services and the perceived degree to which these entities fill the need for services,” (Thoennes & Pearson, 1999, p. 464). The authors used a snowball sampling technique to identify all supervised visitation programs in the United States as of 1997. They were able to locate and received survey responses from 94 programs. Surveys were also sent to judges and court administrators affiliated with the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts and child protective services (CPS) administrators located within the Family and Children Divisions in the two largest counties in each state. They received 51 responses from the judges/court administrators and 40 responses from CPS administrators. Responses from the programs revealed that most supervised visitation services (64%) were located within a private, nonprofit agency, 9% were individual private practitioners, and 13% were part of a for-profit agency. Programs averaged 10 visit supervisors and in most, program administrators supervised visits along with the rest of his or her job duties. Fifty-one percent accepted referrals both from family law cases and CPS, 33% worked with family law referrals only, and 16% worked only with CPS

or dependency cases. Services offered varied across sites and included one-on-one supervision, group supervision, supervised exchanges, therapeutic visitation, and off-site supervision. Programs reported lack of funding and limited space as significant challenges and most reported a desire to have a more active role in the visitation by providing more specific feedback to parents and modeling appropriate behaviors. Additionally, the programs reported they felt visitation services should not occur in isolation and that the families they served could benefit from additional services such as mental health assessment, support groups, treatment programs, and legal assistance. Responses from court representatives indicated that supervised visitation was ordered in approximately 5% of their cases but was needed in double that number. Approximately one third reported they relied on friends and family members for supervised visitation despite the fact that 70% reported they were skeptical that friends or family could be trusted for this task. Seventy percent reported that supervised visitation programs were not widely available and less than one-third were satisfied with the resources available in their jurisdictions (Thoennes & Pearson, 1999).

Pearson and Thoennes (2000) then reviewed the case files of 676 families who had used supervised visitation services in four visitation programs in four different states to develop a profile of families who used the services. Additionally, they interviewed 201 parents (114 custodial and 87 non-custodial) who had exited the program about their experiences while there. Each of the programs served divorced or never-married parents or families with a history of domestic violence. The researchers found that families tended to be struggling financially; slightly more than half had only one child; fathers were the visiting parent in 77% of the cases and mothers in 22%; and, 92% were referred by a judicial order. Primary reasons for referral differed across sites (the researchers assumed this was likely due to different jurisdictional

priorities and site-specific documentation styles), however, visiting fathers were more likely to have been violent towards their children's mother, visiting mothers were more likely to have substance abuse issues, and over 75% of visiting and custodial parents blamed the referral on the other parent's anger. Inappropriate behaviors and negative parent-child interactions occurred during visitation in 13% to 17% of the cases. Interviews revealed that most parents felt respected by program staff and were satisfied with the service provision but many indicated they wanted the programs to make recommendations to the court regarding the success of their visits. Approximately 25% of the visiting parents said they felt the visit supervisors were biased towards the custodial parent and that the program rules were too strict. Forty-three percent reported ongoing visitation problems such as less time with their kids than desired and conflicts over scheduling. Those parents who expressed higher satisfaction with the visitation services also reported fewer ongoing visitation problems after services had ended. The authors reported that at least half of the visiting parents expressed dissatisfaction with every aspect of the family law process and half of the custodial parents were dissatisfied with custody and visitation laws (Pearson & Thoennes, 2000). This study was one of the more comprehensive on supervised visitation, however, the researchers presented data collected from four different sites while providing very limited information about each site. For instance, there was no information about training, experience, or credentials of visit supervisors. Nor was there any mention of program policies, procedures, mission statements, or stated purpose. Additionally, the data were aggregated in such a way that it is unknown if they were equally representative of all four sites.

Based on examples of concerning behaviors at Florida visitation centers (collected by the Supervised Visitation Clearinghouse of Florida), Maxwell and Oehme (2001) observed that battering behaviors described in domestic violence research matched behaviors that occurred at

visitation programs: minimization/denial of abuse; partner blaming; control/manipulation; attacking parenting skills of victim parent; covert/overt threats; using children to get information; stalking; financial abuse/manipulation; animal abuse; physical violence; and, suicide threats (Maxwell & Oehme, 2001). The authors developed a number of recommendations for family court judicial strategies including formal assessments that include screening for DV and assessing lethality risks, ordering perpetrator treatment if DV is identified, and scheduling ongoing judicial reviews of concerning cases. They also strongly encouraged judicial officers to collaborate with visitation providers in order to increase safety for children and adult DV survivors. Recommendations for visitation programs included training for staff about DV and relevant family court processes and establishment of clear policies and procedures that address safety and confidentiality. The authors concluded their report with a strong recommendation for legislated standards and certification for supervised visitation providers, particularly in cases where DV has been identified (Maxwell & Oehme, 2001). While the article was based on information gathered via anecdotal responses of visitation program personnel, the examples provided mirrored behaviors I witnessed regularly during my tenure at the SVP.

Noting that research from 1990 to 2004 on supervised visitation focused primarily on rationales for such services and descriptions of clientele, Birnbaum and Alaggia (2006) called for research regarding the intended and unintended consequences to families who utilize supervised visitation. The authors concluded that prior attempts at determining the impact of these services were not necessarily methodologically sound and suffered from multiple limitations. Given that courts tended to order supervised visitation to ensure ongoing parent-child relationships, Birnbaum and Alaggia stated that sound, mixed method research designs were needed to gather information from multiple sources, obtain observational information, use relevant testing

instruments, gather information from parents and children, and follow up with families over time to determine outcomes of service provision. To date, it appears the authors' call has yet to be answered. In 2007, Crook and Oehme reviewed program data from 47 visitation programs in Florida and found results very similar to the 1999 findings of Thoennes and Pearson (1999): limited funding, lack of training, limited capacity, and reliance on part-time or volunteer staff. The authors again strongly emphasized the need for state-legislated standards and certification and increased, stable funding to address space, facility, staffing, and ongoing training.

Saini and Birnbaum (2015) used case vignettes and focus groups with judicial officers, mental health professionals, and attorneys to determine the validity of a risk assessment tool designed to determine the need for professionally supervised visitation. The Supervised Visitation Checklist (SVC) developed by Saini and Newman in 2014, was based on child custody research and consisted of checklist with categories of various factors related to adult and child behaviors, risk of harm, and child preferences that when tallied, result in a score of low, moderate, or high risk (Saini & Birnbaum, 2015). The study participants found the tool useful for recognizing risk factors and organizing information but many expressed concern that the tool did not allow for psychological or emotional abuse. Many felt that some factors should weigh more heavily than others when determining risk levels and that individuals would need a certain degree of knowledge and understanding of family law for the tool to be useful. The authors concluded that the SVC was most helpful as a supplement to other screening and assessment processes, including clinical judgment and legislated mandates, and provided a good list of risk factors to consider when determining whether or not professional supervision should be ordered (Saini & Birnbaum, 2015). It was challenging to determine the validity of the study. The participants were 15 judges from the United States and 63 professionals (mental health

professionals or attorneys) from Canada where court rules likely differ from those in the United States. No other demographics were included regarding the participants, their level of training in DV, or the context of their practices. Additionally, the professionals were grouped together and the ratio of attorneys to mental health professionals was not provided. These are two very different professions and they hold very different roles in family law cases therefore this is a significant omission. It was somewhat concerning that the article placed so much emphasis on identifying risk levels of families but included no discussion at all of what should be required of the professionals who would ultimately supervise their visitation. There seemed to be an assumption that higher-risk families would be safer under supervision but if the visitation provider or facility was not set up to address such a risk level, there could be a false sense of safety for professionals and clients.

Working With Batterers

I was unable to find any formal research specifically focused on the nature and context of interactions between professionals in the family law arena and men who batter, however, I did find a few articles alluding to some of the challenges and rewards of working with batterers.

Perpetrator treatment program facilitators compared results of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) of 46 group participants to their demonstrated behaviors over a two-year period (Bernard & Bernard, 1984). The men initially presented as socially engaged, remorseful, and eager to change their admittedly abusive ways. The facilitators referred to this presentation as Dr. Jekyll. As time progressed the men almost uniformly began to blame their victims and expressed strong feelings of masculine inadequacy, jealousy, and lack of trust in others. These Mr. Hyde behaviors were consistent with the MMPI profiles that reflected a male who, “was angry and irritable, erratic and unpredictable, and who has problems with impulse

control leading to asocial acting out,” (Bernard & Bernard, 1984, p. 545). The authors emphasized the importance of long-term treatment (with a male-female facilitator team) in order for therapists to move beyond the initial charm of Dr. Jekyll and to the revelation of Mr. Hyde. They suggested that confrontation is generally essential but is perhaps most effective when coming from other group members (Bernard & Bernard, 1984). This was an interesting attempt to quantify the reality of batterers’ attitudes and behaviors but it is difficult to know from the report whether or not negative behavior occurred due to decreased resistance to confrontation or actually in response to ongoing confrontation. In other words, did participation in the program itself lead to negative attitudes and behaviors? The report was very brief and did not provide sufficient information about the program practices or background.

In their qualitative study of how domestic violence counselors were impacted by their work, Iliffe and Steed (2000) used interpretive phenomenological analysis to identify a number of themes that arose from interviews with eighteen counselors (five male and 13 female) whose caseloads consisted of at least 50% perpetrators or victims of IPV. Their objectives were to explore how working with batterers and/or survivors impacted: the counselors’ sense of self, worldview, and psychological needs; what their particular concerns about their work were; and, how they coped. Themes that emerged were related to the initial impact of working with domestic violence, the impact of hearing traumatic material, changes to their personal cognitive schemas, challenges, burnout, and coping strategies. Most of the participants expressed having felt a loss of confidence when they initially began to work with this population and too much responsibility for the safety of women and children. They talked about the difficulties of respecting their clients because of their abusive behaviors or the decisions to stay in abusive relationships. Many described having experienced disturbing visual images as they listened to

horrific tales of abuse and most stated their world view had changed somewhat in response to this work, particularly with regard to issues of gender power and control. In regard to engaging with abusive men, most stated this was the most challenging aspect of their work and many reported having been threatened by a batterer at some point during their career. Interestingly, many stated that working on changing men's abusive behaviors was also the most stimulating aspect of their work. Participants identified debriefing with peers as the most helpful coping strategy and emphasized the need to talk about their experiences with others who understood the sociocultural complexities of domestic violence. Self-care, monitoring the numbers of DV cases, and focusing on client strengths was also helpful in avoiding burnout. Half of the participants also stated that participating in political activism regarding domestic violence was helpful (Iliffe & Steed, 2000). It appeared there was no distinction in the study design regarding the differences in working with batterers versus working with survivors. Such a distinction might have provided useful information relative to the themes identified.

In an article written specifically to help prepare female counselors for group work with male perpetrators of violence against women, Tyagi (2006) presented several challenges specifically related to gender and power. The author described her own experiences of co-facilitating all-male treatment groups for sex offender and batterers and her observations of other women in similar situations. Challenges included being the target of hostility and resentment related to negative perceptions of women, transference issues, bad relationship histories, and gender stereotyping (Tyagi, 2006). Additionally, female counselors had to, "use whatever power she has to establish for herself a position of leadership in the group, at the same time not use that power over group members since she is trying to model equitable relationships and power sharing" (Tyagi, 2006, p. 7), and be vigilant in understanding how gender and cultural identities

impacted all interactions with their clients. Recommendations for female counselors included: ensuring good supervision related to gender and male violence against women; establishing equitable co-gender facilitation situations; providing opportunities for peer support, debriefing, and sharing successes; generating organizational support and positive reinforcement; mentoring others; engaging in training and professional development; and, sociopolitical involvement (Tyagi, 2006).

Bahner and Berkel (2007) used the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to determine levels of burnout among 115 batterer-intervention program workers from 40 different agencies located within several mid-western states. Burnout was defined by the MBI as consisting of three main factors: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (PA) (Bahner & Berkel, 2007). The researchers used multiple regression analyses of respondents' scores with the following independent variables (identified in their literature review as predictive of burnout): socio-demographic and job settings; job-stress; social support; and, personality. While there was a significant correlation between job stress and higher levels of EE and DP, they found that their sample did not meet criteria for burnout in any of the three categories of the MBI. Interestingly, many of the workers scored high in the area of personal accomplishment (PA), which the authors suggested was compatible with the findings by Iliffe and Steed (2000) regarding the self-perceived rewarding aspect of working on an important social issue such as domestic violence (Bahner & Berkel, 2007).

Schrock attended weekly meetings of a men's batterer intervention program (BIP) over a three-year period to observe and document how notions of masculinity were constructed via interactions between and among the men and the group facilitators (Schrock & Padavic, 2007). The focus of this particular BIP was, "to undermine violent masculinity by teaching men how to

be egalitarian partners who took responsibility, used egalitarian language, and acknowledged their own and others' emotions," (Schrock & Padavic, 2007, p. 631). The group typically consisted of 10–18 men who had been convicted of domestic violence and were mandated to the six-month program or otherwise face incarceration. Group membership changed throughout the observation period as men completed and exited while new members entered. One female group facilitator was consistent throughout the three years of data collection. Three different male co-facilitators were present for approximately one year each. The researchers used ethnographic methods of concurrent data collection and analysis of field notes, memos, and transcripts of verbatim interactions during the weekly group meetings. They also reviewed the facilitators' handbook that outlined the program curriculum and goals. Grounded theory analysis revealed that the female facilitator more frequently bore the role of enforcer of rules, often using the tactic of humiliation or embarrassment for incorrect commentary such as not acknowledging one's responsibility in the violence (e.g., "she wouldn't get off my back") or using ownership language (e.g., "my wife"). The researchers found this to be effective in inducing compliance in that the men responded by changing their language to reflect the stated goals of responsibility and egalitarianism. However, the facilitators were not effective in inducing men to be vulnerable or empathetic. They noted that when emotionally challenging topics arose, the men tended to disengage or divert by changing the subject or making a joke. This often resulted in the facilitators' retreat and missed opportunities to challenge assumptions of entitlement, patriarchy, and sexism (Schrock & Padavic, 2007). The authors concluded that while the facilitators' handbook consisted of reasonable objectives towards helping men to change, the actual facilitators' interactions with the men often served to undermine those objectives. While the men may have learned to use language that indicated a sense of responsibility and egalitarian values,

they continued to resist efforts to explore emotions related to their behaviors. The authors recommended that evaluation of the success or failure of BIPs should include more in-depth explorations of what actually occurs within the groups (Schrock & Padavic, 2007). This study provided an excellent window into the world of batterers' intervention groups. Though it was based on only one program, Schrock spent a considerable amount of time observing and reported responses that resonated with my personal experiences of working with men who batter. Of course, he noted that he took minimal notes during the actual group so his memos would naturally include only (or primarily) those interactions that struck him as noteworthy. Without video or audio recording or the presence of a second observer, it is difficult to know what other themes might have arisen.

Borochowitz (2008) conducted in-depth interviews with 18 batterers to understand how they thought about their wives in relation to marriage and the use of violence. Grounded theory methodology revealed two specific foci: the idealized marital couple relationship and the betrayal of the changed relationship. The idealized couple relationship construct was employed by six of the men who seemed to view wives as subsumed into the husbands' reality. These men did not see their wives as independent, autonomous persons with their own needs and intentions. The betrayal construct was employed by 10 of the men who blamed the wives for betraying the role she had been assigned. These men believed that such betrayal warranted discipline. The researcher identified an overarching narrative among the men that upheld the expectation that they should be able to control their wives' behaviors by whatever means necessary. All of the men viewed themselves as victims of their wives antagonism (Borochowitz, 2008). This was a small study with a very homogenous group of men—Jewish husbands in Northern Israel—yet the narrative examples in the report were strikingly similar to the narratives I heard at the SVP

on a regular basis during intakes. Additionally, the attitudes demonstrated by these participants seemed to mirror the attitudes described by Bernard and Bernard (1984).

Saini, Black, et al. (2012) used a grounded theory approach to analyze transcripts from four focus groups conducted with 28 child protection workers regarding their experiences of working with high-conflict separating families. While the study did not focus specifically on families involved in domestic violence, such families are often the ones labeled as high-conflict by the court, child protection services, parenting evaluators and attorneys (Bancroft et al., 2012; Dalton, 1999; Stark, 2009). The data revealed a number of themes that demonstrated the workers' difficulties with these families such as the extra time they demanded, their ongoing state of crises, their manipulative behaviors, and their lack of awareness of the impact their behaviors had on their children. The workers expressed trepidation and a sense of feeling caught between the parties and the court. They consistently stated their desire for more training and collaboration with other professionals. The researchers found that even though this was a small sample from a single agency, there was no consensus among the workers interviewed as to what criteria defined high conflict. Additionally, participants disagreed regarding the overlap of domestic violence in these cases with some believing that high conflict behaviors were an extension of DV that existed in the couples prior to separation (Saini, Black, et al., 2012). The researchers utilized a semi-structured interview process during four, one-hour focus groups that allowed the workers to talk about their general experiences of working with high-conflict families. Individual interviews may have elicited additional information about their experiences and increased credibility particularly in regard to the participants' understanding of what constituted high-conflict. Further exploration of their understanding of that concept might have resulted in a more beneficial outcome for the participants.

Bailey, Eisikovits, and Buchbinder (2012) interviewed 15 male social workers about their experiences of working with men who battered. Using content analysis, the transcribed interviews were coded by each author to reach consensus on common themes that emerged. The data revealed two early challenges for the therapists—preconceived negative judgments regarding their clients' abusive behaviors and fear of alienation in a field firmly grounded in feminist values. Over time, the participants described their increased feelings of empathy for the men they were serving which in turn brought about feelings of guilt. Eventually, the therapists were able to intentionally navigate their discomfort with the similarities between themselves and their clients and clearly articulate their differences. This allowed them to move from their sense of shame about the masculinity related to domestic violence to instead, being able to embrace how they expressed their individual masculinity (Bailey et al., 2012). The results of this qualitative study were similar in many ways to the findings of Iliffe and Steed (2000) in that introductory work with batterers challenged core values and evoked personal reflection of one's own gendered assumptions.

To summarize, the literature review has outlined a family law system that highly values continued relationships between non-custodial fathers and their children. While understandable, this can be problematic when domestic violence is a factor. The research has demonstrated that battering does not necessarily cease upon separation and in fact might actually escalate. Supervised visitation has been designated as an intervention that courts can utilize to ensure safety during parent-child contact. Unfortunately, there are few states that require certification, training, or standards of service provision for visitation providers. This is concerning given that the literature reviewed above demonstrated the complex and multiple challenges of working with batterers. Many of the articles on supervised visitation refer to the Supervised Visitation Network

(SVN)—a national association for professional supervised visitation providers (Crook & Oehme, 2007; Maxwell & Oehme, 2001; Pearson & Thoennes, 2000; Saini, Van Wert, et al., 2012; Straus, 1995). The SVN has developed standards of practice for supervised visitation that members must agree to in order to join (<http://www.svnetwork.net>). Membership is voluntary and reasonably priced (currently \$125–\$175 per year) and the network website boasts a 24-hour training program and training manual available for purchase, however, neither are required for membership. A recent review of my state’s SVN chapter directory listed eleven members for the entire state and only four were located within the SVP jurisdictional region. Additionally, the directory page included the following disclaimer:

Names of independent service providers who belong to this Network are made available as a courtesy to those seeking services. Supervised Visitation Network neither regulates or monitors service providers and therefore cannot certify that those listed here operate in compliance with SVN Standards. (http://www.svnetwork.net/providers_disclaimer.asp)

A search of an online supervised visitation directory (<http://SVDirectory.com>) listed 46 providers in the same region. This implies that most professional visitation providers in this jurisdiction were operating absent any formal guidelines or standards of practice. Regardless, without state legislated guidelines, it is unclear as to how adherence to such standards would be monitored. The Safe Havens grant program developed Guiding Principles for their funded providers (see Appendix C), however, that funding is limited and only services provided using designated Safe Havens funds are held to those principles.

To date, research on supervised visitation has been primarily descriptive and focused on service provision. The problems of limited resources, lack of training, and limited capacity have been consistently highlighted. Additionally, it appears that the focus of service is generally limited to the actual visit and the interactions that occur within that time and space. This is concerning given that research regarding post-separation battering indicated that risks of stalking,

abduction, or lethality are often increased during child exchanges. Research on men who batter described their resistance to accepting responsibility for their behaviors, their insistence on blaming their victims for their problems, and the perceived threat to masculinity that was associated with separation from a partner and children. Considering the potential danger for battered mothers and their children by batterers who may view themselves as losing control of their families and the court's expectation that supervised visitation will provide safety for the families involved, it is concerning and surprising that we have not heard directly from the professionals positioned to intervene: the visitation staff. Supervised visitation professionals are in the unique position of witnessing and attending to incidental and ongoing battering in real time as they provide service to survivors, batterers, and children who are involved in custody disputes.

Phenomenological Framework

The exploratory nature of this particular study warranted the use of qualitative research methodology that allowed for a rich understanding of the phenomenon of directly confronting post-separation battering specifically for the purpose of increasing safety for survivors and their children. A qualitative approach allows for the development of rich descriptions of the participants' experiences, in their own words and from their own perspectives (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Smith, 2008). It gives room for reflexive storytelling and multiple perspectives that can deepen our understanding of an issue, activity, or event (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenology is rooted in the philosophy of the late Edmund Husserl and was developed in response to the scientism of the late 19th century (Polkinghorne, 1983). It is an approach to qualitative research that identifies common descriptors of an experience or phenomenon as expressed by individuals who experienced it, with the goal of illustrating the

essence of that experience (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). It is the study of lived experiences. Husserl believed that only when we consciously reflect on an experience do we become aware of our understanding of it and its relationship to us (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). For example, a woman may walk up the same flight of stairs to her office several times a week but only in intentionally reflecting upon that particular act and then describing it can we begin to understand the act's function and its impact on her. Does she view the act as welcomed movement? Does the ascent cause anxiety? Does she consider whatever is awaiting her at the top? Is it easy? Painful? All of these possibilities are based upon this particular woman's particular experience of this particular staircase. If we were to then ask her coworkers to describe their experiences of the same flight of stairs, we would likely get some unique and similar answers. We could begin to piece together the commonalities among the descriptions to come up with a composite description of what these employees experienced when they walk up these stairs and how they experienced it. However, we would likely come up with a very different composite description if we were to interview several individuals who walked up a different flight of steps under different circumstances, for instance, tourists walking up the steps to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. There is no single objective way of describing the experience of ascending a staircase that applies to all individuals in all contexts. However, despite individual variations of the experience, it is likely that thoughtful analysis would result in a description of ascending a staircase that would resonate with all.

Other 20th century philosophers expanded upon Husserl's descriptive, or eidetic phenomenology. Heidegger added the element of interpretation (Polkinghorne, 1983; Smith et al., 2009). In hermeneutic phenomenology, the analysis is a "dynamic interplay" (Creswell, 2013, p. 79) among the various activities of the research and includes the political, historical, and

cultural contexts of the phenomenon, of the person describing it, and of the researcher. Returning to the stairs example, how might the experience be different for an African American employee in 1940 prohibited from using the elevator at her work place? How might the descriptive language change if the interviewer was an immigrant? Would a White researcher with a mid-western upbringing interpret the responses differently than would an immigrant researcher from an urban background? The hermeneutic researcher takes on the task of making meaning of the research participant's meaning making based upon their locations in time and space (Polkinghorne, 1983).

Descriptive phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology share many similarities, however, their underlying philosophies differ with regard to their approach to analysis and their search for reality (Lavery, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Polkinghorne, 1983). Husserl emphasized the importance of the researcher bracketing off or setting aside personal values, assumptions, and experiences in order to avoid influencing the data (Creswell, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1983). In contrast, Heidegger believed it impossible for the researcher to separate oneself from the research and was in fact central to the interaction. While Husserl sought to develop phenomenological methodology as a way of scientifically validating the essence of human experience, Heidegger believed it impossible to describe such an essence because it constantly shifts in response to context and interaction between participant and investigator (Lavery, 2003).

It is usually difficult to determine the underlying phenomenological approach when reading a completed study but it is important that the researcher has a clear understanding of the differences (Lopez & Willis, 2004), particularly with regard to the role of the researcher. The hermeneutic approach would be appropriate if the focus of this research was more specific, such

as an examination of actual interactions between staff and clientele rather than my focus on the overall experience of intervening at the SVP. I have elected to use the eidetic approach because despite my personal knowledge of the SVP clientele, staff, policies, and procedures, I was deeply curious about what stood out the strongest for the program staff. This approach de-emphasizes the goal of interpretation and instead seeks to simply describe a phenomenon. I know that I cannot completely bracket my experiences (nor do I think that's ever truly possible), however, I took steps to identify my biases in order to more easily set them aside while exploring the data. I've explained my role as the researcher and as Program Director of the SVP. I was interviewed by a colleague using the guiding questions I developed for this project, which I then transcribed, analyzed, and summarized for inclusion in the overall analysis. The context of this particular experience was very clearly defined for the individuals involved and while of course they each entered into it with their own social, political, and cultural histories, their common experiences illustrated the essence of intervening in post-separation battering.

Methods

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to illustrate the experience of intervening in post-separation battering in the context of a specialized supervised visitation program. Data were collected via in-depth individual interviews with women who were previously employed at the SVP to answer the following research question:

How did the staff of a specialized supervised visitation and exchange program experience the assigned task of increasing safety for survivors of intimate partner violence and their children while decreasing opportunities for further battering?

This study focused on staff perceptions of intervening with batterers. It was also designed to illuminate the need for specialized training of visitation supervisors and add to the literature on post-separation battering, supervised visitation, and working with men who batter.

Rationale for Choosing Phenomenology

Phenomenology was appropriate for this research for a number of reasons. First, the data were collected from participants who shared a unique activity within a specific context and setting (Creswell, 2013; Englander, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). Second, phenomenological methodology provided a richness of description that illustrated the essence of this particular experience—the task of directly interfering with behaviors associated with post-separation battering—that has not been previously studied. Third, the phenomenological approach provided a rich, detailed illustration of post-separation battering from a new perspective—that of the intervener. And finally, on a more personal note, my own experiences at the SVP not only opened my eyes and my mind to the realities of post-separation battering and intervention but also opened up numerous professional opportunities for me as well and ultimately led me to

pursue this doctorate. This approach allowed me to honor that experience by giving voice to those who shared it with me.

Context and Setting

The phenomenon I studied was the intervention aspect of a specially designed supervised visitation program (SPV) that was in operation from January 2005 through December 2012. This particular program was intentionally designed to provide supervised visitation and safe exchanges to families where domestic violence between the parents was the primary reason for referral. The program policies and procedures were developed in collaboration with representatives from the family law division of the local superior court and the local domestic violence advocacy community to meet the unique safety needs of survivors and their children post-separation. The facility was designed with numerous safety features such as electronically locked doors, emergency signal lighting, separate entrances and parking areas, panic buttons, audio monitoring equipment, and security cameras.

Criteria for acceptance into the program were two-fold: (a) one parent was in fear of or needed protection from the other parent and (b) the child or children had to be living with one of the parents. In other words, the program did not require a criminal finding of DV nor did it provide services for children in foster care or state-appointed guardianship placements due to allegations of child abuse or neglect. While many of the families using the service were also involved with criminal court or child protection services, most were referred to the SVP during the civil protection order process (see Appendix B). Domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs) are a civil legal remedy designed to provide safety for individuals (and their children, if needed) when there is reason to fear another individual due to allegations of domestic violence. DVPOs are initiated by individuals seeking protections and require a lesser burden of proof than

is mandated for criminal proceedings. Judicial officers can include conditions and/or exceptions to the DVPO such as temporary visitation plans, DV or substance abuse assessments, and/or enrollment in a batterers intervention program (Fleury-Steiner et al., 2016; Logan & Walker, 2009).

Prior to acceptance into the SVP, in-person intake interviews were conducted with each parent to determine why they were referred to the program and what their specific safety concerns were. A primary goal of the intake process was to be as clear as possible about the program policies and procedures with all clientele. The intake interview included a tour of the center and a thorough review of the visiting parent guidelines that provided a list of prohibited behaviors and directives regarding where (and where not) to park, staggered arrival and departure procedures, and an overview of the SVP's policies related to safety and service provision. Additionally, each parent received a sample copy of the Observation Notes form and a welcome packet that included tips on how to have successful visits, what to do if they needed to cancel, inclement weather policies, etc. Visiting parent intakes were always conducted first to ensure that they understood and agreed to the rules and expectations and signed the Visiting Parent Service Agreement (see Appendix C). Once that was completed, the custodial parent intake was conducted followed by a child orientation for children two years old or older. The SVP accepted children ages 0-18, however the vast majority of the kids that came to the center were between two and 12 years old with most of those in the four to 12-year-old age range. Children were never forced to visit and were allowed to end their visits at any time if they felt frightened or uncomfortable. The child orientation provided an opportunity for kids to explore the visitation room, gain some familiarity with the program staff, ask questions, and set up safety signals if they chose to do so. Safety signals (such as tugging their left ear or making a peace

sign with their fingers) were a way for children to safely let the staff know that they wanted a break or an intervention to occur.

Fees were paid by the visiting parent and determined on a sliding scale basis (as low as \$2 per visit), visits were offered weekly for one hour, and professional interpreters were provided as needed at no additional cost to the clients. The SVP was open five days per week for the first six years and then reduced to four days per week during the final two years due to decreased funding. The program was initially fully funded by a grant from the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women and later (as federal funds decreased) funding was provided by municipal and state coffers and supplemented by private and non-profit organizations and donors. During the course of its eight years of operation, the program served over 400 families in more than 20 languages.

Other than the Program Director, all staff worked on a part-time basis of 8-24 hours per week. Of the sixteen individuals employed over the eight years (including myself):

- Eight were also employed elsewhere as domestic violence victims' advocates, one as a perpetrator treatment provider, one as sexual assault victims' legal advocate, and one as a mental health therapist.
- Five were enrolled in graduate school (law, social work, counseling, psychology).
- Five employees were bilingual English/Spanish and one was trilingual English/Mandarin/Cantonese.
- Fifteen were female and one was male.
- Two were employed at the program throughout its eight year entirety, one for at least five years, two for at least four years, two for at least three years, one for at least two

years, and four for at least one year. Two quit within the first three months of employment and two were terminated during the six-month probation period.

Employees received training in program procedures, conflict de-escalation, working with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, sexual abuse grooming behaviors, normal child development, secondary trauma and self-care, and working with interpreters. Several employees attended or participated in local and national grant-funded training events on issues related to supervised visitation and DV. Those whose schedules allowed them to do so were expected to attend the weekly two-hour case consult meetings where emerging or ongoing safety issues and/or training needs were identified and discussed. The site was recognized as a model program by the federal grantor and as such, hosted multiple visits by other grantees from across the United States. Unfortunately, despite being at capacity with an ongoing waitlist of potential clients, the program closed in December 2012 due to persistent insurmountable funding challenges.

Participant Selection

I used a purposeful sampling strategy to select participants who worked at the SVP for a minimum of one year and were able to attend at least 50% of the program's weekly case consult meetings during their employment. I used these two criteria because (a) staff appointments were part-time so a year of employment would ensure enough time to have been fully trained and exposed to multiple interactions with the clientele, and (b) those that were able to attend the weekly consult meetings were expected to monitor or assist those who could not (due to conflicting schedules). In other words, consult-meeting attendees were tasked with a higher level of responsibility to adhere to the program's philosophy of service. Of the 16 employees, 10 (including myself) met the required criteria.

Upon approval of my research proposal by my dissertation committee and the Antioch University Seattle Institutional Review Board, I contacted all eligible participants via email to invite them to participate—all accepted the invitation. I then sent consent forms (see Appendix E), demographic information forms (see Appendix F), proposed interview appointment dates and times, and the research question. The interviews took place at times and locations convenient to each participant. Skype was used to interview three participants who no longer lived in this state. All interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed verbatim.

Data Collection

In-depth interviews were conducted with the goal of eliciting rich descriptions of the lived experience of intervening or directly challenging attempts at coercive control or post-separation battering, and how the participants were impacted by that experience. I used a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix C) to inquire about the experiences of professional visitation staff who were required to directly intervene in situations where abusive men were attempting to undermine, intimidate, or exert control over the mothers of their children, their children, or staff members while using the visitation services. Additionally, to collect the group demographics of the SVP clientele, I reviewed all archived files to determine the number of families served, the referral source, and the gender and race of visiting and custodial parents.

Method of Analysis

I used the analysis procedures outlined by Moustakas (1994) to identify common themes of participant experiences:

- Step 1. Using a phenomenological approach, obtain a full description of your own experience of the phenomenon.
- Step 2. From the verbatim transcript of your experience complete the following steps:
 - a. Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience
 - b. Record all relevant statements

- c. List each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience
- d. Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes
- e. Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a description of the textures (*what* was experienced) of the experience. Include verbatim examples
- f. Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a description of the structures (*how* it was experienced) of your experience
- g. Construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of your experience

Step 3. From the verbatim transcript of the experience of each of the other co-researchers, complete the above steps, a through g

Step 4. From the individual textural-structural descriptions of all co-researchers' experiences, construct a composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122)

In order to bring my potential biases into awareness, I was interviewed first by a colleague using the guiding questions I developed for this project. I transcribed, analyzed, and summarized the data from that interview for inclusion in the overall analysis. I created a table in Microsoft Word to help track and highlight quotes of interest, break down into units of meanings, and sort into three general categories of key words and ideas: job/self-related perspectives/qualities, client-related perspectives/qualities, and intervention-related perspectives/qualities. Next I reduced and clustered these into themes that guided the development of the textural, structural, and textural-structural description.

I then interviewed the participants and using verbatim transcripts, I repeated the steps listed above to develop a textural-structural description for each (Appendix A). Each participant was invited to review the composite description of her individual interview to confirm whether or not I had captured the essence of the experience. After all participants approved their individual textural-structural summaries, I used a similar table to sort the key words and ideas of each one to develop a composite summary that captured elements of the phenomenon that were

common to all. I developed a list of themes that emerged throughout the process and clustered and reduced those to key concepts that were experienced by three or more participants. I sent the completed composite description and list of themes to the participants for review. Direct quotes from participant interviews were then used to demonstrate and support the themes that emerged for inclusion in the final report.

Role and Background of Researcher

I have been involved in the field of domestic violence since the spring of 1998 when I signed up for a 50-hour training to volunteer at a local domestic violence victim advocacy program. During my seven years of volunteering, I answered a 24-hour crisis hotline, facilitated several survivor support groups, attended court hearings with survivors, conducted intakes, facilitated parenting classes focused on children's experiences of domestic violence, and lobbied for or against relevant legislative changes. I also became very interested in nonviolent conflict resolution and peace activism during this time and received extensive training in conciliation, mediation, domestic mediation, and facilitation as a volunteer for a local non-profit dispute resolution center. This led me to become a volunteer for the Alternatives to Violence Project where I have facilitated three-day experiential workshops in two men's prisons for several years. I earned a bachelor's degree in Social Sciences in 2002.

In 2003, I was hired as Project Coordinator of the federally funded grant program to plan and implement a supervised visitation and exchange program specifically designed for families referred due to domestic violence. In this position, I developed strong working relationships with court representatives and victim service providers. After 18 months of planning, the SVP opened and I moved into the position of Program Director. I participated in numerous multidisciplinary think tanks, topic-specific round table discussions, and local and national conferences with

nationally recognized leaders in the field of domestic violence. I also received extensive training in the areas of post-separation battering and access to children, DV in the context of family law, and batterer intervention.

I completed a master's degree in Conflict Analysis and Resolution in 2005 and began speaking publically about what I was seeing at the visitation program. I became involved in several local work groups and projects focused on family law issues and perpetrator treatment. I realized we (the visitation program staff) were witnessing behaviors that no one else saw because of our ongoing association with the whole family. I was often frustrated at the lack of understanding of domestic violence that I was seeing among various providers and decided to return to school for a doctorate in clinical psychology in order to pursue research and increase my credibility among professionals in the family law arena. I co-facilitated a domestic violence perpetrator treatment program for three years as part of my clinical training.

During my clinical internship, I conducted or participated in several mental health evaluations ordered by the family court for mothers who had petitioned for protection orders. These cases were very concerning in that they included numerous examples of missed opportunities to identify and articulate the impact of battering and thereby renewed my interests in increasing awareness among professionals. I have also been frustrated at what seems to be resistance to simply naming the behaviors as abusive because doing so might imply a loss of objectivity when in fact, thoroughly evaluating evidence and contextual information leads to good decision-making. My personal opinion is that with proper training, clarity in one's professional role and expectations, and good descriptive documentation of concerning behaviors with solid explanations as to why they are concerning will result in increased safety for women, children, and men. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lack of awareness among family law

professionals regarding the impact of non-physical coercive controlling behaviors and attitudes that persist beyond separation, divorce, and family law proceedings.

Researcher Assumptions

Based on my personal and professional experiences as a feminist, an advocate, a mediator, the SVP Program Director, a perpetrator treatment provider, and a budding clinical psychologist, I entered into this research project with the following assumptions:

1. Some batterers are extremely persistent, creative, and blatant in their efforts to maintain control and exert their perceived rights.
2. There is a lack of awareness and/or acknowledgement among family law professionals and other service providers of the impact of battering and how some batterers continue their abuse via their right to access their children.
3. Battered women are expected to comply with and support court- and socially sanctioned parenting provisions regardless of the harmful or threatening behaviors of their batterers or their legitimate fears for themselves or their children.
4. Given the three assumptions above, it is extremely challenging for survivors with children safely separate from the damaging control of their batterers, and
5. Interveners are tasked with a very difficult assignment when expected to directly interrupt battering in real time in order to provide safety of DV survivors and their children.

Ethical Considerations

As stated above, the SVP closed in December 2012 and therefore all client data have been archived. This dissertation does not include any information about specific individuals using the program. Group demographics were collected (Appendix B) to provide an overall

depiction of the numbers, gender, and referral sources of clients served. The unique nature and status of this particular visitation program rendered it easily identifiable to others who have worked in or explored the field of supervised visitation and domestic violence. Therefore, I have refrained from using the actual program name or its location. Consent forms for the interviews fully explained the possibility of identification and the ability to opt out at any time as well as the fact that direct quotes will be used for illustrative purposes in the final report. Participants were asked to select a pseudonym that was used throughout the interview transcripts, analysis, and final report. Data from the interviews were aggregated to present an overall picture of the experiences described and individual quotes were used to illustrate the findings. The participants were fully aware of my background and involvement in the SVP. I was their immediate supervisor and it is possible that some chose not to disclose aspects of their experiences they believed could undermine or compromise our relationship. However, the day-to-day operation of the SVP was conducted on the basis of my training in conflict management and facilitation and our collective feminist values. We regularly participated in peer-to-peer debriefing and consultation, we strived for consensus on most programmatic decisions, mistakes were addressed as systemic issues rather than as individual failures, and we held yearly retreats to clarify our program objectives and celebrate our work together. I believed each has had sufficient time away from the SVP and was able to talk about it objectively and reflectively. I trusted them to tell me if they were in any way uncomfortable with any part of the interview. I addressed this in the invitation to participate and encouraged questions, suggestions, and concerns regarding any potential dilemmas prior to signing the consent form.

Trustworthiness of Study

As recommended for qualitative research methods, I utilized the concepts of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994) to ensure trustworthiness. In order to address credibility and account for my personal biases, a colleague interviewed me using my semi-structured interview schedule. I transcribed and analyzed that interview for inclusion in the overall analysis. Additionally, after my initial analysis of the individual transcribed interviews, participants were invited to review my summaries of their individual interviews to ensure consensus of accuracy. The interview participants were also invited to review the composite description for accuracy and completeness. Dependability was established by clearly documenting my procedures throughout the entire project. I established confirmability by creating an audit trail that will enable others to understand how I arrived at my conclusions. To achieve the goal of transferability, I worked to develop thick, rich descriptions of my findings in order to assist my readers in understanding how my assertions might apply to their own work.

Limitations

The SVP primarily worked with heterosexual couples where the male partner was the identified aggressor. This is likely due to two factors: (a) statistically, male-on-female violence still represents the majority of domestic violence cases that result in serious injury or death (U. S. Department of Justice, 2012), and (b) because of the historical denial of rights and privileges to same-sex couples, they have not historically turned to family court for resolutions. Additionally, this particular SVP was developed to serve only families where the children resided with a parent who was the victim or abuser of the other parent. In other words, the program did not serve families in dependency court or who were utilizing kinship care. This is atypical, in that most

programs accept cases from multiple sources and therefore, are often faced with the challenge of shifting their function and purpose dependent on individual family circumstances (Saini, Van Wert, et al., 2012). The experiences represented in this study may not reflect those of providers who are not specifically trained in or focused on domestic violence.

Presentation of the Data

Introduction

The participants in this study were asked to describe their experiences of having to intervene at a specialized, DV-focused supervised visitation program. Prior to each interview they were reminded of the SVP mission statement that defined the program objectives of increasing safety for battered adults and children while decreasing opportunities for further abuse. I asked them to describe the overall experience of intervening for safety at the SVP rather than to describe specific interventions that occurred during individual visits. After listening to the audio recordings of each interview several times and then reading and rereading each transcript, three main categories of focus emerged: The challenges of the task of intervening for safety, the internal and external resources that were helpful, and the rewards of having worked at the SVP. I identified several themes within each of these categories that I have expanded upon below.

Description of Participants

Due to the small pool of participants from which to draw and the recognizable nature of this particular program, participant demographics were aggregated in the figure below, which includes my information as well. The participants were not informed regarding who else had agreed to be interviewed and I assured them that no one other than my committee members would have access to the interview recordings or transcripts. At the time of the interviews five were still working in the field of domestic violence, three were small business owners, and two were employed at agencies not specific to DV.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Characteristics	N = 10
Race	
White	6
Non-White	4
Language	
English Only	6
Bilingual	3
Multilingual	1
Education	
AA or Technical	3
BA or BS	4
MA, MS, or Above	4
Length of Employment at SVP	
1-2 Years	1
2-3 Years	1
3-4 Years	3
5-6 Years	2
7-8 Years	3
Age at Time of Interview	
30-39	4
40-49	3
50+	3

Composite Description of the Phenomenon

After creating the textural-structural composite of each participant's lived experience of intervening at the SVP (see Appendix A), I combined them all and then eliminated any sentences or ideas that did not seem true for all participants. I clustered the remaining sentences into key ideas and statements to create the following composite description. While I wrote this from the collective perspective for added impact and clarity, it does not contain direct participant quotes. Instead, I used imaginative variation to illustrate the essence of the experience.

The task of intervening at the SVP was multifaceted and nuanced because we were serving survivors, batterers, and children during a time when they were likely to be at

increased risk of danger. We wanted to provide a physically and emotionally safe place for survivors but also needed it to be a family-friendly environment for kids. We had to be persistently vigilant about watching for manipulation and potential threats to safety in and around the building. Even though most of the time things went pretty smoothly, there was always an air of tension and high emotional energy there—like things could go awry at any moment. It was difficult to see how scared some of the women and children were and to watch what they were going through both at the center and in their daily lives as a result of battering. We tried to be helpful and supportive to the fathers when we could but some of the men were non-receptive or intentionally non-cooperative. We knew interventions were necessary and important so we did them despite how intrusive and uncomfortable it may have felt. Direct interventions with fathers during visits were nerve-wracking because we could never know whether it would go smoothly or explode into something awful. We had to be aware of so many things at the same time—what we needed to say, how to say it so as not to make things worse, what the response might be, how we would get the kids out quickly if necessary, who else was in the space, etc.—all while trying to protect the children from exposure to negative outbursts. We saw that kids often thought the intervention was their fault and it was discouraging that some of the dads seemed to intentionally push us to the point of intervention anyway. We had to maintain a calm and non-threatening demeanor to show that we were in control of the situation—even when inside we could feel our hearts pounding and pulses rising. Knowing the facility was equipped with numerous safety features was helpful and there was always someone there to back us up so we felt confident in doing what was necessary. The camaraderie and mutual support among our team made the work enjoyable and it helped that we could figure out together how to do our work more effectively. It felt good to work in an environment that promoted critical thinking and collaboration. Extensive training and clear and thoughtful guidelines about what was expected of staff and clients were extremely important for doing good work. Witnessing the complexity of domestic violence on an ongoing basis was really hard but knowing we were part of the larger effort to address post-separation battering felt rewarding. We are proud of the work we did there.

The composite description—or essence—of the experience included the elements of the experience that were experienced by all ten of the participants. Individual themes were only included in the presentation when they were true for three or more participants. These themes are presented below.

The Challenges of Intervening for Safety

In their descriptions of the challenges of their work at the SVP, the participants talked about three specific areas of difficulty. These were direct intervention, interacting with batterers, and the painful illumination of the impact and insidiousness of battering.

Direct intervention. All of the participants discussed the experience of directly interrupting behaviors that were prohibited by the SVP guidelines. Four aspects of these challenges emerged: Preparing for the worst, staying calm and in control, shielding the children, and discomfort.

Preparing for the worst. During the interviews, descriptions of interventions frequently alluded to a sense of impending disaster. There was a feeling of increased alertness and responsibility they described when participants spoke about this aspect of their work that required them to be ready for anything.

It's kind of just never knowing what to expect. And knowing in the back of your mind, that it could be something that could become really dangerous, really quickly and always being aware of that. So that makes it hard. It does. It makes it really challenging. *Jill*

I had to have quick thinking. And also be compassionate but remember why they were there. So you can't just focus on the person that you are seeing right now, you had to also be aware of where they are coming from, have an awareness of potential danger. *Alli*

It could go, you know . . . we had some pretty high risk guys so there was always that, you know, is he going to try to run away with the child? Is he going to try to leave? Is he going to try to block me as I'm taking the kid, the child out the door? Especially when we had those kinds where the children did not want to see them. But, sometimes they felt like they had to go in. And we knew that if we tried to remove the child, they were going to get really upset. So, there was always, there was that constant fear of, am I going to be able to keep the child safe? Am I going to be able to keep mom safe? *Anna*

I tended to pick and choose my words very carefully because I didn't want to trigger or get them upset with me. So that's the main thing but as it went along it got a little bit easier but still a little bit concerning too that they're going to blow up if I say something that they happen to not like. *Helen*

It didn't matter we could be working with somebody and getting along with them and having a decent relationship for a year and then one thing wouldn't go their way and they'd just come at us. *Lea*

Many of the participants described the physiological elements of this anticipation as well and some stated that they could feel it again as they described it to me.

I guess I would describe the sensation as feeling hot myself, because I knew that something was coming . . . I'm feeling tense, I'm feeling nervous so I'm feeling hot and flushed and there were times where I could also feel myself stutter because I was so nervous and trying to intervene. *Helen*

My heart would beat, it would pound. I wouldn't be relaxed. I would be like kind of stiff, and you know, hyper-vigilant—that's the word I was looking for. So like hyper-vigilant . . . sometimes I'd get red, my face would turn red. *Jill*

Yes, lots of physical sensations. Tightness in my shoulders, neck, and jaw. Sweaty palms. Heart racing. I can feel it now like it's happening. Ugh. *Zara*

Like your hair sort of sticks up a little bit, your body temperature either drops or rises, depending, and you also hear your blood pounding in your ears a little bit. *Maria*

Staying calm and in control. Participants described needing to maintain an appearance of being in control when facing a potentially angry father. They felt that doing so was imperative to keeping things from escalating and to establishing their authority in the room.

It often felt pretty emotionally charged in that room. And it felt harder to intervene sometimes even if, hopefully, it didn't look like that on the outside because the tension was high and we were involved. *Zara*

Just as his behavior and anger or tone is getting higher, I keep level and even and calm so he doesn't feel like he has to go up, up, up. 'Cause I'm getting a little bit more tense and angry and he is, that isn't going to help anybody. *Sarah*

There were times where it was scary to intervene. But, you had to not show it. You had to stay really calm. We had to always stay really calm. And never allow that fear to be transparent for them to see it because the minute we would, the minute we showed that we were scared, then I think things would have gotten completely out of control. *Anna*

Shielding the children. This theme came up multiple times throughout many of the interviews. The participants described a strong desire to keep kids shielded from their fathers' negative reactions to intervention. Some said they thought that some fathers pushed boundaries just because they knew the SVP wanted to protect the children from exposure to any harmful behaviors or comments.

And I was always aware of what was going on with the kids . . . because one thing I think people forget is that when you do intervene, you're changing the child's perception of

what's happening in the visit too. And a lot of times kids would either get really defensive on behalf of their dads, or they would get scared, or they would think they did something wrong and so just having to be really aware of all those dynamics that are happening while you're in the room. *Jill*

Because interventions affected the kids, because the kids felt like, "Oh I did something wrong, this lady is scolding my dad." *Imani*

I think I always wanted to do it in a way that it wasn't going to upset the kids or either scare them or they'd be upset. Because all in all, especially with the younger children, it's still their dad. And so I know when I intervene that the children's best interest always came real quick because I didn't want them upset, that something had to be changed because odds are they wouldn't even understand what I'm even talking about. *Sarah*

I felt like children always internalized it as their fault, no matter what we did to try to make it not. *Chloe*

Discomfort. Participants described how uncomfortable it was to have to intervene and how it put them in somewhat of a punitive or controlling position when they really just wanted the visits to go smoothly and safely.

Sometimes I felt nervous and maybe not intimidated, but sometimes I felt like I had to keep more distance between me and the batterer to intervene. When I felt when he was too close to me, I felt physically like I had to be a bit farther away. And it made me feel uncomfortable sometimes, just like a little nervous. *Alli*

It was really uncomfortable. Unnatural. *Chloe*

It felt intrusive. I didn't wanna be the bad guy in there. *Imani*

I'm not a very confrontational person and I hate explaining myself but it was the afterward part. I kind of dreaded those conversations. Especially those repeat offenders, because they knew what they did was wrong and they still kept trying to challenge it anyway, so that's kind of . . . ugh. *Helen*

Interacting with batterers. Several of the participants stated that many if not most of the men using the program were cooperative and compliant most of the time. However, they knew the men were predictably unpredictable and they had to be prepared to respond accordingly. Three themes arose in the area of interacting with batterers. These were manipulation, mean, and scary.

Manipulation. The participants described interactions where they felt the men were intentionally taking advantage of their discomfort or trying to covertly get their way.

To intervene in someone's parenting moment is going to be uncomfortable, no matter what. To intervene with the batterer is even more difficult because the batterer has a way of, I believe, flipping it to be, you know, the intervener's fault even when he or she knows that they're the person who has caused the issue. So, I felt like even the act of intervening was used as a battering tactic in some ways. *Chloe*

Just pushing the limits when they knew it wasn't okay to be either holding them on their lap or letting them jump off the couch, things that weren't safe for the child and yet you would ask them to stop and they would just continue anyway. You knew you were tested. *Sarah*

It was just so interesting to see those kinds of behaviors just playing out and played out before my eyes. And seeing you know, the tactics that they try to use to get what they want and if they couldn't get it then they think about different tactics to try to get me to do what they want. It was just very interesting to see the wheels that were going in their heads and what I knew was coming and then expecting that it was coming. *Helen*

Knowing I had to go in and face somebody and tell them you can't do this anymore or we're not gonna serve you anymore or we had to report you for something, I remember having to kind of gear up and really play it out in my head, how is this conversation gonna go, um, and be prepared for somebody to be really upset... I had to get really grounded in what I needed to do so that I couldn't be swayed from it. Because you kind of had to gear up knowing they were gonna try to talk you out of it. *Lea*

Mean. Unfortunately, it appeared that some of the men were just mean. Some of the participants saw this in terms of racist and/or sexist behaviors. Most described this in terms of an unwillingness to accept responsibility for their behaviors.

If you come from another country or if you are from another culture, they looked at you like you were dumb or something. Some of them . . . would just roll their eyes or give you that look like, "Don't even talk to me." *Imani*

Sometimes there'd be somebody that treated you badly every single time and you just had to be pleasant and smile. *Lea*

They were already so pissed about having to be there that if we [the program staff] were mean or anything else, it was going to reflect on mom. Because they were very good at blaming the moms for their actions. *Anna*

It's all about victim blaming. It's all about her fault or you know all about that and it's just . . . even after two years, it's still blaming and that to me is just so interesting, that their mind set never changes. *Helen*

Scary. Several of the participants described times when SVP clients caused them to feel fearful or vulnerable.

Because I hadn't been in situations where I was in a small area and you're locked in and knowing what these men are capable of. I always felt I had help very quickly if I needed it because of the safe situation but yeah, it was . . . when you know they're two inches away from you and you're trying to do something quick. What they're capable of doing and they could do it if they chose to. *Sarah*

But, you know, when you're in that space and in that energetic space, it's really difficult. And I think, you know, batterers are about power and control so sometimes there was this energy from them that just felt scary. *Zara*

I was asked before if you are scared of these men. And I said well, not really but there are some who I just wondered what they are capable of? And I didn't want them to know what I drove or maybe they might retaliate. *Imani*

He kind of freaked me out because he would say things that made me know that he was thinking about me when he wasn't there, which is kind of creepy. I didn't like that. *Jill*

Painfully illuminating. Throughout the interviews, participants described how witnessing the complexity of battering had expanded their perspectives of domestic violence. This expansion emerged in two ways: A taste of battering and compassion.

A taste of battering. Working with families week after week at the SVP allowed the participants an opportunity to see and feel battering vicariously and in real time. Several expressed frustration with how profoundly the survivors using the program were negatively impacted by battering that no one else seemed to notice.

After doing this job, I see how smooth they can be. How easy you can get just persuaded, conned, something slipped by, and how slick they can be. *Sarah*

When you had to intervene though you got a whiff, you know, you got a taste of it, I guess. And then you could also see how the kids would interact in that. You know, you got an idea of like, almost as if the intervention was a glimpse into an abusive interaction

between the batterer and someone and then that with kids would play into what was pretty similar maybe to what it would look like at their home. *Chloe*

I also remember being really impacted by just the new partners for the batterers and how kind of gross and quickly—it's just the way that sexism operates that I could clearly see while working at that center. Again, the socio-economic piece, like, the non glamorous struggle of the survivors to be over—the overall majority of the time and batterers finding new jobs quickly, finding new partners quickly, you know, having people who could cook the meals that they will bring to their child for them quickly and that was just overwhelming. *Zara*

I just thought oh my God . . . that's the reality of domestic violence... it was like a cartoon show to some degree, the immaturity and, but yet it wasn't enough for him to get custody. He had to totally destroy her. *Lea*

Compassion. Several of the participants described feeling a great deal of compassion for the women, children, and men they served at the SVP. This was very impactful for some of them.

At first I used to come home and just start crying about the whole situation and about the stories and about the kids. And about, I could not believe certain things could happen and how difficult it might have been for her and the children so it made me feel really sad and after time, it made me stronger and it made me see that things sometimes may not appear to be how they are. *Alli*

Knowing what could happen and seeing . . . I think it was probably the first time that, or one of the first times that my privilege and my lovely upbringing and my safe family was so stark to me. Like, oh my God, I have never been this child. *Maria*

I think I thought they were just group of monsters when I sat in shelter and heard story after story and then you meet one broken man after another. Many of them seemed to have, to be heartbroken over it and to have good hearts but have their own demons, you know. The whole picture becomes quite a bit more complicated. *Zara*

It's not okay. But, they are human beings too. You need to be somewhat empathetic. Not that we are to forgive what you have done, but I want you to see—if you can see when you go deep down—why is it that you're doing it. How was your life? Who did what to you? *Imani*

I guess just the nature of telling someone to stop in front of their children is gonna feel that way. I don't know . . . I think it would be really uncomfortable even for people that don't batter, right? Like any of us as an adult being told you're doing something wrong in front of your children . . . it's gonna feel yucky. *Jill*

They [the survivors] were scared. But most of them, they were just so scared. *Lea*

External and Internal Resources

The participants described several resources that they found made it easier to do this challenging work. These resources fell into four categories, two of which were external (program structure and the team) and two that were internal (hope and necessity of intervention).

Program structure. The participants appreciated the clarity and intentionality of the SVP's policies and procedures in that they made it easier to carry out the task of intervening. They also felt the physical safety features of the building increased their sense of safety while there.

There were clear guidelines that everyone knew and that there were no excuses made for not living up to those guidelines. Including us, right? Staff also had guidelines and expectations and we would be constantly reminding ourselves and each other about what those guidelines and rules were. *Maria*

The environment, the way that it was set up, it was very safe. I knew that my co-workers had my back and they were all aware of what was going on and *we* were all aware of what's going on, so we are able to play it out with each other... I can't say that I was ever physically afraid when I was working there because everything was set up so nicely. *Helen*

It helped to have the structure, the rules, the fact that I knew that there was something that would happen, that there's other people there also watching. *Chloe*

I think those protocols that were in place and the technology that we had and the procedures that we had helped me feel safer and I think it helped the survivors feel safer cuz we showed them and told them about it. I think it also gave the message to the guys that we're serious about this so don't mess around with it . . . the fact that we had the pagers, the little beepers, and the fact that we had it miked, and the fact that the doors were locked, you know they couldn't go in and out and everything was alarmed, that set the tone for them that this was serious, right? So I think in a sense that increased safety. *Jill*

The team. The closeness of the team was fondly mentioned several times throughout the interviews but beyond interpersonal relationships, it was clear that the collaborative nature of the team allowed them to learn from each other, debrief as needed, and strategize for increased safety.

It was rewarding in that we all worked together all the time. Everything was very . . . We talked and commiserated a lot. And so that was fun, there was no forbidden ground. We could talk about anything. We could complain about anything. As long as we kept it away from the clientele. So it felt like a really supportive work environment and so that was a big part of it for me. *Lea*

I felt that we were a team and being a team and close and working together to me is the top key to having this successful program. *Sarah*

We had such a strong and powerful team. We were very much, um, we worked very much in a team oriented way and we supported each other. Even if we drove each other crazy, we still supported each other. I think that having the consults were super important, not only to have a historical understanding of what was going on with that family, like the history of it and then what's happening today, but also we were very much taught why something was a rule and why it wasn't. And the more comfortable you were in understanding why this policy was in place, the more comfortable you would be around intervening around it. And we role-played, and we did lots of things. I mean that really, really helped I think. *Jill*

What worked was our team, just the team that we were. We worked so well. I mean we spent so many hours too, just processing it. We spent so many hours processing every case, talking about it, looking at it from so many different perspectives. And we had an amazing team. We really did. We were pretty amazing women from all walks of life. And I think our bonding and our love for what we did was what made us so good. *Anna*

I think the relationships built with other supervisors at the time were wonderful. I mean, there's nothing like, you know, coming down off a crazy thing being like, whoa! That was like, shake it off, or have a little, you know, let's like scream about or have a dance party or something. You know the bonds are forged pretty quickly in that way. *Maria*

Necessity of intervention. The participants all expressed a strong understanding that their interventions were the right thing to do thereby allowing them to take action despite knowing they would likely be ill received.

I think I intervened when it was necessary and I don't have any regrets of doing what I was doing. But sometimes the people that I intervened with did not agree with what I was doing, but I felt very comfortable with my job and why I did it. *Alli*

I am not here to judge you but I am here to remind you why you are here. And I am not your enemy but you need to follow the rules. The rules were set for a reason. *Imani*

But I really felt, especially with it being with children, it was an important position and one that was really necessary to keep them safe but for them to be able to spend time with their fathers safely. *Sarah*

I just felt pretty clear about what my role was and wanted to do it well. *Zara*

I don't think I was ever so worried that I didn't intervene. *Jill*

I like rules, I like procedures. Things like that are very comforting to me. So having these rules and guidelines, and then knowing that, knowing the consequences for when those aren't upheld made it very easy to step into that role, despite feeling scared and the hair on the back of your neck. *Maria*

It was just that seeing that the children were able to see their dad or mom, and at the end of the visit, they were okay. And making sure that they felt safe and that they were okay. *Helen*

Hope. Several of the participants talked about feeling a sense of hope that the work they were doing might help to change the batterers' behaviors.

You think, oh, after all this, all the yelling, throwing things—they threw shoes at you - you'd say like, "Okay, it's worth it. What I did, it's worth it. My job is done, I made a difference in somebody's life." You knew you helped someone . . . the child, the mom, and in some cases, the guy, too. They had a little change, not that much, but something is better than nothing. *Imani*

I wanted safety for the survivor but I also wanted to treat the father respectfully and to help be a part of an educational process. *Zara*

And then there were moments when you could talk to an actual batterer about their behavior and see a little light bulb go on. It didn't happen near as much as I would've liked it to but when it did happen it did felt like, okay there's some possibility here, which I think helps you stay in the work. *Lea*

It was helpful in understanding how you actually interact with children, or how you can deal with feelings of anger or frustration in a way that isn't yelling, or where communication is at the heart of it. So I would like to think that was the impact for a few of them. Gosh, I mean that's why we totally, why we did what we did, right? It is. That's the hopeful piece of it anyway. *Maria*

Rewards of Working at the SVP

Many of the participants expressed their appreciation for having worked at the SVP despite the somewhat painful challenges and stress they experienced regularly while there. These

rewards were identified as formative, validating and supporting battered women, and feeling connected to social change.

Formative. Several of the participants discussed how their work at the SVP had changed them. These changes were in the areas of personal growth and witnessing the reality of domestic violence.

Personal growth. Participants described a sense of pride in overcoming their fears or trepidation and staying firm and calm in the face of hostile confrontation.

It was empowering. Because we're talking about guys that have done so much damage. We're talking about guys who did not care about the consequences to their actions. Yet, you know, there's this 5'2" Latina who's telling you, "Hey, knock it off. Stop that." I was a badass! *Anna*

This was a learning experience for me. Sometimes it made me feel a little powerful, so that felt good. But then at the same time, I think it make me a better person because it give me insight to understand what moms come and tell me. *Imani*

I think it helped me find my voice. *Zara*

I really see is it helped me be stronger. I definitely, out of all the jobs I've done, this job has made me such a stronger person, more confident. I learned skills that I just feel like I can take outside so much. *Sarah*

It developed character! It did. It built on that too because it gave me the confidence to confront people who are abusive and say, "Hey that's not okay," and to call them out on it. *Helen*

Witnessing the reality of domestic violence. Seeing the impact of battering at the SVP and working with batterers as they interacted with their children was an eye-opening experience for many of the participants, even those who had worked with survivors for years prior to their employment there.

And we got to be, that was one of the things for me . . . You know, I was the one that had the time to go out to go out and talk to the moms. And I got to hear all their experiences. So, it definitely got me to see DV through a completely different lens. *Anna*

I miss it and I wish I could still be helping people the way I used to, maybe I'm not doing it right now, but it changed my life. It changed the way I look at stuff. *Alli*

I think it also changed me in that now I see social problems in a more nuanced way than I did before, and I think that's good and bad . . . And I think before I worked there I saw domestic violence as bad-guy-hurts-innocent-person and that's not how I see it anymore. I also think it really humanized for me who bad actors are in society. I don't have the same black and white view of bad people. I generally don't think there are really bad people. *Zara*

I think that we just had this window into this world of coercive control and intimidation and manipulation that nobody sees because . . . I often think it's like if you were a substance-abuse provider, you don't normally see your client in the bar and how they're acting when they're using, and we did. We saw them with their children. We didn't ever see them hurting their partners because they were doing different tactics at this point, but to sit there and watch how blatantly controlling they were, and with no sense of shame about it. *Lea*

Validating and supporting battered women. Many of the participants discussed how proud they were to provide service that was respectful and supportive to survivors. They felt good that they could validate how difficult their circumstances were and offer them a safe space during visitation.

I think for some women, they were so relieved that finally someone else was seeing what this guy does and it would lessen their sense of well, "I must be crazy." Someone else witnessing it, what he's doing, I think was really helpful. *Jill*

To be able to support folks in a different way was really, really important to me. *Maria*

The survivors, until they had gotten to the center, the majority of them had not been able to actually open up about the reality of what their life was. The court just sort of knew that incident, or those incidents that happened where the law got involved. But no one ever really knew that history. *Anna*

It was also about validating that experience for the survivors . . . being a witness to her truth. That felt like the most important thing we did at times. *Lea*

I'm amazed at knowing all the impact we had on so many families, so many women. And if you ever compared the picture from the intake to a year down the road, it was amazing! It was just incredible to see how, how they had overcome so much and it was because they finally had a place where they were safe. It was okay, it was never about them not having access to the kids, but it was them having access in a safe environment. And we were that place. We were the place where they could go in and they knew their kids were

gonna get to know their dads and they were going to be safe and the dad was going to be able to just spend quality time. *Anna*

Feeling connected to social change. For several of the participants, their work at the SVP allowed them to feel connected to the larger, national efforts to address domestic violence. They enjoyed being part of something cutting edge and exciting.

It was very instrumental in the way that I think about my work. I thought it was very intellectually challenging all the time and I liked that. I like to do that kind of work. I think it was very exciting to be sort of at the forefront of doing work in a different way. *Jill*

It felt like there was something interesting and exciting happening there all the time, like there was always, there was a desire to learn and think about this in a broader way. *Zara*

It was really rewarding to be involved in something that was an emergent philosophy. Like we would overreact and then bend back and that was okay. We didn't ever make a stand and stick to it without really having a lot of conversation and debate and that was really rewarding and to be just involved in a work environment that felt so supportive about critical dialogue. *Lea*

Summary

The participants in this study described a very challenging, illuminating, and rewarding experience of carrying out the task of intervening to increase safety and decrease battering at the SVP. They talked about the difficulty of interacting with men who battered, the resources that helped them to do their jobs well, and the personal changes they experienced as a result of their work there. Many of them expressed their disappointment over the loss of the program and their concerns about how safety for families was or was not being addressed since its closure. The participants also shared what they wanted others to know about their experiences at the SVP. Their final thoughts will be presented in the following chapter along with the implications of this study and recommendations for further research.

Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Introduction

The participants in this study candidly described their unique window into the world of post-separation battering. Their interviews revealed the challenges and rewards of their work at the SVP as well as the internal and external resources that sustained them in their efforts. Their memories of the experience of intervening were clear and vivid despite the facts that the SVP had been closed for some time and several of them had moved on well before its closure. They talked about the sense of urgency that accompanied the task and their awareness of the heightened level of risk that families using the SVP were facing.

I think that for me working at the SVP, it was really a formative experience, because I think it's sort of easy in the abstract to like advocate for battered women, right? But I think when you're in the middle of the nuance and difficulty of it you're learning what it means to be an advocate in that context . . . it just felt like a pretty formative, grounding experience . . . I think it felt scary a lot. It felt hard a lot. And you know, I think just because of the kinds of families that the center was serving and where they were at in their separation. It just felt like energy was always high, like the emotions were always high there. So, it just felt like . . . it did not feel like a place that I could come and have an easy shift, you know? Like many shifts were uneventful but like it just always felt like emotionally draining. *Zara*

They described the need to consider the impact of their interventions and to tailor their words and actions in order to be as effective and protective of survivors and their children as possible.

I guess it depended on the situation . . . it involved different emotions. Like if it was on phone I had to think about my words, my wording, things that I was going to say, I wanted to be clear. I didn't want to have any mistake with phones or scheduling and stuff. If it was with children, I tried to be very comprehensive and remember the things that they had been through. So I needed to talk to them in a way that I wasn't going to upset them more, just tried to be aware of their situation. The same with moms, I had to be aware of where they were coming from, so I had to be very careful. And intervening with batterers was . . . I had to have quick thinking. And also be compassionate but remember why they were there. So you can't just focus on the person that you are seeing right now, you had to also be aware of where they are coming from, have an awareness of potential danger. *Alli*

And they described the nuances and importance of considering safety beyond just the prevention of physical violence or child abduction.

We kept people from having incidents of physical or emotional abuse during exchanges and visits . . . And we kept the kids safe. I mean, just imagine what it would be like to have to hand over your child to someone that you're afraid of. And you had to. And if you didn't you were gonna get in trouble or go to jail or lose custody of that child, right? And so being able to take, as much as we could, the fear of something terrible happening to your child, out of the equation, I think is what I mean by safety. I think knowing that mom's not gonna be undermined, the children aren't gonna be put in the middle, that they're not gonna be . . . the children aren't gonna be physically harmed either - taking that out is safety. Moms are going to be able to live in their housing without dad finding out where it is, that's safety, right? And then just kind of keeping the emotions light and child focused and child friendly, I think that equals safety. *Jill*

This research illustrated the lived experience of directly intervening in post-separation battering in the context of supervised visitation and resulted in three specific findings to be discussed below.

Findings

The results of this research highlighted three important aspects of how the participants were able to effectively carry out the task of intervening at the SVP: they were grounded in the SVP's mission of increasing safety and decreasing opportunities to batter, they knew they were in a safe and supportive environment, and they valued the feeling of being connected to the work of addressing domestic violence.

Being grounded in the mission statement of the SVP. The participants repeatedly described how uncomfortable and hard it was to engage with the men at the SVP regarding their behaviors. They talked about feeling concern for the kids and the knowledge that even the slightest intervention could lead to an explosive reaction. Some of them even felt fear for their own safety at times. Yet they intervened anyway! They understood what they needed to do and more importantly, why they had to do it. They knew that while not every behavior was an act of

battering, any behavior could be. They were trained to err on the side of safety and intervene accordingly. This finding emphasized the need for training in domestic violence that has been identified in the research on supervised visitation programs (Maxwell & Oehme, 2001; Pulido et al., 2011; Saini, Van Wert, et al., 2012). It also supports the standards of practice that were developed and proposed by the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence calling for supervised visitation programs to operate under the assumption that domestic violence is an issue in any case they might be serving, even those where it was not the reason for referral (Pulido et al., 2011). This is especially important given that many programs accept families from multiple referral sources that may or may not have recognized the presence of DV.

Having a safe and supportive environment. Having physical safety features in the building was mentioned as being helpful by some of the participants but all of them talked about the importance of being able to debrief, strategize, and learn with their coworkers. Each felt secure in knowing the team had her back and would be there to assist at any given moment. They knew they were not alone and that mistakes or unpleasant incidents were treated as learning opportunities. In their qualitative study of counselors' experiences of working with DV perpetrators and survivors, Iliffe and Steed (2000) found that peer support and debriefing was the most important coping strategy their participants identified. Saini, Black, et al. (2012) studied child protection workers who worked with high conflict families and found that specialized teams were helpful because workers on those teams had a shared understanding of the complexity of the issues at hand. The authors of that study also suggested that collaborative problem solving was beneficial to improving responses and avoiding burnout. Debriefing and opportunities for sharing successes were also recommended coping strategies for female counselors who work with male perpetrators of domestic violence or sexual assault (Tyagi, 2006).

Feeling connected to the work. The participants were moved by the heartbreaking circumstances of the survivors at the SVP and they were proud to be involved in a project that was attempting to address post-separation battering in a collaborative and thoughtful manner. Many expressed a feeling of gratitude for having had the opportunity to support survivors in such a direct and proactive way. The participants in the study by Iliffe and Steed (2000) found that recognizing client strength and resiliency was helpful to counteract the challenges of their work, as was their participation in sociopolitical activism. Bahner and Berkel (2007) identified a similar benefit among the participants of their study examining burnout of perpetrator treatment providers who endorsed a sense of personal accomplishment due to working on an important social issue. The present study supports those findings.

Discussion

The participants' experiences of intervening at the SVP aligned with much of the research I found regarding the challenges of working with batterers (Iliffe & Steed, 2000; Saini, Black, et al., 2012; Tyagi, 2006), however, I think these women spoke from a much more candidly personal perspective than was evident in other studies. I suspect this candidness was possible for two reasons: (a) we worked together at the SVP and they knew I was familiar with what they were describing and, (b) they were confident in their understanding of domestic violence and post-separation battering. Additionally, they were not expected to assess whether or not battering had occurred but rather they simply had to ensure it wouldn't continue on their watch. This understanding was essential to their ability to carry out their assigned task of increasing safety and decreasing opportunities to batter. Research has highlighted the problems in supervised visitation programs related to lack of clarity and consistency regarding their role and understanding of their purpose. For example, workers at supervised visitation programs that

do not understand the risks related to post-separation battering might miss messages or threats being passed via gifts as described by Oehme and Maxwell (2004). Or they might minimize the importance of firmly holding clients to designated staggered arrival and departure times that ensure survivors and batterers do not come into contact at or near the visitation facility (Oehme & Maxwell, 2004; Saini, Van Wert, et al., 2012). Such a lack of understanding the safety implications related to domestic violence can be tragic as was the case in 1998 when Carlton Edwards shot and killed his estranged wife and their two-year-old daughter outside a supervised visitation program in Seattle, Washington (Barker, 1998).

The participants in the present study repeatedly referred to the importance of knowing what was expected of them and why and they identified this understanding as a significant resource. They fully understood and acknowledged the inherent risks associated with the circumstances that brought families to the program. A review of the literature has shown that battering behaviors continue in supervised visitation programs (Bancroft et al., 2012; Maxwell & Oehme, 2001; Oehme & Maxwell, 2004), so it is not surprising that the participants described their interactions with the men at the SVP in much the same way that research on domestic violence has described the responses of victims of domestic violence (Stark, 2009; Walker, 1980) - a sense of impending explosion, a desire to shield the kids, a feeling of walking on eggshells, and careful attempts to calm the abuser. The participants knew the men were attempting to exert power and control during their visitation and they had experienced highly disconcerting reactions to their interventions. They were witnessing and experiencing vicarious battering.

Vicarious battering is a term that has not been identified in previous research but one that I propose is useful to describe the type of post-separation behaviors used by batterers (to

maintain control over their partners) that is witnessed and experienced by various professionals. I found examples of the angst and trepidation that is vicarious battering throughout my literature review: Bernard and Bernard (1984) discussed the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde nature of the men in their perpetrator treatment program; Tyagi (2006) described experiencing hostility and resentment from the perpetrators she worked with in treatment programs; Shrock observed how men in a batterers intervention group were able to follow the rules while deflecting any serious discussion of their harmful behaviors and beliefs (Shrock & Padavic, 2007); the social workers in the 2012 study by Saini, Black, et al. (2012) described the demanding and exhausting nature of “high conflict” clients they worked with; and counselors in the Iliffe and Steed (2000) study had been threatened by batterers and identified interacting with them as their greatest challenge. While professionals were clearly impacted by such behavior, there was no indication in the research or among my participants that they felt personally targeted. They were simply experiencing direct exposure to the batterers’ attempts to maintain control and/or resist intervention. Staff of supervised visitation programs must not only endure these behaviors in real time but they must attend to them closely and over extended periods of time to avoid further physical or emotional harm to survivors and their children.

Considering that in most states there are no legislated standards, specific licensing, or certification requirements for professional supervised visitation providers (Crook & Oehme, 2007; Oehme & Maxwell, 2004; Saini, Van Wert, et al., 2012), it is safe to assume that many visitation supervisors may lack the training and support needed to stay calm and firm in the presence of such an experience. In fact, in my recent review of an online supervised visitation directory (<http://SVDirectory.com>), of the 46 providers listed for the SVP’s jurisdiction, at least 21 were solo providers, meaning they were providing supervision services by themselves. One

should conclude it is unreasonable and unsafe—for clients and professionals—to expect someone to consistently intervene under such circumstances. To the contrary, it seems more likely that visit supervisors would choose to avoid confrontation and thereby unintentionally collude with coercive behaviors—a problem that was only briefly noted by Bancroft et al. (2012) and Maxwell and Oehme (2001) in their call for visitation providers to be required to have extensive training on battering tactics. I could not find any research specifically focused on this aspect of working with men who batter although Yorke (2016) recently called for family court professionals to increase their understanding and awareness of covert battering tactics in order to avoid collusion that could result in increased harm to survivors and their children.

Implications

The implications of the present study are two-fold. First, it is essential to the emotional and physical safety of survivors and their children that judicial officers and the professionals who work with men who batter recognize vicarious battering and respond accordingly. The participants in this study were empowered to intervene because they were not compelled to prove that any particular behavior was intentionally harmful. Instead, clients and staff alike understood that safety was of utmost importance at the SVP and everything else was secondary. This understanding was strengthened and affirmed over and over again as children and their mothers were able to come and go without incident. And second, this study supported the existing literature concluding that supervised visitation programs need extensive training, collaboration, and sufficient, stable funding. My research resulted in the following specific recommendations for supervised visitation programs accepting referrals due to domestic violence. The program leadership and personnel should:

- Understand that battering continues post separation and in fact is likely to occur during supervised visitation. The participants in this study described the persistence and tenacity of batterers who were trying to get around the rules whenever possible.
- Provide ongoing training and mentorship regarding the complexity and nuances of domestic violence and post-separation battering that is based on both the behavioral and criminal definitions of DV. Ideally, this would include participation in any coordinated community efforts to address domestic violence. This study revealed how important it was to the participants to have a strong understanding of domestic violence and its impact on survivors and to feel connected to the larger work of addressing DV.
- Establish clear and comprehensive guidelines for program staff and clients regarding why and how interventions will occur. The participants in this study repeatedly identified clearly defined expectations, policies, and procedures as important resources.
- Ensure that program personnel and clients are safe and supported at all times during service provision. The interviews revealed a heightened sense of danger while providing services at the SVP. This logically precludes isolated one-person operations for these types of cases in order to ensure that interventions occur as needed and without harmful incident.

Recommendations for Further Research

Research is needed to further explore the concept of vicarious battering and its counterpart, collusion, in the context of supervised visitation and among other professions where individuals are expected to address domestic violence directly such as parenting evaluators,

CASAs, mental health workers, and judicial decision makers. Such research could help to determine how feelings of trepidation caused by vicarious battering might impact outcomes for survivors of domestic violence in family law cases. This could be done via mixed method studies that include qualitative interviews, focus groups, or anonymous open-ended surveys combined with a review of custody outcomes in cases involving allegations of domestic violence. I propose that the trepidation and discomfort of vicarious battering that was experienced by this study's participants and the professionals in the research referenced previously was just a mere hint of what had been experienced by the partners of the men in question. I believe we have an obligation to acknowledge and explore the power and impact of such behaviors on our professional decision-making and responses to the problem of domestic violence.

In 2006, Birnbuam and Alaggia called for additional research on the intended and unintended outcomes of supervised visitation. I agree with their suggestion and to my knowledge that research has not yet been done. Given the feelings of hope described by the participants in this study, such research should include whether or not interventions were effective in leading to improved relationships between men who batter and their children. In their survey study of supervised visitation programs, Thoennes and Pearson (1999) found that visit supervisors wanted a more active role in helping visiting parents improve their parenting skills. This was reflected in several of the interviews for my study as well. However, two participants discussed feeling that the fathers did not seem to care that interventions negatively impacted their children and in fact some took advantage of the staff sensitivity to this and pushed the boundaries just a bit further. I personally recall numerous occasions at the SVP when children attempted to tell their fathers that they didn't like how they were behaving only to have the father dismiss their feelings and blame their mother for putting them up to this. This often resulted in those kids refusing to continue

visitation. A qualitative grounded theory methodology would be useful to interview and analyze the responses of women, children, and men who have used a professional visitation program specifically due to concerns about domestic violence.

As mentioned in the Methods section of this dissertation, the focus of this particular supervised visitation program was heterosexual, male-on-female domestic violence. Marriage equity is likely to result in increased numbers of same sex couples utilizing family court and in turn, supervised visitation programs. That will require additional research, training, and specialization. Additionally, all the participants in this study were female. The SVP employed one male during its operation from 2005 through 2012 however he was employed there very briefly and did not meet the criteria for participation. It is reasonable to assume that men would have very different responses to the questions asked in this study. Further research on gender dynamics in supervised visitation is warranted.

Participant Final Thoughts

At the end of the interviews, I asked each participant if there was anything she wanted others to know about her experience. Three wanted others to know how important such a service is in keeping survivors and their children safe.

It makes me want to shout from the rooftops why this is so important. We need the funding for it. We need the courts to understand, it isn't just these poor little women are shaking in their boots. It is a necessity. It's real. These guys do batter. Their battering shifts and changes and this is why we need this program. *Jill*

A lot of families right now could use that service, but there are none in this area that they can count on. You know, if this program could be restarted, then that would be awesome . . . whoever is willing to take on this issue and reopen the center or something or get it bigger and serve more people . . . I think that would be beneficial to the whole community. *Helen*

I think the most important thing is that making sure, that for them to know that they need to have programs that are going to treat the guys with respect. You know, treat them with respect and kindly, but keep the moms safe. To not align with the dads, or align with the

moms, but to actually be neutral. And for safety to be their number one priority. Because that's what, that's what it was for us. Safety was our number one priority, making sure that the survivor and the children were safe and that he was safe himself. *Anna*

Several talked about the importance of understanding the complexity and nuances of domestic violence and the need for extensive training.

I think it would be very interesting to have other people working at visitation centers to know about how difficult the job is. And that they should be more aware, because of how our center was, they should be more aware of how things could go wrong in just a second and stuff. And sometimes they don't have procedures appropriate for these visits. So they should understand the importance of centers like the SVP. *Alli*

So, what I want people to know is that safety is not, that even if your priority is physical safety, that it is not a black and white task and that nuances and content matter. *Zara*

I think it's important for folks to recognize that the issue of DV is so much more nuanced, than it's given, you know, attention in the media and things like that. *Maria*

Well, I think anyone considering even doing any kind of work with abusers especially, I just feel you need to be as educated as you can and be open to any kind of education, any kind of class, anything you can to build that confidence and be real comfortable and secure with the people around you to be the best team you can be and then build your confidence. *Sarah*

You have a good understanding, some education on what abuse is . . . or when a woman tells you, "I'm scared of this man," to the point that you don't have to be in court, you just have to be in the next room and you're shaking in your boots and you're just crying and you just can't control it because you think something is gonna happen . . . that is just a power that this person has over this other person. And nobody deserves to live like that. *Imani*

And two wanted others to know just how tenacious batterers can be.

Just how much it absolutely continues, that abuse continues, post separation and even when the victim is removed from the room, from the life, from the interaction completely, yet—and it's supposed to just be an hour with your kid! Like that should be easy to do for most people. You can play, you can, you know, concentrate on those children—but yet it was still so difficult to not use that time to batter. *Chloe*

I would really like for people with decision-making authority, judicial officers, attorneys, CPS workers, therapists, mental health assessors, or parenting evaluators, would look at just the challenges, the reality of trying to deal with somebody who is intentionally trying to undermine you every step of the way. *Lea*

These thoughts aligned with recommendations called for in much of the research on supervised visitation programs: adequate and consistent funding for safe, well-staffed facilities and programs; extensive and ongoing training regarding the nuances of DV and overt and covert battering tactics; and a strong understanding of the dynamics and safety implications of domestic violence and how to effectively intervene (Oehme & Maxwell, 2004; Pulido et al., 2011; Saini, Van Wert, et al., 2012).

Conclusion

This qualitative study illuminated the challenges and rewards experienced by the staff of a DV-focused supervised visitation program. The sharing of their experiences illustrated the complexity of providing safety in that setting as well as the impact on the participants of having to directly intervene in battering in real time. The research demonstrated the importance of being grounded in the mission of increasing safety for survivors and their children while decreasing opportunities to batter, having a safe and supportive environment, and feeling connected to the larger work of addressing domestic violence. The use of phenomenological methods provided the venue for candid responses that resulted in a rich description of the lived experience of intervening at the SVP. The willingness and openness of the participants to take this journey with me has resulted in a study that can contribute to the research on post separation battering, supervised visitation, and working with batterers.

Moreover, the interviews provided a graphic depiction of the tenacity and insidiousness of battering conduct. I've used the term vicarious battering to define the felt experience of supervising visits between men who batter and their children. Judicial decision makers, parenting evaluators, attorneys, and others in the family law arena must understand that battering does not end at separation and in fact, for survivors with children, it might actually increase. The task of

intervening in post separation violence should not be taken lightly. Programs and service providers who take on this challenge must be provided with the resources necessary to do it safely. Such resources include adequate funding, extensive training, clearly established protocols and guidelines, collaboration with courts and the domestic violence advocacy community, and of course, appropriate facilities. If done with such resources and thoughtful planning, supervised visitation can be an essential element of increasing safety for domestic violence survivors, their children, and the professionals who serve them.

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Appendix A

Individual Descriptions of the Phenomenon

Sarah

Sarah experienced the task of intervening at the SVP as tension-filled, nuanced, and satisfying. She was highly aware that any intervention could turn into a negative event and she knew her personal demeanor could either calm or escalate the situation. Sarah was sensitive to the gender dynamics between her and the men using the service and felt that as a woman, exerting her authority could unnecessarily provoke challenge. She understood the importance of staying calm and non-confrontational despite her own fear or feelings of increased tension. She knew that she could be physically overpowered by many of the men and she felt empowered by overcoming her fears. She believed this was a necessary service for the families using the SVP because it allowed children to have good experiences with their fathers. She felt it was safe for moms and kids and hoped that it helped dads learn how to behave in ways that improved their children's experiences. Sarah felt that witnessing the behaviors of the men at the SVP helped her to more fully understand battering. She was intrigued by how charming the men could be and she often felt they were testing her to see what they could get away with. Her confidence increased over time and eventually she found she was often able to recognize when a client was going to be particularly difficult. Being part of a team that mentored and trained her was an important element in Sarah's ability to intervene at the SVP. Knowing there were various security features in place and that her colleagues would be available if she needed them allowed her to feel safe while she monitored visits. Sarah felt that working with the whole family gave her deeper insight as to how batterers get away with behaviors that are harmful. Understanding the dynamics of domestic violence was essential to knowing what to watch for during visits and she believed that extensive training was essential to doing this work. She enjoyed knowing she was keeping children safe and helping families to create good memories. Sarah experienced a sense of personal growth during her tenure at the SVP. Her courage and confidence increased significantly and she gained skills that continue to serve her both professionally and personally.

Jill

Jill experienced the task of intervening at the visitation center as physically and mentally demanding, sometimes scary, always nerve-racking, and highly rewarding. She was very aware of the potential for situations to escalate quickly at any given time and she felt a strong need to protect children from emotional and/or physical danger. She understood that her confident demeanor might have been provocative to some of the fathers and she also assumed that interventions might have felt punitive or humiliating regardless of her intentions or tone. She worked hard to be respectful and non-intrusive and felt that as she gained experience she became less confrontational and more curious about various behaviors that occurred during visits. Despite this, she remained cognizant that visiting fathers were often looking for opportunities to manipulate the system in their favor and felt her interactions with them sometimes were akin to a chess match. She worked to avoid the appearance of collusion and this was sometimes disheartening, particularly when she wanted to encourage or support their parenting skills – she feared such interactions could result in a negative outcome for battered mothers. Jill wanted very much for the women using the program to trust her and she was surprised that this was not usually the case. She learned that she was perceived very differently as a visitation monitor than she was as a domestic violence advocate and this was uncomfortable for her at times. She also came to see battered women more holistically as she interacted with them at the SVP and she appreciated that broader perspective. Her understanding of the complexity of domestic violence also deepened as she witnessed the individualized nature of battering tactics and the dynamics

between kids and dads. She appreciated the program's focus on teamwork and felt very supported by her coworkers at the SVP. She was very confident in her understanding of the program policies and procedures. Jill felt great pride in her work at the SVP. Not only was she successful in protecting battered mothers and children, but she was also contributing to innovative work being done nationally. It was very rewarding to her to participate in the development of a program so intentionally designed to address domestic violence.

Anna

Anna experienced the overall task of intervening at the SVP as enriching and rewarding. She attributed her deepened understanding of battering and its impact to the program's unique position of serving batterers, survivors, and their children all at the same location. She felt it was important to be ready for anything during visits and exchanges and she worried about children and their mothers being re-traumatized if she couldn't act quickly enough when things went awry. She believed that staying calm and maintaining an appearance of being in control was essential to avoiding or de-escalating potentially explosive situations. She felt a need to be vigilant and hyper-alert to what might be happening outside the center as well as within it during services. She knew the court sent high-risk cases to the SVP and she worried that someone might run off with their child or wait outside to stalk their victim. Anna was aware that having a woman in a position of authority during their visitation antagonized many of the men and at times she found this somewhat amusing. She also understood that treating the men respectfully and with kindness served to increase safety for the moms using the program. This was difficult for her at times and she found that many of the men were not used to such treatment. She felt good when she thought she had improved someone's experience at the center. She was surprised by how many of the fathers did not know how to interact with their children. She thought learning to do so was an important objective of visits and she was willing to teach them how to play games or use the equipment in the visitation room. Anna felt a strong connection to her coworkers at the SVP. She felt honored to be embraced by women that she believed to be "amazing" and "powerful." She credited the program's success to her teammates and their collective passion for this work. She loved knowing that battered women felt safe there and she was extremely proud that she contributed to their healing simply by allowing them to share their stories and be heard without judgment. Intervening to increase safety for survivors was a profoundly growing experience for Anna and has continued to inform her life both personally and professionally.

Chloe

Chloe experienced the task of intervening at the SVP as intrusive and unnatural. She knew interventions were hard and confusing for kids and this caused her some angst about her role during visits. She tried to be as non-invasive as possible but felt uncomfortable when she had to interrupt a visit to remind a father to stay within the agreed upon guidelines. She felt that regardless of her efforts to protect the kids from feeling as though they had done something wrong, their fathers reacted as if she were attacking them for something no one had ever told them not to do. She felt this put children in the position of aligning with or defending their fathers and she thought many of the men took advantage of her desire to shield their kids from this conflict. She suspected that the men's effort to manipulate as well as their persistent disregard for their impact on others at the SVP was probably similar to what the children and their mothers had experienced in their homes. Chloe had conflicting feelings about the program in that she wondered if parents needing this level of supervision should be restricted from

visitation while she also knew that children loved their fathers and wanted to see them. Additionally, she understood that battered mothers often wanted to give their kids a chance to have that relationship or at least did not want to be responsible for preventing it. Knowing she could immediately debrief with coworkers was helpful to Chloe, as were the weekly case consult meetings where she and her colleagues could vent, compare notes, and share ideas. Chloe felt the SVP facility and policies were set up to provide the safest space possible given the high risk nature of its particular clientele and she wondered how families were navigating their safety since the program closed. Although she struggled with the reality that the men she worked with at the center simply could not seem to put their children's needs first, she also understood the importance of having this kind of service in place.

Helen

Helen experienced the task of intervening at the SVP as interesting and informative. She was intrigued by how battering tactics played out right before her eyes and she assumed that the men were often trying to use the same tactics at the center that they had used on their victims. She found many of her interactions to be like a chess match where she could see the client calculating how to get his way as she strategized how to best respond. Direct intervention with the men was often accompanied by feeling hot and flushed in anticipation of an angry or explosive reaction. Her nervousness in those moments sometimes caused her to stutter. She was aware that her tone of voice was at times sterner than she intended and she worked to maintain an appearance of being in control of the situation. She found it uncomfortable to talk with the men after interventions, particularly when it involved allegations of child sexual abuse. She was aware that these men often felt the restrictions on physical contact with their children were unfair and offensive. It was important to Helen to be thoughtful in her approach to intervention and she felt supported by her coworkers to try out different ways of addressing individuals. She also found it helpful that everybody on staff was aware of ongoing and emerging safety concerns so they could figure out together how to address them. She knew that children were often confused by the interventions and that mothers were grateful to know their kids were protected during visits. Helen was glad that the court made a finding of domestic violence prior to sending families to the SVP because it spared the staff from having to make that determination and allowed them to do their jobs more effectively. She believed the facility, staff, and policies at the center created safety for everyone involved so she never experienced feeling physically at risk. Her tenure at the SVP increased her confidence and ability to more openly address battering behaviors. This has helped her in her current job where she interacts with batterers regularly. Helen felt the SVP was very important and necessary and she had concern that many families were now at increased risk because the service was no longer available. Helen felt her overall experience at the SVP was character building and positive.

Maria

Maria experienced the task of intervening at the SVP as surprisingly easier than she had anticipated. She attributed this to her physical stature and demeanor and the mutually respectful environment of the visitation center. Her strong sense of self prior to her employment at the SVP and her keen awareness of the impacts of privilege and oppression helped her to practice non-judgment and self-reflection while there. She believed the clear and thoughtful guidelines that were in place kept clients and staff accountable for their behaviors and created an understanding by all of what could be expected. When she did have to intervene, she described a fight or flight

response - heart pounding, hair-raising, and changes in body temperature. She felt a great deal of compassion for the families using the program and understood there was more to their stories than she could ever know. She had a strong awareness of the contrast between her happy and healthy upbringing and that of the children she observed at the SVP and wondered at times if she could've been more helpful. Maria felt empowered by the authority she assumed in her role at the visitation center and was confident in her ability to enforce the rules firmly and under any circumstance – a skill she carried with her into her personal and professional life afterward. She appreciated sharing this experience with her coworkers at the SVP and felt a sense of camaraderie and mutual support among the staff. She hoped that children at the center were able to begin healing and she felt proud to provide a safe space where battered women were believed and trusted. She enjoyed being able to focus on domestic violence and work in an integral way that felt truly helpful. Knowing that the SVP's rules and procedures were based on identified needs and objectives was comforting to Maria and gave her a sense of confidence and clarity of purpose when intervening on behalf of the mothers and children at the center. She appreciated watching kids and fathers learning to play together and was glad that children were allowed to have some control of their own during visits. Working at the SVP allowed Maria to feel as though she was contributing to social justice in a concrete and meaningful way.

Zara

Zara experienced the task of intervening at the SVP as scary and difficult, always tense, and personally formative. She felt a constant air of agitation in the visitation room that caused her to have a heightened sense of responsibility as a visit monitor. She understood the potentially negative impact of intervention and tried to maintain a demeanor that was as respectful and non-intrusive as possible. There were times when Zara worried about causing embarrassment or anger but this was subservient to her role of providing safety for children and their mothers. She was very clear about her role and it was important to her to do her job well. She was highly sensitive to the struggles of the individuals and families served by the program and at times felt overwhelmed by the injustices she witnessed regularly. The blatant sexism, racism, and poverty weighed heavily on her and broadened her perspective on social justice issues. Zara appreciated the extensive training provided by the program and was excited by the opportunity to focus so specifically on the nuances of battering. She found it invigorating to work in an environment so committed to meeting the needs of survivors and that encouraged critical thinking and exploration. The SVP's inclusion in a national initiative gave her a sense of feeling connected to “the larger struggle” of the battered women's movement, which in turn helped her to cope with the day-to-day stresses of the work. Zara felt that her experience at the SVP increased her compassion and understanding of the complexities of domestic violence and its intersections with multiple societal problems – an outcome that has been both rewarding and painful.

Imani

Imani experienced that task of intervening at the SVP as uncomfortable and rewarding. She believed that some of the men intentionally pushed her into the role of enforcer during their visits and she did not enjoy that. She was particularly uncomfortable when there were concerns about child sexual abuse and recalled feeling nauseated while monitoring certain visits. She knew interventions were hard on the kids and she tried to help their fathers understand the impact of their behaviors. She was frustrated when so many of them would not put their children's comfort above their own needs to control or manipulate. Imani felt that some of the men were hostile and

demeaning towards her specifically due to her status as a minority and as a female. Some were so blatantly disrespectful at the SVP that she wondered what they might be capable of behind closed doors. She worried about her own safety at times but she had a great deal of empathy for the men, women, and children using the program despite any disturbing behaviors she saw. She worked hard to build trust with the clients and believed this was especially important for families from minority or immigrant cultures. Accountability was very important to Imani and she expected the men to follow the rules. She felt most effective when she was able to coach parents and children on how to better manage their visitation. She knew that some did not understand how to parent and she was glad when she helped fathers improve their relationships with their children. Imani felt her prior training in advocacy and working with sex offenders helped to prepare her for this job. She was able to recognize manipulation and respond firmly and thoughtfully. Her deep sense of empathy kept her from demonizing the men she was supervising and allowed her to feel good about offering guidance when possible. She enjoyed this aspect of her work at the center. She appreciated the program's emphasis on an in-depth understanding of domestic violence, its affordability, and its flexible service hours and she knew its closure was a loss to the community. Imani felt her tenure at the SVP was a learning experience that increased her compassion for battered women.

Alli

Alli experienced the task of intervening at the SVP as important and rewarding. She knew that the men using the program did not want to be there and would likely disagree with her interventions but she felt confident that what she was doing was necessary. She was thoughtful about her interactions with the men, women, and children at the SVP and worked to avoid causing them any further harm. There were times when she was nervous and she felt the need to keep a degree of physical and emotional distance between the men and herself during their interactions. Regardless, she was confident in her decisions to intervene in battering behaviors and prepared to manage adverse reactions. Alli felt that most interventions were fairly easy, but behaviors that threatened the safety of kids or their mothers felt "big." Those incidents were chaotic, confusing, and required quick thinking and she knew that her team's trust in each other was most important during such events. She felt the strength and mutual support of her coworkers was essential to her ability to intervene safely and effectively. She knew she was doing her job well when mothers and children felt safe at the SVP and batterers decided to cooperate. Alli knew the SVP policies and procedures were in place for good reasons and she took her job there very seriously. She was deeply saddened by some of the stories she heard from the mothers at the center and this significantly impacted her worldview. She learned that she could never fully know what someone else might be going through and she wanted to be compassionate and supportive. Alli was grateful to work at a job that was so meaningful to her and where she could combine her administrative skills with her desire to help others.

Lea

Lea experienced the task of intervening at the SVP as grueling, painfully illuminating, and rewarding. She was dismayed by the unwillingness of the men ordered to the program to accept any responsibility for their harmful behaviors. It was emotionally difficult to regularly witness their blatant disregard for others, including their children and her coworkers. She found it exhausting to have to be mentally prepared at all times for outbursts or manipulation but she understood that vigilance and caution were essential for the safety of everyone at the center. Lea

knew that mothers were very scared while there and it was hard when she couldn't meet all their demands. She felt bad when they didn't understand how hard she and her coworkers were working to keep them and their children safe. Working with the families at the center exposed Lea to how difficult escaping abuse can be when there are children involved and she felt the women there were facing a nearly impossible situation. She thought other professionals didn't seem to understand or believe how tenacious and mean batterers can be. She felt the staff at the SVP was in a unique position to see battering and its impact firsthand and she was grateful she could validate the unfairness of it for survivors. She was frustrated that others in the family law system often seemed to exacerbate the problem and she enjoyed opportunities to share what she was seeing with others. Lea relied on the mutual trust and support of her coworkers at the SVP and she believed their shared values as advocates for battered women was a major strength of the program. She deeply appreciated the work environment because it promoted critical thinking, collaborative problem solving, and emergent practice design.

Appendix B
SVP Demographics

SVP Service Demographics

The SVP began serving clients on January 5, 2005 and permanently closed its doors on December 15, 2012. Over the course of the program's eight years of service, 439 families – including 680 children - were accepted into the program. There were 24 visit slots available per weekend and 8 per weekday. The program reached capacity during its third year of operation and maintained a waitlist thereafter.

Services provided. *Supervised visitation* consisted of one-on-one supervision (one visit supervisor observing one visiting parent) inside the visitation facility. *Supervised exchanges* consisted of monitoring the exchange of children at the visitation facility who were coming from or going to unsupervised visitation with their non-custodial parent. During the course of its eight years of operation:

- 418 families received supervised visitation
- Of those, 25 transitioned to supervised exchanges during the course of service provision
- 21 families received supervised exchanges only

Additionally,

- 18 families completed the intake process but never scheduled a first visit
- 16 families began but did not complete the intake process
- 3 visiting parents were denied services upon completion of the intake because they were deemed too dangerous to serve by the program staff after extensive case consult

Referral source. Families were enrolled in services at the SVP due to serious or persistent allegations of domestic violence.

- 373 families (85%) were referred to the SVP via a domestic violence protection order

- 65 families (15%) were required by a temporary or final parenting plan to have supervised visitation
- 1 family voluntarily used the SVP

SVP Client Demographics

Gender. All but one family presented as heterosexual at the visitation center. One family consisted of two male parents. Additionally, one visiting parent was the father in two separate cases.

- 408 visiting parents were male, 30 were female
- 31 custodial parents were male, 408 were female

Racial and ethnic identity of visiting and custodial parents.

The client demographics (Table 2) were collected from archived files and include only those individuals who completed the entire intake process and were accepted for supervised visitation or exchange services.

Table 2

SVP Client Demographics

	Visiting Parent (n=438)		Custodial Parent (n=439)	
	Total	%	Total	%
White / Caucasian	243	55	267	61
Non-White Hispanic	87	20	69	16
Black / African	64	15	46	10
Asian	24	5	37	8
Hawaiian / Pacific Islands	4	1	6	1
Native American / Alaska Native	3	1	2	1
Multi-Racial	13	3	12	3
Totals	438	100	439	100
Immigrant	96	22	93	21

Languages. Languages spoken at intakes and/or during visitation (via multilingual staff or professional interpreters) included:

- American Sign Language
- Amharic
- Arabic
- Farsi
- French
- German
- Japanese
- Korean
- Panjabi
- Persian
- Russian
- Somali
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Tigrinya
- Turkish
- Ukrainian
- Vietnamese

Appendix C

Relevant SVP Forms (Redacted)

Permissions

Permission to use all forms included in Appendix C was granted by the agency that housed the SVP that is the subject of this dissertation.

SVP Mission, Purpose, and Philosophy of Service

Vision

Through community collaboration, ongoing education, and meaningful referrals to appropriate ancillary services, the SVP strives to assist the families we serve in their efforts to achieve a life that is free from violence.

Mission

We provide a safe, accessible, and culturally sensitive supervised visitation and exchange program for families affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and stalking.

Philosophy of Service

At the SVP, all protocols, policies, and procedures have been developed based on the following definition of domestic violence:

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior that one intimate partner or spouse exerts over another as a means of control and may include physical and sexual violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation, and emotional, sexual or economic abuse.

Bearing this definition in mind, all services have been designed with the objective of increasing safety for victims of domestic violence and decreasing opportunities for further abuse. We adhere to this objective *regardless* of which parent resides with the child. In keeping with this objective, the SVP staff reserves the right to modify policies and procedures as necessary to accommodate individual situations.

The Client

The SVP policies, procedures, and protocol have been designed to address the unique safety concerns of adult and child survivors of domestic violence.

Visiting Parent Service Agreement

Parking, Arrival, and Departure

___ I understand and agree to abide by the following guidelines:

- I must arrive **thirty (30) minutes** before the visit starts and wait a minimum of **fifteen (15) minutes** after the visit ends and my children have left the building.
- I must park near and enter through **Entrance** _____. Parking elsewhere is a serious violation of center security policies.
- Loitering outside is not permitted. Any person who accompanies me to the center must leave the area immediately and return to my assigned entry area no earlier than my expected departure time.
- Personal belongings are NOT allowed into the visitation area. This includes cell phones, cameras, gifts, money, and photos.

Visit

___ I understand and agree to abide by the following guidelines:

- My child(ren) will NOT be forced to visit.
- Food items are subject to approval by staff and the residential parent. Children cannot take food out of the visit area that did not come in with them.
- I am responsible for the safety and conduct of my children during the visits and for cleaning up after the visits.
- SVP personnel may intervene at any time during the visit. Examples of behavior that could lead to an intervention include, **but are not limited to**:
 - Talking about the custodial parent
 - Minimizing or denying child's concerns or fears
 - Seeking or sharing identifying information
 - Directly or indirectly sending messages to the other parent
 - Name-calling, threats, physical discipline, or abusive language
 - Making promises
 - Whispering or talking so the monitor can't hear or understand
 - Behavior or discussion that puts child in the middle of the conflict or causes the child discomfort (including physical inspection of the child's body)
 - Aggressive behavior or language towards any person on the premises
- Excessive interventions may lead to termination of visit and may require an additional meeting with the Program Manger or Visitation personnel prior to any further visits.

General

___ The following information and policies have been thoroughly explained to me:

- SVP cannot guarantee a particular day or time to any client.
- SVP is NOT part of the court and cannot enforce orders.
- SVP staff shall not provide parenting assessments or visitation recommendations and shall not provide case-specific information to anyone other than the relevant parties named as clients of the program.
- SVP maintains a Family Case File that may be obtained by submitting a written request up to twice within a 12 month period. Requests should be submitted at least 21 days

prior to the date the file is needed. If requested by one party, the other party will also receive the file.

- Direct or 3rd party contact between parties is not permitted on or around the center premises or parking areas. **Service of legal documents is prohibited at all times on or around center premises and is considered a serious violation of security policies.**
- SVP staff are mandatory reporters and will report suspected child abuse or real or implied threats to person or property. HOWEVER, activities that could compromise the wellbeing of children (such as stripping them for inspection or interrogating them) will not be permitted by staff or parents. If parents are concerned about child abuse, they can report to the proper authorities directly.
- Weapons are NOT PERMITTED on the premises or in the parking areas.
- Military, law enforcement, and security uniforms are not permitted attire at the center.
- The visitation and waiting areas are equipped with sound microphones that are monitored as needed by staff and/or observers.
- Violation of any guidelines may result in suspension or termination of services.
- Any potential threats to another person's safety will be reported to that person and documented in the Family Case File.
- All clients and staff are subject to the most current SVP policies.
- **SVP retains the right to adjust or refuse service delivery as needed to ensure maximum safety for staff, parents, and children using the center.**
- The intake fee of \$25.00 is non-refundable and (based on my income) my hourly fee for visits will be \$_____ and is payable by cash, check, or money order in advance of my visits.

Parent _____ Date: _____

Staff _____ Date: _____

Interpreter _____ Date: _____

Observations Notes

Date of visit: ___/___/___ **Scheduled** Visit Time: ___ AM PM - ___ AM PM

VP Name: _____ **Actual** Visit Time: ___ AM PM - ___ AM PM

Child(ren) Name: _____

Pre-Visit Notes: _____

NOTE: The objective of supervision at SVP is to prevent and/or intervene in any interactions between the Visiting Parent and child/ren that could potentially compromise safety or confidentiality, directly or covertly pass messages between the parties, or undermine the child’s relationship with either parent or others. Ongoing concerns or patterns of potentially abusive behavior will be documented via Case Consult Logs.

Reason for Intervention	Method of Intervention
___ Negative talk about CP	___ Repeatedly redirected conversation nonverbally
___ Minimizing child’s concerns	___ Redirected verbally
___ Seeking “identifying” information	___ Asked parent to stop behavior
___ Sharing “identifying” information	___ Pulled parent aside for private intervention
___ Sending direct messages	___ Staff terminated visit
___ Sending veiled messages	___ Child terminated visit
___ Name-calling, threats, profanity	___ Requested assistance from staff
___ Physical discipline	___ Requested police assistance
___ Making promises	___ Other _____
___ Whispering or not understandable	___ Other _____
___ Involving child in conflict	___ Critical Incident – see CI form
___ Adult or child is visibly upset	
___ Aggression towards staff or others	
___ Inspecting child	
___ **Hula Hoop rule: _____	
___ Other: _____	

**If applicable – all physical contact must be brief, limited, and initiated by child (no sustained hugging, lap sitting, tickling, asking for hugs, etc)

Post Visit Notes: _____

_____ VM Initials: _____ Date: _____

Safe Havens Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles

Safe Havens: Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Grant Program



Principle I: Equal Regard for the Safety of Child(ren) and Adult Victims

Visitation centers should consider as their highest priority the safety of child(ren) and adult victims and should treat both with equal regard.



Principle II: Valuing Multiculturalism and Diversity

Visitation centers should be responsive to the background, circumstances, and cultures of their community and the families they serve.



Principle III: Incorporating an Understanding of Domestic Violence into Center Services

Visitation centers should demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the nature, dynamics, and impact of domestic violence and incorporate that understanding into their services.



Principle IV: Respectful and Fair Interaction

Visitation centers should treat every individual using their services with respect and fairness, while taking into account the abuse that has occurred within the family.



Principle V: Community Collaboration

Visitation centers should seek to operate within a community collaborative which has as its goal to centralize safety of child(ren) and adult victims and hold batterers accountable. The community collaborative will strive (1) to ensure a holistic response to each family member's needs; (2) to stop continued abuse of child(ren) and adult victims; and (3) to eliminate the social conditions that cause intimate partner violence.



Principle VI: Advocacy for Child(ren) and Adult Victims

Visitation centers should work with the community collaborative to ensure that Child(ren) and adult victims have meaningful access to services and should actively link individuals to those services.



Appendix D
Guiding Interview Questions

Guiding Interview Questions

The interviews will be semi-structured so as to allow participants to fully discuss whatever they feel is relevant or meaningful. However, I will pose some guiding questions as a method of ensuring focus on their interactions with the men and their experiences of those interactions. Each participant will be asked the following questions:

1. What led you to your employment at the SVP?
2. What was your role?
3. How did you experience your work there?
4. What was the impact of intervening? On you? On others (father, mother, child)?
5. What were the challenges?
6. What were the rewards?
7. What was helpful?
8. Are there any experiences at the SVP that stand out for you now?
9. How has your experience at the SVP shaped your thinking about domestic violence?
10. What more would you like others to know about this experience?

Appendix E
Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Dear _____,

You are invited to participate in my doctoral dissertation research. For this qualitative study, I will be interviewing individuals who worked at the SVP for a minimum of one year during the program's operation (January 2005 through December 2012) and were able to regularly attend the weekly case consult meetings. The purpose of the interviews will be to explore the following question:

How did the staff of a specialized supervised visitation and exchange program experience the assigned task of increasing safety for survivors of intimate partner violence and their children while decreasing opportunities for further battering?

Each interview will be recorded, then transcribed and coded individually for themes and concepts. Then data from all interviews will be reviewed together and coded again to identify common themes. The final report will present a composite description of the experience and will use individual quotes to illustrate the aggregate themes. Implications for practice in domestic violence-related services and recommendations for further research will be included in the report.

Potential Benefits and Risks of Participation

I hope your participation in this research will increase awareness among family law professionals and others regarding post-separation battering tactics and the skills required to directly intervene with individuals involved in intimate partner abuse. Discussing your experiences could potentially bring up difficult emotions however you are welcome to stop or slow the pace at any point during the interview. If you are uncomfortable with being interviewed by me, you may request another interviewer or respond to my guiding interview questions in writing. The individual interviews could take up to two hours and may require a brief follow up interview to clarify any confusing statements. There will be no financial compensation for participation. Each participant will be given an opportunity to review the summary of her individual interview for accuracy.

Data Storage

All interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Once transcription is fully completed, audio recordings will be deleted. Transcribed interviews will be stored on an encrypted flash drive and stored in my personal office. All identifying documentation, including signed consent forms and demographic forms will be stored on a different encrypted flash drive and stored separately from all other study-related materials.

Confidentiality

Participants will be asked to select a pseudonym (false name) for use throughout this study. All interview information will securely stored. Data will be coded and used for research purposes

only. Personal information about participants will not be shared with anyone other than my dissertation committee (and then only if necessary).

Results

This research will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology at Antioch University Seattle (AUS) in Seattle, WA. The results will be published as a dissertation. Additionally, information from this research may be used for future educational purposes, journal articles, and/or professional presentations.

Participant Rights

Participation is strictly voluntary. All participants have the right to ask questions about the research purposes and procedures and can withdraw at any point up until the final publication of the dissertation. If at any time you have concerns regarding the research or my conduct, you can contact the Chair of the AUS Institutional Review Board at ASuarez@antioch.edu or the AUS Chair of my dissertation committee, Patricia Linn, PhD at plinn2014@gmail.com.

Your signature below indicates that:

- You understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your participation
- You have had an opportunity to ask questions and receive answers
- You agree to participate in this research

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please indicate preferred method of contact: Phone ___ Email ___

Researcher's Verification of Explanation

I, Tracee Parker, certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to _____ . She has had the opportunity to discuss it with me in details and I have adequately answered her questions. She has agreed to participate in this dissertation project.

Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone: XXXXXXXXXX

Email: tparker@antioch.edu

Appendix F

Participant Demographics Form

Participant Demographics Form

Name: _____

Contact Information: _____

Racial / Ethnic Identity: _____

Languages Spoken: _____

Current Age Range (circle one): 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

Education Level: AA BA/BS MA/MS Doctoral Post-Doc

Area of Study (if relevant): _____

Dates of Service at Safe Havens / Safe & Sound: _____

Current Occupation: _____