

**THE EXPERIENCES OF PARTICIPANTS IN A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE-
FOCUSED COUPLES TREATMENT PROGRAM:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

by

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(ABSTRACT)

This study is a multi-case study which examines the experiences of participants involved in a 12-session integrated couples treatment program for domestic violence. Participants included 7 therapists and 5 heterosexual couples. 3 couples participated in individual couples treatment, and 2 participated in a multi-couple group treatment. 2 of the couples were Black, while all other couples were White. 4 out of 5 couples were married; one couple was in a committed dating relationship. All therapists were trained in marriage and family therapy. All participants filled out open-ended questions about their expectations for therapy and participated in two interviews to elicit their experiences of ongoing therapy. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, and data were analyzed using the constant comparative method.

The findings include clients' and therapists' expectations of therapy prior to treatment, and their experiences of therapy during the first half of treatment. Participants discussed which aspects of therapy were helpful, and

which aspects of therapy were not helpful. In general, clients emphasized helpful therapist behaviors and qualities that seemed to facilitate their engagement in the therapy process. Therapists tended to focus on specific techniques they employed to facilitate changes in their clients. Participants most often criticized the treatment length as insufficient.

Participants also shared their views about the racial difference between therapists and clients, or among group members in the multi-couple treatment group. Most participants believed that racial difference had no effect on the treatment. Finally, participants shared their opinions about traditional domestic violence treatment versus couples treatment of violence.