



Professional Social Work and the Battered Women's Movement: Contextualizing the Challenges of Domestic Violence Work

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Professional Social Work and the Battered Women's Movement: Contextualizing the Challenges of Domestic Violence Work

Valli Kanuha, PhD

At the very moment this article is being written, activists, counselors, policy makers, and advocates from around the United States and other countries are gathering in Denver to celebrate the 20th year of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV). For those of us who came of age in the American battered women's movement, this commemoration is a bittersweet event. NCADV was once the national organization behind theory building and groundbreaking practices with regard not only to violence against women, but a particular brand of feminism that attempted to integrate gender violence with lesbian activism and anti-racism. This is a bittersweet time because, after twenty years, we are celebrating a national coalition and more so a national movement that was once so vibrant but is now almost non-existent. In 1978, we heard the powerful voices of survivors who dared, guided, and confronted many of us to honor them by keeping their stories of courage and resilience at the forefront of our vision for a violence free world. But, today most local battered women's programs struggle to remain open while social service agencies that provide batterer's treatment receive an increasingly larger share of domestic violence funding.

As one whose professional social work identity is deeply rooted in the American battered women's movement, my observations of domestic violence practice, policy, and research in the U.S. and internationally over the last twenty years are admittedly biased. That is, similar to many social workers in the women's anti-violence movements, I tread a delicate line between feminist activism with its commitment to empowerment of women and survivors, and the mainstream social welfare concerns, such as assessing mental health indicators in abusers and evaluating the effectiveness of restraining orders. Therefore, my analysis of the relationship between professional social work and the

socially urgent matter of domestic abuse is situated within the context of both a feminist-activist and social work perspective.

By necessity, then, while these reflections are primarily intended for social work colleagues they will also be of interest to my feminist sisters (and the wonderful men who have supported our work over the years) in the U.S. and international battered women's movements. As we look back on the accomplishments of the last twenty years to end violence in the lives of women and children, there are a number of themes and conundrums that have continually plagued us and for which there have been no easy answers. Our article begins with an examination of social work's involvement in the domestic abuse issue. It includes a review of social movement theory as a framework through which the trajectory of the American battered women's movement is analyzed and intimate partner violence was brought to public consciousness as a significant social problem.

The particular role of social workers in the historical and contemporary development of interventions concerning domestic violence has been an often discussed issue, usually with disparaging implications about the social work profession. Here is an attempt to examine some of the elements that have contributed to ideological and practice tensions with regard to social work's contributions to end violence against women. One expectation of this analysis is that by revisiting the history of the anti-violence movement in the United States and internationally, social workers who are currently practicing will contextualize some of their prevailing notions about gender violence, feminism, and social activism that reflect the complex beginnings of "the domestic violence problem" over twenty years ago. As will be evident, it is our premise that many practicing social workers have not been trained in the social movement roots underlying the

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plethora of domestic violence services that currently employ many of us. Therefore, we conclude with recommendations for social work continuing education and professional development to include these long neglected analyses in our efforts to enhance our practice interventions with women, children, and men who experience violence in the home every day.

The History of Social Work in the American Battered Women's Movement

After over twenty years of working on behalf of battered women, I regard with some envy the skills and opportunities available to today's social workers in the domestic violence field. They are often passionate, confident, and more comfortable than we were about their interventions and roles with survivors, abusers, and institutions with whom they coordinate client care (courts, child welfare, substance abuse programs). They have well-established men's group curricula to work from and they can rattle off the detailed procedures needed to file orders for protection. And what social worker today has never seen or heard of the Power and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar, 1993)? Most of all, these professional social workers have jobs in social service agencies, court offices, hospitals, and major research institutions (for example, the Minnesota Center on Violence Against Women at the University of Minnesota School of Social Work) specifically established to do this work. Domestic violence in America has come of age, and social workers have grown and developed along with it. However, do most social workers — old-timers and new graduates alike — know about the "real" history of the movements to end violence against women? For all of us who are familiar with the Power and Control Wheel, how many know that it was in part developed by groups of battered women in Duluth, Minnesota, as a more accurate description of daily life with batterers than Lenore Walker's (1979) equally ubiquitous cycle of violence, which was also based on self-reports by

women? This section attempts to establish some of the social movement foundations that currently influence social work practice with battered women, their children, and their partners.

The only comprehensive chronicle of the American battered women's movement is Susan Schechter's superb and singular work, *Women and Male Violence* (1982). Schechter's book portended some significant occurrences that have come to fruition during the fifteen years since it was published. In her introduction, Schechter states that her purpose in writing the book was to counteract the fact that "as non-feminist professionals joined shelter staffs in larger numbers...the movement's inspiring history would disappear behind official institutional accounts written by later generations of experts" (Schechter, 1982 p. 2). In the subsequent paragraph she goes on to confirm her fears by citing a 1981 statement on behalf of the NASW that failed to mention any of the feminist and grassroots origins of America's early response to domestic abuse. In the early 1970s, while individual social workers were at the forefront of the anti-rape and battered women's movements, the profession was not actively involved in the policy, education, or practice arenas regarding violence against women. The generalized representations and stereotypes of social workers that have always haunted the profession were also held by early battered women's advocates in the U.S. and other countries who considered social work professionals to be means-testing, bureaucratic officials of "the system" with no demonstrated interest in the rape and abuse of women by their partners and other men (Hagemann-White, 1998; McGregor & Hopkins, 1991; Schechter, 1982). These perceptions were only in part false. In addition to the profession's lack of public visibility on these issues, while many social workers were in positions frequently to interact with and serve women, they were neither sensitive to, nor adequately trained, on the problem of intimate violence (Schechter, 1982).

The Creation of Social Problems and Social Movements

The tension between professional social work and grassroots advocates exemplified a common and requisite aspect of the ways social problems become identified and in the case of "the battered woman problem," the role social movements play in that process. Spector and Kitsuse (1973) suggest that there is a natural process by which social problems come to public attention. Using a constructivist framework (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), they argue that phenomena come to be defined through a complex series of private and public activities called typification in which interested individuals and groups known as claims makers engage. In their four-stage model of social problems, the authors suggest that claims makers first assert that some problem exists, which is followed by responses from established and "official" institutions such as the government or social welfare agencies. In the third stage, claims makers and their supporters often reject the usually inadequate institutional response, resulting in the fourth stage which is the creation of their own alternative theories and models to address the problem.

The process of social problem construction is integrally related to social movement theory, a rich field of study for over thirty years (Darnovsky, Epstein, & Flacks, 1995; Ferree & Hess, 1985; Mauss, 1975; McAdam, 1983; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988; Oberschall, 1993; Zald & McCarthy, 1987). While there have been diverse theoretical and conceptual frameworks posited about social movements in the U.S. and other countries, feminist, environmental, human rights and other contemporary social movements that have emerged in Western nations in the post-WWII era have been characterized as new social movements (NSMs) (Cohen, 1985; Elder, 1985; Giddens, 1990; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Offe, 1985). While there are historical and political factors that differentiate NSMs not only from each other but from social movements in general (see McAdam et al., 1988, for a comprehensive review), there are

some common features of NSMs that are applicable to the life cycle of the battered women's movement in particular.

One of the most important aspects of NSMs is that they are identity-based. That is, consistent with modernity's deconstruction of once stable social norms and relationships, theorists suggest that NSM participants share goals, experiences, and interpretations of social life that forge a collective identity among them (Cohen, 1985; Elder, 1985; Offe, 1985). More importantly, NSM members are often from marginalized social groups that are denied legitimate social identities in contemporary society. Their subsequent attraction to social movement work serves to fulfill some semblance of kinship networks missing in community and social life. Most accounts of early battered women's organizing support this aspect of the movement. In Germany, feminists were able to mobilize by linking battered women "with other disadvantaged groups...seen as less fortunate" (Hagemann-White, 1998, p. 177), while in Canada it was the "the grounding of movement women in the everyday oppression that is shared by women in all its different locations of class and race" (Walker, 1990, p. 218).

A second aspect of NSMs is collective reflexivity, in which one's deliberations on the social conditions of others' lives have a subsequent effect on one's own situation and a resultant commitment to change oppressive circumstances in society as a whole, a process which has also been referred to by Oliver (1989) as progressive commitment. Schechter (1982) reports that in the U.S. women came to the movement because "drawing the connection between one's own life and that of the woman calling [on a crisis line] was often a relatively easy step" (p. 52) and "women in shelters were forced to understand the concrete needs of poor and third world women for housing, welfare, clothing, and food" (p. 320). A related element of NSMs is the importance of associations, which are informal and formal gatherings in which members not only provide services and strategize for action,

but serve social support functions as well. Accounts of the battered women's movement describe the significant though mostly spontaneous consciousness raising that occurred in late night work shifts in refuges across the U.S. and in other countries (Loseke, 1992; McGregor & Hopkins, 1991; Stout & McPhail, 1998).

A third aspect of NSMs that is particularly relevant for social workers is the concept of professional leadership. Some theorists suggest that NSMs differ from earlier social change movements (the New Left or union organizing, for example) because its leaders are allowed to perform organizing work within their existing employment or the movement itself has developed the capacity for full-time organizers to conduct its work (Offe, 1985). While their job descriptions did not necessarily include the requirement, "ability to start social change movement," medical social workers, Legal Aid attorneys and VISTA volunteers were involved in forming the first shelters and coalitions in the U.S. Soon thereafter, funded positions designated for battered women's advocates and program directors were acquired. Finally, NSMs are also characterized by the predominance of middle-class participants and what Giddens (1973) argues is a "class aware" but not "class-conscious" analysis in the development of ideology and social change strategies. This factor is consistent with the emergence of NSMs in Western European and American capitalist states of the mid-20th century. In addition, this explains not only why so many of the early spokeswomen of the battered women's movement were middle-class professionals, but the recurring tension that ensued between professionals and nonprofessionals, feminists and non-feminists, and battered women and their "degreed" providers.

In summary, the social problem of battering was brought from the privacy of the home to the public domain through claims makers, leaders who were for the most part feminist-activists with roots in the already existing, predominantly White, middle-class women's liberation movement. The mobilization of diverse groups of women and a small out-

standing group of men was achieved through their shared experiences and analyses of gender-based and other forms of oppression. Finally this collective analysis and ideology was reinforced through existing social conditions that are particularly associated with Western capitalism since the post-war era of the 1950s. This background is an essential foundation for understanding how the "problem" of domestic abuse is viewed today, why ideology and practice have sometimes been uncompromising, and the particular roles and perceptions of middle-class professionals — including social workers — in a social change movement.

Professionals vs. Grassroots Advocates

The divide between professionals and non-professionals has been reported in most accounts of battered women's organizing in the United States, Canada, Australia, Germany, and Great Britain (Daniels, 1997; Hagemann-White, 1998; Loseke, 1992; McGregor & Hopkins, 1991; Violence, 1992; Walker, 1990). In these same accounts, it appears that the predominant archetype of "the professional" is usually the social worker or generic social service worker, in spite of the fact that academics, lawyers, and other degreed persons were involved in movement work. For this reason, it is important for practicing social workers to understand how these developments occurred, and what it foretold about the current and future role of the profession in the domestic abuse field.

This long-standing conflict is situated in a combination of factors including: 1) the feminist roots of the movement, 2) the particular social problem and target constituents around whom the movement was organized, 3) key elements and processes in the natural life cycle of new social movements, and 4) the type and nature of the relationships between professionals and constituent members of the movement. In their analysis of refuge organizations in Australia, McGregor and Hopkins (1991) argue that radical feminist foundations were evident in the collective nature of battered women's shelters. They state, "If violence has its roots in hierar-

chy, as the theory of patriarchy suggests, then non-hierarchical, empowering forms of organization are an integral part of the struggle against domestic violence" (p. 23). Similarly, in the U.S., Schechter (1982) reports that among early movement members "although some were professionals, most were not. Generally they found common ground with many feminists when they insisted on organizational autonomy, egalitarian treatment and self-help" (p. 50). These feminist credos were applied in other peer-based service models that de-emphasized expertise, privilege, and power between women, and for example in the anti-rape movement "emphasized the ability of any woman to do rape crisis work" (Matthews, 1994, p. xii). In addition, for battered women and advocates — feminist and non-feminist alike — their shared experiences of personal and institutional abuse on the basis of sex, race or class were reinforced by the promise of liberation through a social change movement. Third, many of those visible and public spokeswomen for the movement were oftentimes White, multiply-degreed, middle-class professionals who easily espoused a strong feminist rhetoric. All of these conditions were antithetical to the academic preparation and career expectations that accompanied the profession of social work prior to and during the early years of the battered women's movement.

As the early feminist roots combined with members' global experiences with violence and oppression were operationalized into their working relationships, there are some key factors that explain why social workers in particular became the fixation of professional-bashing. By now, we have all heard the numerous and diverse "horror stories" about battered women who recounted their experiences with abusive partners to child welfare workers, therapists, clergy, and counselors, and the careless, incompetent outcomes that resulted. While these service providers were not all trained in professional social work schools, many were. In addition, as the movement was taking hold and practicing social workers began to affiliate with this issue, conventional beliefs such as preserving marriage at

any cost still prevalent among the general population were expressed by social workers as well (Schechter, 1982; Walker, 1990).

To underscore the preceding factors, we cannot overlook the struggle for identity and power that has encumbered the profession of social work almost since its inception in the U.S. over a century ago. Competing against the enduring preference for positivist, scientific methods of treating human problems as embodied by medicine and its stepson psychology (purposely gendered here), the profession of social work has often been the scapegoat for all manner of complaint and maltreatment most consumers have about the helping professions. This relegation of social work to the lower strata of professional life is based primarily on a perspective that incorporates the following elements: 1) social work's historical commitment to the marginals of society, 2) the types of social problems equated with those groups, 3) the assignment of subordinate social status to both those populations and the profession that serves them, and 4) the gendered occupational stigma associated with the overrepresentation of women in social work practice.

In summary, as we reflect upon the mixed reviews the social work profession has received in terms of its involvement in the battered women's movement, this section closes by honoring the many foremothers of the American battered women's movement who were in fact professional social workers. Beginning with activist-author Susan Schechter, Barbara Hart crafted the initial concepts for civil protective orders and mandatory arrest now prominent in almost all U.S. jurisdictions (Hart, 1995), Ginny NiCarthy and Karen Merriam co-wrote the first self-help books for battered women and their advocates (NiCarthy, Merriam, & Coffman, 1984), Beth Richie was an early Black feminist voice to challenge the African-American community to consider domestic abuse as more than a White feminist concern (Richie, 1985; Richie, 1996), and Barbara Mikulski pioneered domestic violence legislation through Congress in 1980 (Schechter, 1982). Of the "new"

social workers in the domestic violence field today it is likely that few are well versed in the political, feminist, or social movement roots of battering. Continuing education programs that are designed to enhance clinical skill-training for social workers working with battered women and their families should integrate these historical contexts and analyses into their training agendas. By understanding the elements that underpin some of the existing policies and practices that are now commonplace, perhaps more social workers will reclaim the feminist, activist history of their work while acknowledging the celebrated and troubling aspects of the profession's relationship with battered women and the movement.

Yesterday's Dogma, Today's Discourse

Over the years, there have been a number of tenets and practices that advocates in the battered women's movement have not only initiated but demanded from service providers working in the domestic violence field. In this section, some key and sometimes controversial issues regarding the problem of domestic violence in the United States and as applicable in international settings will be discussed. In particular, these issues were selected for their relevance to professional social work practice with an aim towards encouraging but not necessarily resolving the discourse about doing social work on a problem with highly political and ideological foundations.

Who Are We Serving and How Are We Serving Them?

As chronologies of the U.S. and international battered women's movements depict, the first duty of early advocates was to assure safety for the battered woman (Daniels, 1997; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Hagemann-White, 1998; McGregor & Hopkins, 1991; Schechter, 1982; Walker, 1990). Not unlike the anti-rape movement, the battered women's movement was initially grounded in the protection and integrity of women — as survivors, as advocates, and as "all women." The emerging critique of the battered women's movement and by

extension feminism was that we were unduly focused on women, and not equally concerned about their children or male partners who were in fact co-related in family violence.

In 1977, EMERGE, the first program for batterers was established in Boston as a collaboration with local battered women's advocates. Thus began at least a decade of sometimes strident debate about such issues as the role of men in the movement, how to maintain a feminist vision in abusers' programs, and supporting batterers' services without eroding funding for women (Edleson & Tolman, 1992; Healey, Smith, & O'Sullivan, 1998; Yllo & Bograd, 1988). While contemporary concerns about child abuse and neglect were raised in the 1960s, attention by child welfare and other social service providers to the dual risk of child maltreatment and abuse of their mothers was minimal. Similarly, with the battered women's movement, its singular focus on women while relegating children to "secondary victim" status was a dangerous shortcoming (Alessi & Hearn, 1984; Hughes, 1982; Peled, 1996). Almost immediately, child advocates in the movement called for more than just respite services for the children of battered women. It is important to add that battered women themselves (some in their "official" advocate roles) were also at the forefront of the discourse seeking solutions to these complex issues. However, the stringent and often criticized feminist ideology of the movement was at times antithetical to the very goals we were seeking, which was the liberation and empowerment of women. In particular, it was the expressed needs of battered women that were sometimes incongruous with the collective feminist analyses about the causes of and solutions for battering, resulting in turmoil both within and outside the ranks (Daniels, 1997; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Loseke, 1992; Walker, 1990). And while none of the above issues was resolved very well, they foreboded the direction of public policy and social services regarding domestic violence from the early 1970s to the present.

As the battered woman "problem" became legitimized by the state, the change in nomenclature from "battered women" to "domestic violence" (domestic abuse, family violence, etc.) was evidence of not only a linguistic but political-ideological transition regarding this issue. Claims makers in the movement had constructed what Loeske (1992) called "a collective representation" of the battered woman and the battered woman problem in order to typify with whom "the face" of this emerging issue might be associated. Such a typification was intended to idealize sufficiently with whom the general populace and more importantly institutional bureaucracies could sympathize and, therefore, view as deserving of attention. While it meant more visibility, more funding, and more legitimacy for battered women, it also severely limited what kinds of battered women and their families indeed would be served by our efforts. In a previous analysis (Kanuha, 1996), the ways such a process of social problem construction affected our notions of battered women as White, without agency, and not fighting back, was discussed in terms of implicating the fundamentally racist and classist foundations of the movement.

In addition, no longer was it acceptable to focus only on feminist interests of women's empowerment and self-determination. Instead, the new calls to accountability were "What about the children?" and "How can we help abusers change?" voiced not only by battered women themselves but by those social service, child welfare, and public policy proponents who had been at the sidelines of the movement for many years. These charges were evidence of our success in transitioning from a radical, feminist-based, activist movement to a viable, mainstream, bona fide institution in American life. Zald (1988) elaborated upon this natural development in social movements by adding that most social movement activity "in fact takes place in bureaucratic institutions and in the professions." We have created a family violence industry that now includes specialty fields in incest, sexual assault of children, teens, and adults, intimate partner abuse, dating

violence, elder abuse, and abuse by therapists and clergy (Busby, 1996; Chalk & King, 1998; Klein, 1998; Walker, 1990).

The proliferation of domestic violence services has at least three important implications for American and international social work professionals. First, the service industry that has evolved from early organizing efforts is predominated by micro- and meso-level interventions. Where our emphasis was previously focused on changing the economic and social structures that propagate attitudes of subjugation and coercion, we are now more concerned about licensure for batterers' group therapists. We treat battered women for PTSD instead of lobbying beside them for meaningful, economically viable jobs equal to men. As urged by Conroy (1998) in her analysis about the role of clinical social work with battered women:

Clinical social work's place is not in the forefront of advocacy, although we should be advocates; it is not in leading program development, although we should develop programs. Clinical social work's most valued contribution should be in the area of clinical intervention itself. (p. 4)

That the role of professional social work, indeed its "most valued contribution," would be in the clinical domain is evidence of another ideological shift regarding domestic violence work. As noted by a consensus of battered women's theorists from the United States, Western Europe, and Australia it appears that the preference for individualized solutions to complex social problems is attributed primarily to Western capitalism (Daniels, 1997; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Hagemann-White, 1998; McGregor & Hopkins, 1991; Walker, 1990). That is, such approaches are consistent with ascribing responsibility for one's problems primarily to human entities, and not to the state or the social environs in which we live. Matthews (1994) further suggests that the therapeutic resolution of problems through the assistance of professionals is a "conservatizing influence" intended to "disguise social ills as personal trauma" (p. xiv). If we

examine the natural life cycle of social movements, this conservatizing influence is consistent with the institutionalization of social problems such that solutions to once unwieldy social goals are made manageable through services and systems focused on incremental change (Daniels, 1997; Zald & McCarthy, 1987). Drawing upon Dorothy Smith's work (1987), Walker (1990) argues:

We have taken up the issue of wife-beating but the 'battered wife' has proved problematic. She has become the 'victim' of 'violence' perpetrated by a batterer who must be prosecuted and treated for his violent behavior. In the process she is turned into an abstraction by procedures that remove from the general context of women's lives the experience being named, constituting it as a category. The category can then be assembled, with others, as issues or social problems from which professional intervention extracts all political focus. Social service or legal solutions can be provided to the individuals concerned. (p. 108)

While social workers can and should be engaged in clinical interventions with battered women and their families, for those social workers who are feminist activists, the more profound analytical question is at what cost to transformative social change do we implicitly maintain the structure for and thereby valorize our micro-level interventions. In retrospect, what have been the results of our successful campaign to bring the "battered woman problem" into public life? To begin with, as many of us feared, the shift in emphasis from battered women to "domestic abuse" or "family violence" did in fact elevate attention to the vulnerable children and "rehabilitatable" partners of battered women while rendering those women as less important, less appealing "victims" and "survivors." In addition, by constructing an acceptable portrayal of "the" battered woman as hapless victim, we have inadvertently excluded from social work texts, research, and clinical programs others who do not fit this collective representation. Some of those currently overlooked: girls and women

exploited in the sex industry in the U.S.; girls and women trafficked in Asia, with the American military as a primary offender; lesbians in violent relationships; and women whose basic human rights are violated daily through global banking machinations, e.g., American-owned sweatshops that employ women in "Third World" countries. Finally, it is simply a professional disgrace that after twenty years we have very few exemplary programs, analyses, or research about battered women of color, and understand so little about men of color who batter and rape (Campbell, Masaki, & Torres, 1997; Chester, Robin, Koss, Lopez, & Goldman, 1994; Hampton, 1991; Kanuha, 1996; Richie, 1996; Williams & Becker, 1994).

As with all issues and problems that become part of the social landscape through social movements, the legitimization of domestic abuse over the last twenty years has been a mixed blessing. The complex issues that were so difficult to deliberate about, much less resolve within the movement have been replaced by rational, "objective" discourse and discussants. Most notable, however, is that the mainstreaming of the movement's struggles has resulted in programs, services, and workers with a diminished if not absent feminist analysis. What this implies for social workers today, whether or not they have beginnings in the battered women's movement, is that professional development and continuing education trainings be designed to maintain the best of our feminist analyses about violence against women while critiquing the well accepted service models that have evolved over these decades. Given the current political climate at least in the United States, however, it will probably be more difficult to do the former than the latter.

Re-contextualizing Violence Against Women

While the battered women's movement in the United States was essentially an extension of the feminist movement, its roots are in anti-rape organizing that began in the late 1960s (Matthews, 1994; Schechter, 1982). Rape crisis centers and

hot lines were springing up all over the U.S. simultaneous to public education efforts to raise consciousness about sexual violence, male domination, and gender inequality. An apparently similar course has been reported in accounts of anti-rape and battered women's organizing in Canada, Australia, and Western Europe (Daniels, 1997; Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Hagemann-White, 1998; Schechter, 1982; Walker, 1990). Despite their parallel concerns and analyses about violence against women, after the battered women's movement took hold in the mid-1970s there was a largely unacknowledged chasm that developed between the sexual assault and battered women's movements, at least in the U.S. The estrangement was apparent in the establishment of separate services, national and state coalitions, and even in the historical research currently available about domestic violence and sexual assault organizing (Daniels, 1997; Matthews, 1994; Schechter, 1982; Walker, 1990). And, while it is not the objective of this article to explain (nor is it exactly clear) why battering and sexual assault were being addressed along such separate functional and social agendas, there have been a number of outcomes relevant to social work that have ensued from this still existing divide.

Most notable is the fact that many of the clinical and practice interventions currently employed by professional social workers literally "treat" rape survivors and/or battered women as if they are quite different kinds of clients. We have sexual assault protocols for hospital emergency rooms that are heavy on evidence gathering, while health care personnel are trained to screen, assess, and discuss options with battered women who appear in clinics. Most of the literature on battering emphasize strategies to keep women safe, while we are more likely to focus on ways to help women "survive" the aftermath of rape (Busby, 1996; Chalk & King, 1998; Herman, 1992). Despite the overwhelming evidence that neither treatment nor other sanctions significantly reduce violent behavior among batterers or sexual offenders, criminal justice initiatives for batterers concentrate on sanctioning and rehabilitating them, while child sexual offenders must

register with local authorities even after they have served jail time and/or received treatment.

In short, it appears that we continue to sanctify the primary bastion of heterosexuality, marriage, and the family over "less intimate" dating or stranger relationships. Sex offenders are somehow more menacing than battering men who are just everyday guys with power and control problems. At some level, we also afford a more maternalistic view towards battered women versus rape survivors regarding the concept of culpability. When I train on these issues, practicing professionals no longer express disdain about the limited agency that battered women have; i.e., most audiences do not come right out and ask why she stays. However, with the topic of sexual assault there continues to be an undercurrent among social workers and other providers that the literal embodiment of assault through a sexual encounter implies some imputation on the woman's part. This subtle but troubling differentiation that we impose upon the issues, our clients, and the interventions we develop is in part attributable to the complexity of battering and versus sexual assault. However, it is also an unintended consequence of the separate organizing of the battered women and anti-rape movements.

The political estrangement of these dual but related ideological movements is in part evidence of a failed collective vision. That is, if we began as feminist activists concerned first and foremost about the historical pervasiveness of violence as a patriarchal weapon against women and children, by partitioning our subsequent organizing efforts we allowed our ideologies, turf, and eventually the natural evolution of state bureaucratization to surmount our original vision for social change. In the course of developing rape crisis centers, battered women's shelters and offender services which focus on individualized interventions to end violence, we not only reinforced the disconnections between sexual assault and battering but dissipated the possibility of changing the very institutions that enable heterosexism, racism, classism, ageism, and other forms of oppression to endure.

These days, my preferred term for these various and complex issues related to the systematic exploitation of women and girls is gender violence. This term, for me, honors the radical transformations in American society due to the sexual assault and battered women's movements, along with resolving the too long divide between them. It also broadens the analysis and effects of violence against women to include those girls and women mentioned earlier who do not fit neatly into our existing programs and social work curricula on domestic abuse. And, finally, it gives credit to and underscores the deeply feminist roots in our understanding of violence against women which in many agencies, clinical sessions, and training workshops have been lost. For no matter how many husbands are also abused by their wives, children who are damaged by witnessing abuse in their homes, or young girls who "choose" prostitution, this problem in the end is essentially a systematic, institutionally gendered one.

Putting Ideology to Practice

As a feminist advocacy movement, the battered women's movement grounded their work in the epistemology and ontology of our lived experience as women — that is, as survivors, mothers, partners, workers. Building on the work of the anti-rape and broader women's movements, concepts such as empowerment, self-determination, advocacy, and safety were not only operationalized through particular practices but reified by them. We developed groups, organizing strategies, and hiring policies based on collective understandings of these concepts.

Interestingly, many of the concepts and practices including those noted above are hallmarks of both the battered women's movement and professional social work. For battered women's advocates and social workers, however, the inherent tensions in putting concepts to practice are not easily reconciled. Operationalizing the notion of empowerment is one example. A primary tenet of work with women and other marginalized populations, the

idea of empowerment as applied to battered women was intended to respect the integrity and self-determination implicit in the processes by which women made decisions about violence and other aspects of their lives (NiCarthy et al., 1984; Stout & McPhail, 1998; Violence, 1992). This is not inconsistent with social work's perspective on empowerment, which includes a critical assessment of individuals/groups in their social environment, validation of their perceptions and experience, and praxis or reflective action (Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye, 1995; Lee, 1994; Simon, 1994). However, in its purest form, empowerment and client self-determination for battered women means children must witness their mother's abuse until women are safe to leave. How does that operationalization of empowerment fit with the fact that in its purest form the profession of social work is designed to serve the common good and "promote the general welfare of society" (National Association of Social Workers, 1990)? Similarly, with safety, is it the social worker's role to accept the intuitive assessment of risk that a battering partner reports whether or not our "professional" evaluation determines that her abusive partner is likely to strike tonight?

Certainly, as with the distinctions between micro-level clinical interventions and macro-level institutional change efforts, these are not "sharp-shooting riders on black and white steeds" as one assertive client once described my sometimes dualistic therapeutic options. However, "new" social workers who have inherited some of the notions developed in the battered women's movement must take care not to reject them offhand as too feminist or simplistic, nor to believe that the practices of empowerment and self-determination are only as effective as the client or institution that cooperates with our professional treatment recommendations.

Conclusions and Future Prospects

This analysis was intended as a dialectic of complementary themes both celebratory and critical, hopeful and ominous. The battered women's movement situated its anti-violence and feminist analysis

regarding sexism and violence with the interconnected issues of racism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism and homophobia, classism, and other forms of social oppression. Unfortunately, for all that we have accomplished to end violence against women around the world, the current ideological and economic condition of American life does not bode well for efforts to assure equitable treatment for gay and transgendered men, the poor, people of color, women and others. Therefore, social workers should draw on the foregoing analysis of the battered women's movement to enhance their current practice not only within the domestic violence field but with related populations and issues at multiple levels of intervention.

Most of what we have heretofore deemed good theory and best practice regarding violence against women were originally developed by "clients" themselves, consistent with the collective feminist principles upon which the battered women's movement was founded. However, it was only a matter of time before the institutionalization and subsequent involvement of the state into "the domestic abuse problem" would follow and those who would be tasked to provide services, administer programs, and conduct research would look less like "them" and more like "us." Today, practices that appear heavy on feminist ideology — often derived from battered women and advocates in the 1980s — are either tolerated or rejected by service providers. Where it was once imperative that battered women or at least their perspectives were integral to any development or delivery of service, many professionals now find such a requirement unnecessary and intrusive. The decades long tension between professionals and non-professionals is essentially a non-issue today. Why? Because almost everyone from the men's group therapist to the shelter director to the legal advocate is now a "professional." We have eliminated the need for activists, organizers, and, indeed, a role for battered women themselves, unless of course they are clients or have degrees. Social workers who are teaching, conducting research, or designing professional devel-

opment programs, can truly empower battered women, rape survivors, and girls escaping prostitution, by involving them as partners and collaborators in every initiative. For example, due to the complex nature of intimate violence that is not traditionally gendered male-to-female, it is important that any professional trainings or workshops on this issue include co-presenters who are lesbians that have experienced violence in their relationships. With lesbian battering, as well as other types of gender violence that are not well-established or understood among practitioners (such as prostitution or femicide), there is no substitute for the contributions and narratives from women themselves.

While many social work professionals today are employed to handle problems such as mental illness, aging, substance addiction, and juvenile crime, gender violence is one of the few topics in social work with roots in a political, social movement led by and for women. Although not primarily mobilized by women, the contemporary HIV/AIDS movement is a corollary. As stated throughout this article, the import of this fact cannot be overstated. With the increased emphasis on clinical social work training on domestic violence it is unlikely that schools of social work will include an in-depth examination of the foundations of our existing practice models. Therefore, professional social workers should familiarize themselves with the specific historical and theoretical literature regarding feminism, anti-rape, and battered women's organizing to situate accurately their attitudes, beliefs, and practices in an ecological framework.

Our overemphasis on individual interventions to address gender violence illustrates the conservatizing influence upon our solutions to complex social problems as suggested by Walker (1990), but it is also indicative of the social work profession's increasing deviation from its own social change roots. A recent report from the Committee on the Assessment of Family Violence Interventions, sponsored by the National Research Council (Chalk & King, 1998), highlights the importance of an ecological approach in "shifting away from single

risk factor approaches in favor of models that examine the interactions of factors across individual, social and cultural domains" as well as reforming "cultural attitudes towards gender in general and male attitudes towards women in particular as part of the social intervention process" (p. 277). Towards this end, there are two specific recommendations for currently practicing social workers. First, continuing education programs should offer trainings on the Coordinated Community Response to domestic assault, better known as the Duluth model (Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 1996). Well-grounded in a feminist and battered women's movement analysis, the Duluth model is based on the establishment of formal working relationships between shelters, criminal justice, batterer's programs, police, and social welfare agencies in local communities. The model has been cited as one of the most effective interventions for domestic violence, primarily due to its collaborative, multi-system approach (Chalk & King, 1998; Gamache, Edleson, & Shock, 1988; Hart, 1995; Healey et al., 1998). The entirety of this particular framework is rarely taught in schools of social work because it is best applied within already existing service agencies and practitioner networks. For social workers in private or public settings, interested in clinical or policy-related outcomes, the model offers the promise of both individual and institutional change.

A second and related task is to ensure that clinical skill trainings on domestic abuse are designed with both micro-and macro-level emphases. Again, drawing an example from the Duluth experience, their support group curriculum for battered women is based in part on Paulo Friere's popular education approach for critical consciousness (Pence, 1987). Clinicians who require further training to enhance their work with individual battered women, abuser groups, or any oppressed populations should become skilled at both process and praxis, consistent with social work's emphasis on empowerment (Burstow, 1992; Gutierrez et al., 1995). If our interventions are to be predominated by micro-level strategies, at least social workers should be trained

to include more social change and activist tactics in their clinical repertoire.

Additionally, we must step up theory building, program development, and research, relevant to those populations and issues that have been under-represented in our construction of abuse, battering, rape, and all forms of gender and bias-related violence. An outstanding and long overdue effort currently in progress across the U.S. is professional training for child welfare and social service workers on the interrelationship between battered women and child abuse/neglect (Fleck-Henderson & Krug, 1998; Friend & Mills, 1998; Schechter & Edleson, 1994). These initiatives are often collaborations between schools of social work and public/private child welfare agencies that include specialized skill training for social work supervisors and their staff, team-building between hospital, child protective service, and domestic violence providers, and curriculum development for schools of social work.

With regard to diversifying the available literature and training materials on gender violence, notwithstanding the exceptional text by Stout and McPhail (1998) and Burstow's (1992) radical feminist approach social work literature that contains an integrated analysis of violence against women is still meager. For example, while there are many texts and professional training workshops on child sexual abuse and incest, few social workers are prepared or skilled to intervene with children and teens who are involved in prostitution and pornography. In a continuing education social work course I recently taught, the majority of students had never heard the term "trafficking" and most knew practically nothing about its implications for them as practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region where girls and women from their home countries such as the Philippines, Japan, and even right here in Hawaii, are being exploited. More troubling, however, the course was on gender violence and all the students were women. Continuing education should draw upon diverse sources of information to expand the available "literature" on gender vio-

lence. These sources include the Internet, agency newsletters, and personal narratives by survivors.

Finally, while inservice trainings on diversity and multiculturalism abound in most social work settings, we need more workshops that provide analysis and skill-building about those most stigmatized and invisible among our so-called culturally competent, domestic violence services: lesbians who are battered/batterers, male transgenders who are harassed in school, and Asian and Pacific Islander immigrants experiencing violence in the home. In addition, culturally competent social work practice should not focus primarily on improving our clinical sensitivities, but the advancement of research agendas and future professionals that represent those populations about whom we wish to become more culturally competent.

Despite the bad press that social workers and the profession constantly receive, we are still the field of practice that offers the best analyses and promise for social change. We began as activists and our work is deeply ingrained in those foundations. Gender violence is only one of many issues upon which we have left our mark as advocates, clinicians, and teachers. As we look to the decades ahead, let us return to our professional roots as social change agents by keeping our vision on reformist and revolutionary institutional efforts and not only on sound clinical work.

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NOTES

1. The various terms of reference for the complex phenomenon of violence towards women are also fraught with political-ideological meanings (see for example, Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Edleson & Tolman, 1992; Gelles & Loseke, 1993; McGregor & Hopkins, 1991; Walker, 1990). In terms of intimate partner violence, we have long rejected the limitations of our early terms, "wife assault" or "conjugal abuse." Feminist advocates believe "battering" acknowledges both the patterns of abusive behavior and the social movement roots in intimate partner violence, while some theorists prefer "domestic violence" and "family violence" due to its emphasis on the context of violence in the family and home. The term "gender violence" has gained currency because it encompasses all forms and contexts of violence against women, while "spouse abuse" is considered too gender-neutral. Cynthia Daniels (1997) offers a fascinating and cogent analysis on the topic of terminology regarding domestic violence.

For the purposes of this article, most of these terms and others such as "abuse," "violence," "victim," and "survivor," will be used interchangeably. Readers should become familiar with the historical roots and important distinctions that accompany their use of any terminology regarding this and other social problems.