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RESEARCH REPORT SERIES   2/2015

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ISSN 2357-206X

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Abstract

This article examines how contemporary women's advocates working in New Zealand with women experiencing intimate partner violence regard their work and how these experiences both connect with and depart from a feminist movement to end violence against women. Ten women's advocates from ten different organisations were interviewed two times. First interviews involved participants commenting on vignettes about hypothetical cases of intimate partner violence. Second interviews were semi-structured and involved discussions about participants' work and wider thoughts on the phenomenon of intimate partner violence. Interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to identify key themes within participants' interviews. Analysis indicated an alignment with international research illustrating an erosion of feminist perspectives in advocacy work. At the same time, it revealed areas of enduring feminist influence. Findings therefore suggest that the relationship between advocacy and the feminist movement to end violence against women is complicated and contradictory. Implications for further research directions are considered.

Key words: Intimate partner violence, violence against women, feminism, interpretative phenomenological analysis, advocacy.

Introduction

International research has suggested that contemporary advocates for women who are subject to intimate partner violence (IPV) may be increasingly disconnected from feminist political goals for social change around violence against women (VAW) (Hammons, 2004; Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009). Drawing on semi-structured interviews with contemporary advocates in Aotearoa/New Zealand, this article investigates the ways in which advocates' experiences of their work today with women recovering from IPV connect with and/or depart from the wider feminist movement to end VAW. Acknowledging the complexity and breadth of feminist thought, the researcher was interested in engagement with varied feminist approaches to IPV work and sense making of the phenomenon of VAW. This research was conducted as part of a master's thesis in social practice and had the explicit goal of contributing to feminist research in Aotearoa/New Zealand to strengthen our work to end VAW. Diane Woolson Neville conducted the master's research with Dr. Helen Gremillion acting as principal supervisor.

The international feminist movement to end VAW has catalysed widespread political and social change around the world. Feminist movements in civil society working to end VAW have been responsible for significant and enduring shifts in how VAW is addressed worldwide (Ertürk & Purkayastha, 2012; Htun & Weldon, 2012). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, feminist organising has given voice to women's experiences of violence and oppression which had historically remained silenced (Cahill & Dann, 1991; Grey, 2008; McCallum, 1993).

In New Zealand and elsewhere organisations were formed to support women who experienced violence and abuse in their homes (Hammons, 2004; Hancock, 1979; National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges, n.d.). These organisations often worked to support women recovering from violence and abuse while simultaneously striving for systemic long term change to end VAW. The women who worked for these organisations came to be known as 'advocates'. Advocates' work simultaneously involved supporting women who experienced abuse at home to have increased safety and linking this work to the wider movement to end VAW (Coombes, Morgan, Blake, & McGray, 2009; Hammons, 2004; Hindle & Morgan, 2006; Lehrner & Allen, 2009; Pence, 2001; Sadusky, Martinson, Lizdas, & McGee, 2010). It has been argued internationally that feminist VAW organisations and the advocates who work there have become increasingly depoliticised. The rise of a neo-liberal individualised approach to addressing VAW has meant a change in service delivery focus; according to a number of scholars, close working relationships with statutory bodies with different agendas for change have compromised goals for wide spread change (Finley, 2010; Hammons, 2004; Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009; McDonald, 2005; Stark, 2007).

Intimate Partner Violence and Advocacy: Historical and Contemporary Context

Violence against women is an issue which affects every nation in the world. Most countries have rates of between 29-62% of women experiencing some form of violence in their lifetimes (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005). In New Zealand, research has indicated that between 33-39% of women who ever have a partner will experience IPV in their lifetimes (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004). Overwhelmingly, IPV involves male abuse of female partners (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2012). Local research has

shown that most IPV remains unreported to statutory organisations, and only just over half of women who experience it have sought support (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010).

Addressing the silence surrounding VAW was a driver of feminist political movements in many nations in the 1970s, which have sought to uncover the relations of power VAW entails. Though many different perspectives on VAW existed at that time, and the diversity of feminist perspectives on the issue are continually evolving, common components of a feminist view include an acknowledgment of the gendered nature of violence, male privilege, and social constructions which allow VAW to continue (United Nations General Assembly, 2006). These ideas have come to form the basis of the socio-political, or movement, analysis of IPV and other forms of VAW (Hammons, 2004; Lehrner & Allen, 2008; McMillan, 2007).

In the 1970s, women's groups around the world concerned with issues of gender inequality began to be organised, and became movements with social momentum (Sawer & Grey, 2008; United Nations General Assembly, 2006). Various levels of activism were undertaken simultaneously: women focused on empowerment through consciousness raising groups, women's organisations were established with egalitarian structures, and many advocated for wider change in the myriad systems (e.g. in families and in workplaces) which enabled VAW (Hammons, 2004).

Feminist advocacy was directly responsible for legal changes around IPV and sexual assault. While the effectiveness of legal changes may be variable, the legal changes themselves signalled important cultural movement around VAW (Hammons, 2004; McMillan, 2007; Stark, 2007). Feminist movements were successful in raising VAW as a human rights issue throughout the world; consequently it became an issue of international policy. This development led to the linking of national

and international women's movements (Ertürk & Purkayastha, 2012). Violence against women began to be understood as the responsibility of individual national governments (United Nations General Assembly, 2006), and states provided funding to organisations offering services to victims of IPV (Hammons, 2004; McDonald, 2005).

Refuges and shelters for women were established in a number of countries in the 1970s, with the first refuge established in the UK in 1971 and other countries quickly following to open their own shelters for women fleeing IPV (Hammons, 2004; McMillan, 2007; Stark, 2007). These organisations were understood as 'feminist social movement organisations' and were "the embodiment of feminist theory and practice, and reflect varied missions, structures, issues, strategies and products" (Hyde, 2000, p. 47). As collective structures were seen as compatible with feminist goals many of these organisations were structured collectively, in opposition to mainstream structures which were seen to replicate inequality (Gilson, 2006; McMillan, 2007).

Women who work within feminist movement organisations are commonly known as 'advocates', whose work has involved empowering and supporting women through IPV in part by viewing these women as experts in their own lives (Hammons, 2004; Lehrner & Allen, 2008; Pence, 2001; Stark, 2007). It has been argued that advocacy itself is also activism (Pence, 2001). Women who were supported were considered part of the struggle to end VAW, and their experiences formed the knowledge base of the movement work:

> Feminist anti-violence activities have a foundation in extensive knowledge, standards and ethics, and political analysis that are all built on the experiences of women, on collective knowledge building processes, and on listening to women's experiences, not as patients or as clients, but as members of a social change movement (Bonisteel & Green, 2005, p. 33).

In this view, advocates are the point of connection between the community and the feminist movement to end IPV.

A feminist women's movement working to end VAW developed in New Zealand during the 1970s and gradually organisations were formed to address the service needs of victims of sexual assault and IPV (Cahill & Dann, 1991; Grey, 2008; McCallum, 1993). These organisations were not all feminist in nature, though many were (Hancock, 1979). The rise of women's centres, rape crisis centres, women's health centres and women's refuges happened around the 1970s from primarily politically motivated groups which had a degree of cohesion despite varied feminist perspectives (Vanderpyl, 2004). Despite feminist ambivalence about the role of the state in addressing VAW (Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 2008), efforts to raise awareness of IPV successfully led to significant legal changes designed to protect victims of IPV and hold perpetrators accountable (Fenrich & Contesse, 2009).

It has been argued that the shift of IPV from radical issue to mainstream has coincided with a weakened feminist movement. The rise of neo-liberalism in many western nations and its associated emphasis on individual rather than societal level approaches, the professionalization of service delivery, and the co-optation of feminist social change agendas through close working relationships with the police and justice have all been associated with the decline of a feminist VAW movement (Finley, 2010; Grey, 2008; Hammons, 2004; Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009; McDonald, 2005; Sawer & Grey, 2008; Stark, 2007). International research on this topic indicates that even advocates who consider themselves members of a feminist movement to end VAW evidence disconnections from this movement (Hammons, 2004; Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009). The relationship between advocacy and a feminist movement has not previously been explored in the contemporary New Zealand context. This research was concerned with how

advocates for women recovering from IPV experience their role as advocates, and how these experiences connect with and disconnect from a feminist socio-political movement to end VAW.

Research Methods

This research was undertaken in 2011/2012. Ten women working as advocates for women who had experienced IPV were interviewed. All participants worked in organisations that support women victims of IPV, with each of the ten participants working at separate organisations. Organisations were asked to approve an advocate participating with the understanding that individual participation was voluntary and confidential. Seven Pākeha women, one Māori woman, one Asian woman, and one Pasifika woman were interviewed. Participants came from a range of ages with two women aged between 20-29, two women aged between 30-39, three women aged between 40-49, two women aged between 50-59, and one woman over 60 years of age. Participants had worked within their organisations for various lengths of time with three women working at their current organisation under one year, three from one to three years, one from four to six years, one six to nine years, and two for over ten years. All participants have been given pseudonyms.

Participants were interviewed twice. The first structured interview involved participants commenting on four vignettes, or scenarios, about IPV and working with IPV. Vignettes were selected at this stage for their ability to focus thinking while also creating space for participants to elaborate with personally meaningful discussion (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). Second interviews were semi-structured and involved questions covering participants' experiences of their work as advocates, organisational history, and ideas about causes of IPV while allowing for the interview to flow into areas of personal meaning for participants. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed; transcripts were subsequently emailed to participants for approval. Interview data were analysed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was chosen for its emphasis on participant experiences and its focus on generating a robust descriptive account from transcripts while considering the role of the researcher when interpreting themes (Larkin, Clifton, & de Visser, 2009; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

When two interviews had been concluded with all participants, each participant's two interviews were combined to create one participant account. The accounts were analysed with an IPA process modified from Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). Transcripts were first read while listening to the audio recording of each interview; afterwards initial impressions were recorded. Secondly transcripts were read again and initial notes on descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual foci were made. Thirdly, themes were generated from these notes with textual examples. This process was followed with each participant account. Themes identified in earlier participant accounts were revisited as subsequent accounts were analysed. These stages were part of a fluid process in which steps were revisited along the way, as recommended by Smith, et al. (2009).

Research Findings

Analysis of participants' accounts of their experiences of their advocacy work produced two primary themes: connections with and disconnections from a feminist socio-political movement perspective. These will be explored in turn, though importantly, the lines between these themes are not always clearly defined. The IPA analysis used privileges the experiences of participants, allowing room for such contradictions to be explored. That both connections with and disconnections from a feminist socio-political perspective occur within all participant accounts indicates the complicated

relationship today's advocates have with a feminist position of advocacy.

Connections With a Feminist Perspective

This theme contained two sub-themes: honouring women's experiences and the role of the advocate. These will be explored separately.

Honouring Women's Experiences

All ten participants' accounts indicated a connection with a feminist history of advocacy. Sometimes these connections were explicitly made; elsewhere the connections were made more tacitly. All ten participants placed much importance on honouring women's stories and experiences; the process of advocacy was frequently spoken of as a woman-led process. As Sarah summarised, "So, it's just always making sure that the woman knows that she has choices and reminding her of that." Participants often spoke of this focus as distinguishing their role of woman's advocate from that of, for example, a social worker from Child, Youth and Family. Placing the woman and her choices at the centre of advocacy practice is a key feminist legacy, though it is not without challenges as Melanie stated:

> You would believe for people, and you would hope for people, and you would be positive for people, but in the end, you hold them lightly, because they've got to do what they need to do. You can't - you can't change their life, you can try and point them in the right direction and motivate them and encourage them, to go in that direction, but you can't change them. And you need to - well I think you need to - you need to keep that in the back of your mind because otherwise you'll break your heart . . . and we would always welcome people back.

This quote illustrates the idea of walking alongside women on their 'journey', which was a concept present in eight participant accounts. The emphasis on walking with a woman as a collaborative partner as she heals from

abuse reveals another aspect of the role of advocate as seen by the participants in this research. This aspect goes beyond providing a service of support, and reveals a connection with a historically feminist emphasis on relationships based on principles of equality. This awareness of power - the potential for the advocate relationship to replicate unequal power relationships seen in IPV and the importance of modelling equality instead – was highlighted by Francie:

> It is a big thing, often the women don't leave - they stay and stay. And you can only work with them where they are. I know that CYFS (Child Youth and Family Services), sometimes for CYFS, they have to leave abusive relationships, or CYFS say, 'if you stay in this relationship, we will have to uplift your children, because they're being exposed to too much violence.' Um . . . for us, it's not a policy to say, 'you should leave.' I will work with women where they are - absolutely support them where they are. And hopefully walk with them - maybe to leaving - or maybe, he will do a programme, I don't know. But, our - we're not here to break up relationships; we're here to support the woman in what she wants to do. To, offer her choices, to give her - to explain to her what is available in the community for her. But also, to make her see that she doesn't have to stay, that there are other options for her.

The idea of working with a woman's individual needs was echoed by the other nine participants. In this way, the advocate and client relationship for the participants in this research was characterised by great responsiveness to individual women. This relationship was seen as a collaborative one, and was allowed to evolve over time as a given client's needs changed. The following quote from Maria emphasises the importance of the relationship progressing at the woman's pace. She said in response to a scenario in the first interview when a woman phoned for help:

> Because this is the first time she's probably called, and if I go on too much about how bad it is for

children, she's going to feel even more guilty and she probably won't call back. So you've got to be very careful. The most I'll say is - well I'll ask, 'So, how are the children?' You know, 'is he abusive - do the children see it?' And I might say something like, 'you know, the violence does affect them, you know, even if they don't see it, they hear it, they feel it, they sense it.' But not go into too much detail there because I'm wanting her to go away and think about it and call back. Then we can go into the next step, which is, you know, maybe she might decide to leave because she understands he won't change, then her step really is to leave the relationship. So then we go into whether she needs a refuge, or she might need to talk to a lawyer to get the parenting orders and protection orders. And all that sort of thing, but you can't push it. If you push it too much they won't come back.

Maria's excerpt illustrates the delicate work of building rapport with a vulnerable woman; the importance of assessing safety while maintaining an opportunity to provide support which could decrease her risk.

This sub-theme was characterised by the importance the advocates in this research placed on building working relationships with women recovering from IPV which are based on equality and which place primary importance on the women guiding the process. The advocates in this research emphasised the importance of working with women so they understood they had choices, an idea that women entrenched in an abusive intimate relationship may be unused to. These approaches to advocacy work connect strongly with a feminist history of advocacy.

The Role of The Advocate

As noted above, the advocates in this research all spoke of the role of advocate as one distinct from other social support workers a woman recovering from IPV may encounter, for example a Child Youth and Family social worker or a Work and Income case manager. The experiences of advocacy work in this research form a complex role negotiating power: advocates were the holders of specialist knowledge which was used to educate and inform women about the nature of abuse and also to advocate on behalf of women as they negotiate through systems where they may feel powerless. This attention to power relations embedded in systems is a key feature of feminist approaches to IPV.

Half of the advocates explicitly saw their role as facilitating women's empowerment, sometimes spoken of as a key component of feminist conceptions of advocacy, though one that is not without its tensions. For five participants in this research, empowerment stemmed from the knowledge that a woman recovering from IPV can be at her lowest, often having been in a relationship where she has been controlled for an extended period of time. Empowerment was related to an emphasis on women regaining the knowledge that they have choices in their lives. As Caroline said, "I don't believe you can empower people - I believe people empower themselves - but what we can do is provide the opportunity and environment for them to do that. Where they might not have had that before."

Maria spoke of how even brief contact with an advocate can make a tremendous difference to a woman who had felt powerless. She said:

> I've had conversations, most of them, where you finish the conversation and you can hear the strength in that woman's voice. It's a little bit stronger, you know? Because I've talked to her about her choices, and about how she can do this and this, and whichever way she wants to go. And you feel they are a bit, you know, at the end of the conversation, they are a bit stronger.

This excerpt from Maria's interview illustrates the idea of empowerment as experienced by five of the advocates: that the role of advocate can make a significant difference to the lives of individual women as they grow stronger in their healing from IPV.

All ten participants spoke of their role as a specialist one. They spoke of holding knowledge about the dynamics of abuse, and part of the role of advocate was seen as sharing knowledge and language about abuse with women who had experienced IPV. Suzanne shared these words about her approach:

> We always, we just support her where she is at really. And maybe just work on enhancing the, the uneasy feeling, really about, about the power and control, and the issues. So we kind of just enhance the discomfort with those feelings so that . . . she will find the best solution for her really.

Eight participants spoke of women minimising the abuse they experience. The incremental increases in abuse that clients can experience were described as being difficult to identify from inside an abusive relationship. Maria spoke of her role as shedding light on the real nature of the abusive relationship:

> I'm not going to give my personal opinion of what she should do, I'm going to tell her the facts of what might or might not happen. You know depending on how bad he is, often the abuse gets worse, you know, it might start off fairly mild, to the end she might be in a situation where he might kill her. So that's something I might say, because I'm not going to pretend that it won't happen, because it might.

An approach guided by women and their choices was compatible with the paramountcy of the safety of women and children. All ten participants spoke of the primary importance of safety and managing risk. Sarah spoke of balancing these two priorities by saying,

> And it's not about not expressing concern, you know, I can say, 'well I am concerned about this, because this has happened before, and I don't think that that's very safe - you know I'm concerned that it's not safe for you to go back.' But I would word it, 'just be aware of, this happened the last time.'

The specialist knowledge shared with women about the dynamics of abuse does not preclude a return to an abusive relationship; all participants acknowledged that this is commonplace. Caroline spoke of the role of the advocate entailing supporting the woman to be as safe as possible when she returns home. The knowledge gained and a continued relationship between woman and advocate was important for increased safety. As Caroline said of risk: "and what we can do, is help her to manage it."

The idea of advocates as holders of specialist knowledge extended to relationships external to the advocate/client relationship, signalling a feminist systemic understanding of advocacy work. Participants spoke of their role of acting as a voice for women experiencing IPV; either directly alongside women clients as they attempt to navigate complicated systems such as the Family Court, or as members of increasingly common collaborative working relationships to 'case manage' incidences of IPV.

The role of assisting women to manage systems was spoken of by all participants as an integral aspect of advocacy. Caroline described advocating for women through systems by saying,

> We advocate for them at WINZ appointments, at lawyers appointments, in court if necessary, help them to get protection orders, parenting orders, Housing New Zealand - so helping them get a house, either through private rental or through a Housing New Zealand house.

This advocacy is often necessary for women, and a number of participants spoke of becoming accepted players in these statutory systems. Says Jen, "and Work and Income won't usually see clients, our clients, without one of us being there. Just for the safety of our refuge and the client and the worker."

Maria spoke of her advocacy role within court and how such a role has become accepted practice. She and

others at her organisation assist clients to share their views with judges "giving the clients a chance to say how they feel about what has happened. We're taken quite seriously in court by the judges."

Caroline believed that advocates are uniquely placed, "because I'm trained in domestic violence, I know how complex these situations can be." This concept was shared by all participants. The advocate's specialist understanding of IPV was utilised in collaborative work with other organisations; participants spoke of advocates having a special 'lens' to view cases of abuse, and consequently seeing the underlying dynamics others may miss. Sarah illustrated this idea in her attention to the process agreed by her collaborative practice group. She used her knowledge as an advocate to ensure that the agreed practice of asking women three risk screening questions is followed. She said,

> I'll say, 'what was her reply to the three questions?' And it'll say, 'was this the most frightening - what's the most frightening incident?' and you know, this one might be something like that (low risk violence), but she'll say, 'oh, three months ago when he tried to strangle me.' So there's, you know, and because I work for this agency, I've got that kind of analysis - that I'm looking a bit deeper. I'm not just taking things on face value. Cause, you know, it can be hidden.

Summary of Theme

All participants' accounts evidence connections to a feminist conception of advocacy in their privileging of women's stories and experiences, their acknowledgement of specialist knowledge of the dynamics of abuse, and their assistance navigating complicated statutory systems on behalf of women experiencing abuse.

Significantly, although the role of the advocate as seen through the experiences of these ten participants is thus in many ways similar to feminist advocacy in the past, most participants did not engage with this role in a socio-political way. Negotiations of power were spoken of in terms of challenges to gaining access to necessary services for women, rather than terms that connect advocacy work with wider feminist efforts to change systems which currently enable the continued abuse of women by their partners.

Departures From a Feminist Perspective on Advocacy

Ambiguity of perspective and disconnections with a feminist socio-political approach to advocacy work were also present in all ten participant accounts. Participants struggled with a lack of clarity about the reasons behind IPV and disconnections were evident in advocates' awareness of their organisation's history and philosophy particularly around feminist activism. Many of the quotes in this theme further illustrate the complex and intertwined way in which each participant indicated both connections with and departures from a feminist approach to advocacy work; some quotes simultaneously illustrate both of these themes.

Making Sense of Violence Against Women

Creating a personal understanding of why VAW continues to happen despite a great deal of work to prevent it is a complicated undertaking. The advocates in this research made sense of IPV in various ways, with some common ground. The various ways participants made sense of IPV show both connections with and disconnections from a feminist approach to advocacy work. Overall, only four participants understood IPV within a socio-political feminist perspective, in this context meaning that violence is predominantly a gendered phenomenon of men's violence against their women partners and that this abuse is enabled and replicated within social systems and structures. Caroline illustrated this perspective when she stated the following about men's abuse of women partners:

Fundamentally they do it because they can - they think they're entitled to. I mean, you know - but the sad thing is, most offenders... believe that have had it hard wired into them - it's not their fault that they choose it, but they absolutely they choose it. It comes from society's attitudes towards women, patriarchal attitudes, a sense of entitlement.

Francie spoke about the continuing inequality between women and men behind IPV:

I think that injustice, and that imbalance in society, has got a lot to do with it. A lot to do with it. I think if we were brought up completely equal, I think there would be far less family/domestic violence. So I think it's going to be a long time before it's gone quite honestly. Because male privilege has been around forever. And it's slowly going. Yeah, the changes are really slow.

Jo and Maria also shared this perspective of VAW rooted in inequality. As will be discussed, Jo was also deliberately a-political in her advocacy role, which raises interesting questions about the link between a feminist perspective on IPV and advocacy work.

Georgia and Sarah also shared aspects of the feminist perspective; however their perspective centred on individual examples of male entitlement within relationships. Choice to use violence or abuse was emphasised over socialization.

In fact, all four participants who engaged with a feminist socio-political explanation of IPV emphasised the individual aspects of an abusive relationship and the potential for individual change as seen in this quote from Caroline:

But until they are going to take some ownership and accountability for the choices they are making, there's no hope for the relationship. And I'm really blunt with women about that, and as much as I don't want to victim blame - and I don't think they should be the ones to make the changes, in their lives - the reality is that they are the only ones that can. Because unless he's going to take accountability for his actions, and

his choices and man up and take responsibility and make some changes - nothing's going to change. It's only going to get worse.

It is perhaps natural for advocates to return to individual level explanations for the causes of and solutions to IPV as their everyday work is with individual women, though this perspective arguably limits space for addressing structural inequality.

Five of the six participants whose perspective included viewing IPV from a feminist perspective combined this understanding with additional explanations for VAW. Eight of the ten participants spoke of the involvement of factors such as poverty and alcohol. In particular while alcohol was not considered a cause of violence participants had difficulty reconciling its presence in much of their work. As Georgia says when asked what she believes causes IPV:

Alcohol. Financial situations, drugs, definitely. You know of course, there's that saying out there that alcohol is not an excuse for violence. And yes, it's not an excuse, but it definitely is a factor. Definitely. And you know, I have known offenders that have only offended whilst intoxicated. So it's definitely a factor.

Four participants included relationship issues in their explanations of IPV. Suzanne exemplifies this idea by saying, "I think it's definitely relationship issues that get out of hand. One can maybe say communication - poor communication skills. From both parties really. And needs that are not being met, ongoing needs that aren't being met." Participants who discussed IPV in this way also mentioned the influence of external pressures on a relationship and how these pressures can increase the likelihood of abuse. No participant understood this issue as the sole reason for IPV, but it was used combined with other causes to explain the roots of IPV.

Two participants also spoke of intergenerational aspects of abuse, explaining IPV as a behaviour learned in the home. The participants who explained abuse in this

way combined their understanding with accounts of alcohol use and relationship pressures. It is worth mentioning that these two participants spoke of their organisations as deliberately sitting outside the feminist movement to end VAW. Making sense of IPV through relationship issues, alcohol, drugs or poverty, or even intergenerationally, was not accompanied here with structural explanations for IPV and consequently does not sit comfortably within a feminist framework for social change.

Imparting Organisational Knowledge and Culture

Many organisations supporting women through IPV have a history of political activism. Each participant was asked about whether she was aware of her organisation's history; only five participants were aware of organisational roots. Amongst these five there was an emphasis on how their organisations had grown and changed, and on how services had expanded.

Participants were asked about their induction process into their advocacy role. Six participants had previously worked at other organisations doing similar work with women. Five of these women moved with little further preparation into new roles at their current organisations, with only one participant undergoing a substantial induction process. A rapid induction speaks perhaps to an assumption of shared philosophy and approach to work amongst organisations, and also perhaps to a lack of organisational resources to conduct thorough inductions. Four participants spoke good naturedly about being 'thrown in the deep end' when beginning their advocacy work, as they were needed immediately because of the demands of crisis work. The hurried induction again indicates that organisations working with women in crisis are stretched for resources and do not have the luxury of thoroughly imparting organisational philosophy and approach to new workers prior to commencing work. An organisation with a strong

philosophical approach to advocacy that is linked with an agenda for social change could be expected to have a process for inducting new workers into the organisation where this philosophy would be thoroughly communicated.

From prior research into participant organisations, it was expected that at least seven of the ten participants worked within organisations with feminist perspectives on advocacy work. However, only three participants spoke explicitly of working within a feminist organisation and with a feminist approach. Suzanne described working from a feminist perspective by saying:

> It's really kind of, just the imbalance in society, that women are mostly not in the same position as men, that our society enables men to have control over women, and our laws support that. And as women, we are pushed to kind of a secondary role, and that has severe implications in some relationships.

Suzanne's expression of the importance of feminism to her practice was rare amongst participants. Other participants spoke to the challenge of remaining a feminist organisation in contemporary times. It was at one time quite common for feminist organisations to develop organisational structures which governed collectively in opposition to hierarchical structures where power was distributed from the top of the organisation downwards. Three participants mentioned a collective structure: two of these organisations had moved to a management based structure and one still maintained a collective structure. Of the two participants who spoke of previous collective structures, the move to a hierarchical one was mentioned as almost inevitable given modern demands on services. The one participant currently working in a collective spoke of her frustration about the time consuming nature of decision making in her organisation. The importance of a collective egalitarian structure to a feminist organisation was spoken of by only one participant.

Three participants deliberately positioned themselves outside the feminist movement. Two participants spoke about organisational decisions to sit outside the feminist movement so as to work with whole families, and articulated a belief that working with couples and families was not compatible historically with a feminist perspective. Melanie spoke of how her organisation chose to sit outside the feminist movement when it was founded. She said,

> There was a bit of a push for that whole, 'leave him, don't have anything to do with him and if you do, you know, we're not going to have anything to do with you sort of thing'. But I mean, that's a long time ago, that was sort of like in the 70s or when that whole sort of women's movement, took off, so - I think you've got to work with human nature, you can't change people if they don't want to change.

Melanie spoke of refuges today being much less political, and stated that the differences between her organisation which deliberately positioned itself outside a political movement and what were once feminist movement based organisations have decreased greatly. In her account, Melanie emphasised the historical nature of the women's movement's political activism. This view indicates a perception of decreased activism and a shift toward the mainstream on the part of organisations that were previously associated with a feminist movement for change.

Jo, who spoke of being an activist in other settings, was consciously a-political in her advocacy work. She had spoken of this stance with other young women in the course of her advocacy work and said:

> I speculate that my generation of young people have kind of grown up with that experience of being in refuge, you know, we grew up with mothers who might have gone through women's refuge and been saved by it. And so, it's something that we give back or have an understanding of. Whereas their generation, when they were in their 20s, they probably didn't get involved in women's refuge until it was women's rights and they were doing it from kind of an activist, kind of a political activism kind of perspective, whereas myself and a couple of the other women there - we were doing it because we wanted to help. You know, it wasn't a political statement we were making to be in these fields of work, just somewhere that comes from the heart that we want to do it.

Further discussion during the interview involved asking Jo if there was a connection for her between a feminist movement for social change and her advocacy work. Jo then said:

> I think my work in itself-I've had a think about this-I think my work itself isn't political, I wouldn't call it activism. My job isn't activism. I have volunteer roles that I would describe as activism. But you know, I think activism is the other end of the scale. We catch people, activism should be preventing people-it's the fence at the top of the cliff, not the ambulance at the bottom. And I think this work is the ambulance at the bottom.

Jo's words indicate an awareness of the potential for a politicised approach within the IPV field of work and a deliberate decision not to take this approach in her role as an advocate.

Summary of theme

Disconnections from a feminist approach to advocacy work are apparent in all participants' accounts, particularly when interviewees discussed the causes of violence and organisational culture. At the same time, many interviews evidenced simultaneous and complicated connections with a feminist approach to advocacy. However, expressed connections with feminism do not necessarily translate into concrete links between advocacy work and the feminist movement to end VAW; for instance, socio-political understandings of the causes of violence do not preclude individualist recommendations for change.

Discussion

Though these findings are particular to the advocates who participated in this research, they illustrate broader issues facing the feminist movement to end VAW in Aotearoa/New Zealand. They indicate that while advocates continue the essential work to increase women's safety and support their empowerment – work which can be linked clearly to feminist perspectives – evidence of an erosion of the feminist socio-political perspective on IPV, which focuses on the structural causes of VAW, is also present in the experiences of contemporary advocates. This research indicates that the erosion of feminist social movement approaches to advocacy work present elsewhere may be occurring in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context (Hammons, 2004; Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009; McDonald, 2005).

It has been suggested that the rise of neoliberalism, the growing emphasis of business concepts such as 'outcomes' within the social services sector, and the increasing reliance on government contracts among organisations providing services in the IPV sector have contributed to a decline of the feminist movement to end VAW (McDonald, 2005; Phillips, 2006). Participants' focus on individual change in this research signals the power of these influences. In addition, the complex phenomenon of organisational adaptation over time to meet changing external demands, the inadequate socialisation of staff at IPV organisations into a feminist socio-political theoretical framework (where applicable), and the consequent influence of less politicised advocates on the wider VAW movement create a pattern of increased disconnection from feminist movement goals for social change (Finley, 2010; Grey, 2008; Hammons, 2004; Lehrner & Allen, 2008, 2009; McDonald, 2005; Stark, 2007). Over time, lost feminist knowledge may further exacerbate the disconnection between current advocates and feminist socio-political movement narratives of VAW (Bartle & Halaas, 2008; McMillan, 2007).

Erosion of a feminist socio-political movement perspective is not only a theoretical issue. Worldwide, the feminist movement to end VAW has been the greatest vehicle for change (Htun & Weldon, 2012). Aotearoa/New Zealand continues to have high rates of IPV (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004) indicating the enduring need for socio-political change.

Importantly, participants in this research do evidence a continued feminist legacy in advocacy work, particularly in most of their stances taken alongside women both in their struggles against IPV and in navigating social systems: for example, in the privileging of women's stories of their abuse experiences, and by accompanying women to Work and Income appointments to advocate for their complete benefit entitlements. However, participants did not access a clear feminist narrative about the phenomenon of IPV. Narratives advocates hold are pivotal, and have the capacity to rewrite the wider movement perspective (Lehrner & Allen, 2008).

> If one understands the goal of a social movement as in part to contest received interpretations of social phenomena and to offer competing analyses, then the importance of shared narratives in constructing the phenomenon of interest and in shaping a response must be seen as central (Lehrner & Allen, 2008, p. 221).

Arguably a fractured narrative of IPV presents challenges for the continued progress of the feminist VAW movement.

One limitation of this research is the small number of organisations participating, and that advocates from kaupapa Māori organisations were not among participants. Research using an IPA approach must also acknowledge the perspective of the researcher, and the 'lens' with which she views the experiences of participants. The primary author has an evolving feminist theoretical perspective which involves an understanding

of VAW as a gendered phenomenon that requires ongoing political action for continued change. An awareness of the primary author's stated feminist goals to end VAW and position as an immigrant to Aotearoa/New Zealand of European ancestry were considered continually during the process of analysis, as it is clearly a partial perspective. Future research with a wider range of organisations within the Aotearoa/New Zealand context undertaken by different authors may yield different perspectives.

This point is particularly salient because it has been suggested internationally that conversations focusing on the erosion of the feminist VAW movement neglect areas of vitality within the movement and continue to privilege the movement through the eyes of European women (Arnold & Ake, 2013). It is important to acknowledge that the emerging work in kaupapa Māori approaches and in Auckland's increasingly international community will continue to make important contributions to the ongoing conversation to end VAW in Aotearoa/New Zealand. These differences of perspective may indeed be a source of vitality for the movement. A key challenge may be the ability to link these different perspectives into a (partially) shared narrative for social change, while still respecting the specificity of these various strands.

This research reveals some potentially fruitful contradictions regarding an erosion of feminism; disconnections with feminism often sit right alongside a continued feminist legacy. Recall Jo's stance about IPV as rooted in gender inequality, and her simultaneous, overt positing as an a-political advocate. The resilience of feminist perspectives in today's climate, along with areas of vitality and growth in this area of practice, are important to explore in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context in future research, and could contribute to a strengthened movement that prevents VAW.

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