Networking Against Intimate Partner Violence:

Experiences from the perspectives of the professionals

Josefin Shapiro

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Handledare: Karen Odberg Pettersson
Examinator: Lillemor Hallberg
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Josefin Shapiro, Karen Odberg Pettersson

School of Social and Health Sciences, Halmstad University, Box 823 S-301 18, Sweden

Abstract

Violence against women, of which intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant part, is a widespread public health problem. There is a great need for effective programs that address this issue. The objective of this study was to explore the experiences expressed by the members of the Karla network whose purpose was to combat IPV. Due to the nature of the study, a qualitative approach was taken and data was gathered through interviews with professionals in the network. The function of collaboration and its impact on the individuals is highlighted by the core category: Striving for progress. The categories that resulted from the analysis were: 1) Achieving professional satisfaction, 2) Developing professional competence, and 3) Treading water. Working within the network was perceived as rewarding, as the network improved the quality of their work. Updated guidelines and routines were regarded as essential to improve the collaboration. To progress in the work against IPV, methods to recognize and attend to abused women should be refined and implemented. More focus needs to be put on preventive actions. There is reason to direct actions toward children and adolescents and thus the arenas that initially should be engaged are media, school, and youth clinics.

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Introduction

Violence against women is a widespread health problem and a major threat to the lives and health of women in a global perspective (WHO, 2002). Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant part of this problem area (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). IPV exits in all societies and all social strata, irrespective of religion or culture and is more frequent in lower income groups (Balci & Ayranci, 2005). A spectrum of
health problems afflicts the abused women including trauma, chronic pain, psychiatric illness and reproductive health problems (Campbell, 2002; Hedin, 2002; Ramsay, Feder, Rivas, Carter, Davidson, Hegarty et al. 2005). IPV has substantial social consequences that are detrimental to the development of society (Krug, Mercy, Dalberg & Zwi, 2002).

WHO (2002) has published recommendations for action that emanate from the viewpoint that violence is both predictable and preventable. These recommendations are derived from the existing knowledge of IPV and its consequences. They include wide spectra of tactics involving all levels of society, from government policies to preventive interventions. One of the highlighted issues is that traditionally problems related to violence have been addressed by the judicial system, police and correctional services and that it is now reasonable for the health care sector to take a more proactive roll bringing its competence and rationale to bear. In a study by Chang, Cluss, Ranieri, Hawker, Buranosky, Dado et al. (2005) 21 women with experiences of IPV were questioned about their opinions of how they would like the health care sector to address domestic violence. For these women safety, privacy and autonomy were essential qualities in the interventions. Other suggestions were a legal hotline and easy access to information and counseling. In several studies it has been stated that women appreciate health care professionals bringing up the subject of abuse as long as the responses are treated confidentially (Stenson, Saarinen, Heimer & Sidenvall, 2001; Webster, Stratgos & Grimes, 2001; Zeitler, Paine, Bretbart, Rickert, Olson, Stevens et al. 2006). However, it has also been declared that it is not sufficient to ask the question at one occasion alone (Scheiman & Zeoli, 2003; Hamberg, Johansson & Lindgren, 1999).

So far, the majority of evaluated interventions addressing violence have targeted the already abused woman (Ramsey et al. 2005). According to Hyman, Guruge, Stewart & Ahmad (2000), primary prevention of violence against women should target: 1) education and public awareness, 2) early identification, 3) empowerment and life skills for women, 4) safety and support programs and, 5) legal policy. Whitaker, Morrison, Lindquist, Hawkins, O’Neil, Nesius et al. (2006) found that interventions directed at dating violence showed a promising approach. In South Africa a multi-media intervention was designed to impact individuals, community awareness, and political structures (Usdin, Scheepers, Goldstein & Japhet, 2005).
This was a project of great magnitude; it involved orchestrating a toll free helpline, producing booklets, posters and shows for TV and radio. The evaluation showed that using edutainment was a promising method and the project was successful in many respects.

The DAIP- project (Domestic Abuse Intervention Project) included in the Duluth model from Minnesota, USA (DAIP), which was launched in 1980, stands out among programs aimed at reducing IPV and protecting victims. The strategies applied covered a broad range of interventions and promoted interaction between institutions and authorities involved (Shepard, 2005). The basic tenet of the program was that violence was unacceptable and that society had the responsibility to intervene. An important facet of the work was to make people in general and personnel within institutions and official authorities aware. In Sweden the Duluth model was adopted in 1994 by “Projekt Fridelborg” in Norrköping (Eliasson, 1997). The Fridelborg project has in turn had several followers for example “Utväg” in Skaraborg and “Johanna” in Helsingborg (Persson, 2001; Socialstyrelsen, 2001).

The Karla program in Kungsbacka, was inspired by the Swedish followers of the Duluth model. Karla is an inter-sectoral collaboration, the purpose of which is 1) to diminish the number of cases of abuse of women and 2) to increase the safety for women. The objective of this study was to explore the experiences expressed by the members of the Karla network.

Background

In debates and literature, several terms are used for violence against women in an intimate relationship. In this study the term intimate partner violence (IPV) is used. The attitudes towards abusing women are biased due to cultural factors prevailing in society. In patriarchal structures the paradigm states that the man is the head of the family while women and children are his possessions. This paradigm has survived in the Swedish judicial system and only recently has wife beating within the confines of the home become a statutory crime and consequently the perpetrator subject to prosecution. Gross assault against women, which entails threat to life, became a crime in 1944. Rape of a wife by her husband became punishable in 1965, and in 1988, assault on women in the home became a statutory crime. During the 1980’s, victims’ rights were strengthened with the introduction of restraining orders and the
right to obtain legal assistants for the injured party (Persson, 2001). The 1998 law addressing violence brought about considerable improvements as women were able to obtain legal assistance when subjugated to IPV (Brå, 2002). In its analysis of political decision factors, the Health Institute concludes (Fhi, 2005) that freedom from IPV should be brought forward as a new general objective. Furthermore, IPV is interpreted as an expression of structural discrimination against women. The efforts towards gender equality should thus be a central undertaking in prevention.

The proposition *Kvinnofrid* (KFP) [Peace for Women] (1999) from the Swedish government defined three fields where activities should be intensified in the fight to prevent violence against women: 1) legislation, 2) preventive measures and 3) response to battered women. One of the preventive measures was that the Police Service, the Social Services, The Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the Public Prosecutors, the National Council for Crime Prevention, the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority, County Administration, and the National Courts Administration should be directed to:

- Augment efforts to prevent violence against women
- Elaborate strategies or policy documents for the tasks
- Cooperate between branches, agencies and volunteer organizations involved

In 2004 the proposition was followed up by *Slag i luften* [Punch in the air] (SOU, 2004), a report aimed at defining new guidelines for the continuing work of reducing IPV. The report severely criticized how the proposition had been implemented. Flaws were described in the crime prevention efforts and in the making of central plans and policy documents and more. The report also criticized the apparent lack of continuity in funding for practical work. An overview published by Amnesty International (Amnesty, 2005) highlight the variations among Sweden’s municipalities. Among those who answered the survey (75%), most exhibited low priority for IPV while guidelines, information material, and statistics were often entirely missing. The National Board of Health and Welfare and the County Administration made their own assessment of contingency plans for abused women (Socialstyrelsen, 2005). The survey reported that the concept *contingency plan* was interpreted differently in different municipalities. It could encompass a plan for program development, information about available resources or definitions of authorities’ responsibilities, or even a general definition of the community's
objectives and policies. The contingency plans seldom contained strategies for preventive actions.

The Karla program started as one of the programs originating from the KFP (1999) mandated by the government. The head of the National Police Board gave mandate to the County Police Board, which in turn delegated the task to the Chief of the County Police. In 2000, the Chief of Police, the head of the Social Services and the Chief of The Swedish Prison and Probation Service in Kungsbacka drew up an agreement to clarify each unit’s responsibilities. In 2001 the group was expanded with representatives from local health care facilities, women’s support group and from the local victim support group. When the crime prevention council joined (2003), the group acquired its present configuration. Among all the actors defined in the government’s commission the only one missing is the prosecutor’s office.

Methods

Setting and Sample

This study was performed in Kungsbacka, a municipality on the west coast of Sweden just south of Sweden’s second largest city, Gothenburg. At the end of 2003 the population of Kungsbacka was 67,653. Kungsbacka can be considered a well to do town, according to the statistics from 2004 collected by the Swedish National Institute of Public Health (Fhi 2004). Unemployment in Kungsbacka was only 3% compared to 4% nationwide. Ninety five percent of Kungsbacka’s residents were born in Sweden, the national figure was 88%. The expected lifespan of women was 83,7 and for men 80,0 years while the national averages were 82,1 and 77,5 respectively.

The Karla network initiated this evaluation by approaching Halmstad University. The study was planned together with members of Karla and is a qualitative process evaluation focusing on the experiences expressed by the professionals working within the network. In this study the informants working as volunteers are also included among “professionals”. Ethical permission to undertake the study was granted from the local ethics council at Halmstad University. Data was gathered from informants representing the authorities and organizations collaborating in the network. These comprise: 1) Police Services, 2) Social Services, 3) Probation Service, 4) Local Health Care, 5) Local Crime Prevention Division, 6) Association
for Victim Support, and 7) Women’s Shelters. A strategic selection of eleven informants was made among all stakeholders in order acquire a heterogenic sample in terms of experience, age and gender. The informant group comprised three men and eight women. The average age, when interviewed, was 51,5 and the average duration of work experience 19,6 years. The majority of the informants had been members of the Karla network from its inception. All the informants received an information letter, where the objective and methods of the study were made clear. All the informants agreed to participate and signed a letter of consent prior to the interviews. Those who so desired were given the opportunity to read their interview transcript, which they could comment and supplement. Nine of the eleven informants took advantage of this opportunity.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study data have been collected through interviews which has been conducted and analyzed with the reformulated grounded theory introduced by Strauss and Corbin, serving as guidelines (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The objective of gaining knowledge about experiences, attitudes and opinions from the informant’s perspective prompted the choice of qualitative methodology (Britten, 1995). In Grounded Theory knowledge elucidating the research question develops during the process. In the beginning of the process there is no preconception of which findings the work will generate, it is a methodology suitable for disclosing social processes. This approach was also appropriate since the field of violence against women was previously not an area familiar to the author (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Qualitative interview methodology provides an opportunity to illustrate a phenomenon by gathering perspectives from many viewpoints; thus several informants’ opinions can be woven together. In this study, data has been collected through semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1997). Data analysis was performed in conjunction with the academic supervisor and co-author (KOP) who has extensive experience of this research method. The validity of the analytical process was secured through repeated discussions and constant comparisons within the material.

The interviews were performed during the autumn of 2005. They lasted between 20 and 50 minutes and were held in the informants’ offices. The conversations were recorded digitally with a laptop computer, a microphone and ancillary software and transcribed verbatim by the author. All identification of the informants in the
interview material was removed. The recordings, together with the transcripts, were stored on a compact disk which, together with printouts, remained accessible only to the author.

The introductory question was: Can you describe your work against IPV? This question provided a relaxed start to the interview. Subsequently three thematic queries followed: 1) In which way has the Karla program been useful to you in your work against IPV? 2) Which problems have you encountered within the Karla program? 3) What visions do you have for the continuing work against IPV?

The responses to these queries formed a framework and made a relevant base for further exploration of opinions relating to different experiences of the program. Probing and follow-up questions, such as: “Can you explain that further? Can you give me an example of that?” gave more detail and substance to the material. After each interview, the author transcribed the recording and preliminarily analyzed the data in order to further develop the questioning line. Certain concepts that were deemed interesting and relevant for the inquiry were probed further, i.e. theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Examples of such concepts were: meeting structures, the experience of support from superiors and the attitude towards the constitution of the Karla group.

The transcriptions were initially processed with open coding, where concepts were identified, coded and subsequently categorized. The categories that emerged were evaluated and compared with supporting substance from new material. During the analysis of the material, questions were continuously posed to the data, for example: “Which effects has the program generated? For which phenomenon is this an expression?” Through this procedure the pattern of relationships between categories began to surface. Notes were kept of thoughts and reflections; as such ‘memos’ are an important part in tracing the research process (Hallberg, 2002). It became clear that there was no need for additional interviews as the analysis proceeded and the categories became more developed. The relationship between the categories became evident elucidating the social process “striving for progress” which thus was interpreted as the core category.
Findings

The function of collaboration and its impact on the individuals is highlighted by the core category: Striving for progress. The categories that resulted from the analysis were: 1) Achieving professional satisfaction, 2) Developing professional competence, and 3) Treading water. Categories and their subcategories are presented below, with quotations from the informants.

Achieving professional satisfaction

Working within the Karla network with IPV was considered important and the members had substantial desire to effect a positive change for the abused women. Data indicating constructive feelings on an emotional level toward working within the program elucidate this category.

Feeling Accomplished

The Kvinnofrids Proposition focused a spotlight on the problematic area of IPV. Being a member of the Karla network meant that you were given personal responsibility from your organization to combat IPV in Kungsbacka. Members of the network expressed appreciation in being a valuable resource in the work against violence. Professional involvement in the network has bestowed a certain amount of status upon the members. It has entailed guiding and supervising others in their own organization and a great deal of responsibility as they regarded themselves as an important link.

“I have become a kind of symbol [for colleagues], they come to me and ask how they should respond.”

When information and knowledge transfer were successful, when an initiative was triumphant and response and feedback were given, then the network members conveyed a great feeling of accomplishment. This response could be communicated within the network or from the victimized women.

Being Dedicated to a Mission

There was a powerful desire to arrive at working structures together in the battle against IPV, to find strategies for responses that would improve the care of these vulnerable women and address problems associated with treating violent men. The
network generated ideas that were cultivated by members and then transmitted within the organizations and to society.

“I consider it very important to work with women’s health...It’s about how to care for these women and that is what Karla is all about.”

Karla members expressed profound involvement against violence as a desire to spread knowledge and awareness. A great deal of work involved organizing education and disseminating information, which demonstrates a genuine desire to increase awareness and responsiveness. The network organized conferences directed toward employees that would encounter IPV, working mainly within the Police Service, the Social Service and the Local Health Care. Members of the network did some lecturing together with externally recruited lecturers. An important part of the conference, according to the informants, was to provide opportunities for different categories of professionals to meet and discuss the topic, to create a setting that would increase and facilitate understanding and collaboration. At an early stage the Karla network produced a brochure that contained information on where women could get support and assistance. The brochure was distributed in the community.

“It is a great help for us working with it [IPV] that the general public knows about it and does not deny its existence.”

Developing professional competence

A significant advantage or being part of the Karla initiative was the opportunity to access the network, which entailed aspects of social competence. Data showing how this affected members are presented under this category.

Being Part of a Team

From the informants’ point of view the Karla network membership above all, gave them a sense of security, as they knew where to turn and to whom. It was easy to get in touch with others in the network and, when necessary, the member who appeared best suited to offer information or assistance was called on the phone. The informants expressed that the quality of their response to abused women improved notably through direct communication and access to the proper expertise and accurate answers. It also became easier to guide abused women and to establish
contact with another person in the network with the personal relations within the network. Moreover, it entailed assurance that the proper professional would carry on the work that had been started.

“You can’t pass her on to just anybody.”

The network membership gave insight into each others capabilities and resources, which consequently created an understanding for various working methods and routines that were to be followed. Constructive working routines that were developed and used resulted in a better cooperation, particularly between the Social Service and the Police Service. The outcome was a more ample response to victimized women and a more satisfactory working situation for all personnel involved. Knowledge about the team and familiarity with various methods resulted in prompt reaction, which the informants regarded as necessary to succeed in these cases.

“Karla is extremely important because we cannot work alone in our little beehive, we must raise our heads, peer across borders and cooperate.”

The Karla network consisted of a core group with a number of constituents and of more peripheral members. The informants observed that meetings provided a forum for information exchange and members could discuss what was important in their work. Peripheral members considered it important to be a part of the network in order to remain informed and thereby be able to transmit accurate information beyond the network. The informants experienced being part of a team as strengthening and when the interview turned to concrete activities that the network had performed together the informants expressed great satisfaction. To some degree the informants considered that network membership also meant being part of society’s decision-making structure.

“Everyone is in complete agreement regarding what needs to be done, and that is empowering.”

Gaining Knowledge

Participation in the Karla network provided members with in-depth knowledge about the reality experienced by women exposed to IPV. Involvement also provided
understanding for how society’s structures functioned in helping these individuals and which possibilities were available to combat the violence. Additionally, working within Karla offered opportunities for competence development on the individual level and even prospects for participation in educational courses to improve professional expertise.

“I have learned a lot about the entire chain [of society’s response to IPV] and can see the big picture.”

Treading Water

Just as there were a great deal of stimulating experiences within the Karla network, some negative experiences were also expressed. This third and last category illuminates these feelings of frustration that were found in the data.

Feeling Inadequate

There was a feeling of inadequacy, especially relating to work with perpetrators, where the Probation Service had neither ability nor capability to fulfill their part of the contract that was drawn up at the beginning of the Karla program.

“It has not worked out [for the men] as we had hoped from the beginning.”

Quite some attention within the Karla network had recently focused on treatment of the men, as it appeared that they were overlooked in society’s response to IPV. The rationale now was that violence against women would diminish first when the perpetrators had received help to change their behavior.

Lack of time was mentioned on several occasions during the interviews. All of Karla’s members had other duties; the work against IPV was a minor part of their workload. For volunteer workers it was especially apparent that persistent time deficiency caused a gnawing bad conscience. Not only were personnel resources inadequate, but also material resources were deficient. Concrete items such as cameras for documentation of battery and software to be able to store digitalized evidence, were lacking when needed.

“I can’t work the way I want to because we don’t have enough resources. (…) I don’t feel that it works, I want to do so much more.”
Each individual was alone in their organization as a Karla representative; as a result they had little or no support in their daily practical work. In those cases where the individual represented a large organization; it could be difficult to fulfill obligations adequately. Work with Karla demanded great flexibility, as there were large variations in problems faced by the group. The resources available did not always suffice despite the amount of knowledge and experience concerning work against violence found in the network. It was often difficult to motivate victimized women to seek help or accept being steered to the next agency. Lack of resources instilled a feeling of frustration and resignation, as Karla members could not fulfill their commission in the manner they had hoped.

“I’m afraid that if I’m not there [on the job] no one really dares address these things.”

Despite the fact that preventive measures were defined as one of the purposes of the Karla program, this has not been highlighted in the Karla network work.

“I don’t know if there is any preventive work. (...) Who would be in charge of that?”

Feeling Like an Outsider

The level of engagement in the Karla network differed between various members and the lack of follow-up left some members without acknowledgment of success. A sense of insufficiency was conveyed both on professional and personal levels by the informants.

“It would be wonderful if sometime you were told that you had done a good job.”

The network had changed constituents during its existence and at times there had been interruptions in the continuity of the members of the network. The informants expressed difficulties with communications since the personal relations were affected by this lack of stability. At times it was not clear who was expected to attend meetings. There were also different opinions of who should be in the network, which related to how members interpreted Karla’s mission.
“And then there’s one that I don’t know what she’s doing there, or where she’s from, or, yeah…”

All members did not have the same interest in or need to be a member of the team. It was evident that some disharmony existed among the network members. This was related to either the commission or the organizational status of the stakeholders. The stakeholder’s commission could entail prevention, urgent action or treatment, which implied different needs and conditions. The informants expressed that circumstances were different working within a voluntary organization and working within a government controlled agency, for instance regarding authority, economic conditions and regulations, but also in the manner in which the general public approached Karla members. The occupational fields of the network members overlapped at times, which could be construed as a sense of intrusion upon each others field of expertise. The informants stated that it, on the other hand, could be valuable to represent an independent alternative. Within the group it was expressed that some work was valued higher than other tasks and that some members were not considered equally competent. This generated a feeling among the informants of being an outsider and the necessity for self-assertion.

“We have our own niche.”

Feeling of Deceit

Much energy went into projecting a crisis centre in collaboration with several local politicians. Karla members expressed that politicians were on their side during this work and when the project was turned down, a feeling of disappointment and of being let down ensued.

“We tried, but I don’t know, we kind of feel a litter burnt, all of us, after that.”

New projects against IPV were under way in Kungsbacka. Most Karla members knew that something was being planned but did not have insight into the details, causing some uncertainty.

“So some other stuff is popping up. (...) Its important not to do what someone else is doing, we should work together instead.”
Discussion

Violence against women is a global public health problem that encompasses, among other things, female circumcision, abortion of female fetuses, and honor related violence (WHO, 2002). IPV is part of this violence. There is a great need to find methods for effective programs to address this violence. The objective of this study was to explore the experiences expressed by the members of the Karla network, a program whose purpose was to combat IPV. This study has given knowledge into how working within the program was perceived and how future work against IPV should be organized. The Karla program works within a small municipality and has a limited number of members. However, the findings illuminate interpersonal relations and social processes and therefore can most probably be transferred to other situations where the objective is to create inter-sectoral networks. Creating and maintaining inter-sectoral collaborations places rigorous demands on communications, cooperation and interaction; collaborations offer benefits as well as difficulties (Tones & Tilford, 2001).

Analysis with grounded theory guidelines requires the ability to reflect freely while considering different aspects of the data. With the assistance of the coauthor, (KOP), the data obtained were analyzed, as free as possible from preconceived notions. Constant comparison and theoretical sensitivity is fundamental in the process of disclosing emerging pattern and relationships between categories; as these social processes had aspects in common with experiences of the professional life of the author. A key concept is to retrieve a sample of maximum heterogeneity (Hallberg, 2006). The Karla network itself consisted of members of similar age and education as well as ethnicity and the majority were women. This diminished the ability to achieve diversity in the group of informants. The Karla network was a group under some turbulence, particularly considering the police leadership, but also in terms of group membership. Some of the members had remained over the years while some others had been replaced. During the period in when the interviews took place, new directives were being discussed for the social services and at this time the local health care was about to be reorganized. Most likely these uncertainties impacted the participants’ statements. In grounded theory the research aim is for greater understanding through theory generation, which explains as well as predicts a social process. In this study the core category describes how inter-sectoral
collaboration efforts to achieve health benefits at the community level can develop.

Three categories emerged through the analysis, 1) Achieving professional satisfaction, 2) Developing professional competence, and 3) Treading water.

The category “Achieving professional satisfaction”, illustrates how the members expressed their commitment for the program. Karla provided a platform where professional confidence and personal skills developed. Job satisfaction increased and professional status improved due to the network membership. The members regarded the task of disseminating information to other professionals and to the general public as especially important. Members were particularly satisfied with contributing to greater knowledge and understanding in society. As Usdin et al. (2005) have shown the increased awareness had a preventive effect, as it was more natural for neighbors and relatives get involved against violence on a personal level.

The category “Developing professional competence” illuminates how interacting with other sectors gave professional authority through access to competence and resources. In an approach initiated by Smith & Christie (2004), inter-sectoral cooperation and communicative ability were trained as part of the respective professional’s basic training. The students felt that, beyond gaining an understanding of other professions, their competence increased while they simultaneously learned other professions’ terminology. By developing inter-sectoral collaboration it was easier to delimit one’s own area of responsibility and thus strengthen professional identity. In a network, the relationships between individuals rather than the relationships between organizations determined the perception of collaboration productivity (Abbot, Petchey, Kessel & Killoran, 2006). By better understanding the way other members of Karla worked and by having a personal relationship to them, individual members of the network achieved a sense of security and simultaneously work was facilitated and more efficient. Karla members found it particularly rewarding when work focused on defined objectives and work was performed intensively and in close cooperation. At these times relationships developed and work produced tangible results.

The category “Treading Water” embodies the feeling of insufficiency and lack of momentum that was expressed by the informants. For the members, the Karla network was an additional task that had to be incorporated into the daily routines. There was neither time nor money earmarked for the program, contributing to the
difficulties in attaining desired goals. A lot of frustration was expressed in regard to the Karla meetings that were considered to have stagnated. This was interpreted as a result of indistinct leadership as well as unclear demarcation. The Karla group consisted of members with different tasks, certain had preventive duties, others were assigned acute interventions and the third category was treatment. These responsibilities were not mutually exclusive, but occasionally overlapping. The acute work was prioritized; this included improved routines for cooperation between social services and police. It was also within this field that Karla has achieved its goals despite the lack of representation from the Public Prosecutors office. The Probation Service did not fulfill their part of the agreement as delineated at the outset of the program, since the routines planned were beyond the scope of their legislated mandate. The result being that the treatment of perpetrators was defective and that frustration was felt throughout the Karla network. The members working within prevention and treatment did not experience the same feeling of belonging to the group. It was possible that the team would function more effectively if the members had more similar tasks. Many collaboration groups tend to develop towards homogeneity (Masuda & Konno, 2005). In these groups cooperation seems to flow smoothest. But with this development creativity can be lost and the link to society weakened.

The core category “Striving for progress” illustrates the expressed aspiration for success in the work against IVP. The three categories were identified as dimensions of the core category. “Achieving professional satisfaction” describes an increased satisfaction and development through the profession on a personal level, “Developing professional competence” illuminates how strength and knowledge increase through cooperation on group level and “Treading water” depicts frustration over lack of momentum which was observed on an organizational level.

To obtain results in a collaboration project, a clear mission, explicit goals, strategy and continuity are imperative qualities (SOU, 2004). The regulating documents must be evaluated and reviewed regularly; members and their roles must be clearly defined and described. The requirements of the success for this type of network included, according to Rog, Boback, Barton-Villagrana, Marrone-Bennett, Cardwell, Hawdon et al. (2004), that the allocated resources were sufficient, that there was a well defined purpose, that guidelines were clearly stated and that decisions were
made democratically. During the latter phase of the Karla program there were some
turbulence in the police leadership, the guidelines and routines for work have not
been revised and meetings have been held more infrequently and sporadically than
previously. With a stricter structure there most probably would not have been the
disintegration that was evident in the evaluation. This was especially apparent in the
attitudes towards the group’s meetings, which the informants described as having
stagnated. Despite this there was an impressive desire to resume and there were
many ideas for further development of the program.

Preventive work can be structured in several ways. Previously, interventions
against IPV focused on secondary prevention; in other words, care for the victims
and treatment of the perpetrators. In primary prevention the goal is to influence
behavior by working to change public attitudes in general and to alter social
structures. Achieving results requires massive generalized actions in several areas
and at various levels simultaneously. There are several areas that could be included
in the work against IPV, for example schools, school health services, child health
clinics, youth clinics, antenatal clinics, dental clinics, psychiatric care, the
prosecution office, and churches. Within these arenas much could be done to put a
spotlight on IPV, disseminate information, conduct discussions and get in touch with
victims. Specialized primary health care clinics are key arenas where routines for
screening for IPV should be formulated and implemented.

A first step to combat IPV is to identify the victims; subsequently there must be
effectively devised programs so the abused women can continue to receive help. The
KFP set the guidelines for combating men’s violence against women. There is a lot
left to do, in *Slag i luften* (SOU, 2004) sharp criticism is leveled at how the principles
established by the KFP have been put into practice. Generally it can be said that the
proposition has dissolved and been diluted. When Amnesty International (2005)
surveyed how Swedish local governments were dealing with the principles set forth,
they found that there was enormous variation across the country. Many areas were
entirely without any program at all. In Kungsbacka, the Karla project has worked
relatively well in numerous ways and fulfilled portions of the propositions intentions.
Initially the entire province was to work in the same manner but presently things are
different in various parts of Halland (Region Halland, 2005). Lately, dating violence
among youths has received attention (Whitaker et al. 2006) and subsequently the
situation of dating violence progressing to IPV among adults. Therefore there is reason to focus preventive measures on children and adolescents.

Conclusions and Implications

In the struggle against IPV, increased knowledge concerning the intricacy of health promotion networks improves the probability of obtaining desired results. For the members of Karla working within the network was experienced as both personally and professionally rewarding. It improved efficiency and quality through access to competence and resources. A heterogenic configuration of the network gave closeness to members of society and potential for creative development. The program objectives need to be revised and the guidelines for the program should be updated continually. Future studies should explore the opinions of the women who had been in contact with Karla in order to evaluate the project from the user’s perspective.

The importance of creating programs to improve women’s security and freedom from violence cannot be overestimated. It is necessary to disrupt the destructive structures at the root of this violence. The preventive assignment set forth in the Kvinnofrid Proposition must be emphasized. To progress in the work against intimate partner violence it is important to refine and implement methods to recognize and attend to abused women. More focus has to be toward preventive actions, including working for gender equality. There is reason to direct actions toward children and adolescents and thus the arenas that initially should be engaged are media, school, and youth clinics.

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