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Domestic Violence as a Wicked Social Problem: Policy Cascades and Misdirected Solutions

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we introduce the concept of a policy cascade which describes the process of creating policies to address the consequences of other policies. Using the concept of wicked problems introduced by Rittel and Webber in 1973, we trace state and federal policies to address domestic violence to show how they form a policy cascade and decenter survivors. By treating social issues as wicked problems, upstream approaches which bypass compounding effects of policy may help recenter survivor needs.

Keywords: domestic violence, wicked problem, policy cascade, the braid

Domestic Violence as a Wicked Social Problem: Policy Cascades and Misdirected Solutions

Over the course of the last 50 years, the issue of domestic violence in the United States has moved from a private matter into the public sphere. As a result, a multitude of programs and policies have been introduced to respond to domestic violence, under the guise of prevention and protection. The policy response to domestic violence started as a human service response through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA; 1984), then escalated into the criminal justice system through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA; 1994). Most recently we are seeing a push towards a public health approach through social determinants of health initiatives such as health care partnerships with domestic violence agencies (Kimball et al., 2018).

All of these responses may provide some survivors with more options for protection and services, but recent critiques highlight the negative impact of the anti-domestic violence industrial complex (e.g., Kim, 2020; Richie, 2012; Ritchie, 2006). The policy and program responses to domestic violence are almost exclusively reactive and have focused on individual survivor needs and do little to address the broader threats and risks. For example, legal advocacy to assist a survivor in obtaining an Order of Protection provides limited protection to one survivor from one bad actor. The Order of Protection does nothing to prevent further victimization of another person nor does it address the behavior of the bad actor. Yet a fair amount of energy (e.g. research, education, labor, systems) is directed towards legal advocacy.

Building on the work first written about in “The Braid That Binds Us” (Mehrotra, Kimball, & Wahab, 2016), this paper argues that complex social problems like domestic violence are wicked problems as described by Rittel and Webber (1973). In our continued thinking and discussion of the "Braid" framework, it is clear the argument was incomplete (Mehrotra et al.,

2016). The framework of the Braid describes the interlocking interactions between neoliberalism, criminalization, and professionalization on domestic violence work in the United States. Neoliberal policies work to decrease the role of the government in providing social services by encouraging the privatization of services, with a heavy reliance on individual responsibility and accountability. The criminalization of domestic violence in the United States occurred during a time of massive policy shifts towards criminalization as a means of dealing with social problems in general. Criminalization of DV has meant enhanced engagement with law enforcement and criminal justice interventions and solutions to addressing violence. The professionalization of domestic violence work has led to a departure from collective grassroots organizing networks, to many formal organizations now requiring degrees and credentials for staff, and clearly defined hierarchical organizational structures.

These three forces significantly influence and constrain domestic violence work and research in the United States. While all three of these concepts are reactions and interactions to the effects of attempting to tame a wicked problem, it is incorrect to analyze professionalization on the same plane as neoliberalism and criminalization because professionalization is actually a cascading effect of neoliberalism and criminalization. This paper broadens the analysis first presented in the "Braid" to highlight the policy cascades that are created through attempts to provide simple solutions to wicked problems.

The term wicked problem was first introduced by Rittel and Webber in the 1970s. Rittel and Webber (1973) detailed the difference between tame and wicked problems. The wicked problems frame has been used to analyze various social problems including health care inequity and reform (Raisio, 2009; Young-Wolff et al., 2016; Periyakoil, 2007; Blackman et al., 2006), racism as a public health problem (Came & Griffith, 2017), public policy and management

(Head & Alford, 2015; Richardson, 2008), nuclear power (King, 1993), and professionalism (Coyne, 2004). While used broadly, it is not without its critics. The critiques of the wicked problems framework mostly rely on misapplication of Rittel and Webber's theory. Rittel and Webber (1973) emphasize that wicked problems are inherently unsolvable and solutions are controlled by problem formulation (or how the problem is defined). Critiques of the wicked problems framework seem to get locked into the solutions rather than the problem formulation (Peters & Tarpey, 2019) or others misapplication of the wicked problems framework (Termeer, Dewulf, & Biesbroek, 2019). In our explanations below, we articulate the differences between tame and wicked problems that are often missed in critique and apply the original defining characteristics of wicked problems to domestic violence.

The defining characteristics of a wicked problem are 1) no definitive formulation of the problem; rather “formulation of a wicked problem is the problem” (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 161); 2) because the problem cannot be definitively formulated, there is no stopping rule; 3) any solution to a wicked problem is good/bad and not true/false; 4) as such attempts at solutions will result in untraceable and intractable consequences over an unbounded period of time; 5) every attempt at a solution to a wicked problem is a consequence that cannot be undone; 6) there is not an exhaustive list of solutions because they all cannot be identified; 7) all wicked problems are unique; 8) however, every wicked problem is a symptom of another wicked problem; 9) attempts to resolve wicked problems are chosen by the definition of the problem-solver; and 10) Unlike science where it is acceptable (or even sometimes desired but rarely sanctioned) to test a hypothesis that is later refuted, planning does not have this luxury because planners cannot test solutions without being liable for the consequences those solutions generate (Rittel & Webber, 1973).

In contrast, a tame problem is not necessarily a simple one. The difference between the two problems lies in the problem formulation and solutions. Multiple attempts at solving a tame problem can be made without changing the problem or solution states. For instance, take a puddle of oil on the shop floor (Scholtes, 2018). The machine leaking the oil is examined, and the deteriorating gasket is replaced. The oil stops leaking, signaling that the problem has been solved. However, the new gasket deteriorates again and the puddle of oil returns. Further investigation reformulated the problem as poor quality gaskets. In an attempt to order higher quality gaskets, it was found that the purchasing guidelines favored gaskets with low prices over quality gaskets, inhibiting the ordering of a higher quality gasket to stop the premature oil leak. The true problem formulation is the purchasing guidelines. Until the purchasing guidelines were modified to favor quality over savings, preventing the next gasket from leaking similarly, this tame problem would not be solved. This problem, though more complex than it may have initially seemed, is still a tame problem. Several attempts at solving it could be made without fundamentally changing the problem or solution states, and eventually the unnecessary oil on the shop floor could be eliminated.

A wicked problem, on the other hand, does not have the same causal clarity nor the unambiguous state of being solved. Social problems are wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973) therefore, social policies are all attempts to solve social problems. Treating them as tame problems will not improve societal conditions, and will not resolve them. Attempts at incremental improvements to a wicked problem will not contribute to comprehensive improvement as they might with a tame problem. Instead these fragmentary changes will have far-reaching repercussions, changing the wicked problem fundamentally. It is worth noting that tame problems are not problems with objective solutions. They are problems where an

overwhelming majority consensus has been reached. When a classroom is too dim to read text on a page, a near unanimous consensus would label turning on the lights as a solution to the problem. Whether a problem of this nature could be objectively defined or solved is irrelevant to discussions of tame and wicked situations.

Rittel and Webber (1973) argued that it is not the complexity of the problem but the ability to solve it that makes it wicked. Newtonian causality could be applied easily and successfully to issues like establishing a system for clean water supply or paving roads. Professionals could reach solution states for such problems, complex as they may have been. Water could be supplied and roads could be paved. In an attempt to manage this ambiguity, standardization became the norm. The positivist paradigm of modern science assumes a problem can be isolated, defined, and solved (Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Evidence-based movements emerged, and social service workers were professionalized. This standardization limits accepted definitions of knowledge (Webb, 2001), ostracizing marginalized communities in the process (Cross et al., 2011), and privileging the dominant population's definitions of success. Furthermore, attempts to treat a wicked problem as a tame problem reinforces the culture of white supremacy specifically in its attempts to find only one solution, paternalism, focus of efficiency and effectiveness, and creating a sense of urgency (Okun, 2020). As society grows to be more concerned with issues of equity, previous standards for success are no longer sufficient. Mechanistic understandings of cause and effect require unanimously agreed upon success states, but equitable solutions to social problems are not universally accepted, and there will be no amelioration so long as these problems are treated as tame.

Through this paper, we will argue five points: 1) Domestic violence is a wicked problem; 2) Treating wicked problems as tame does little to ameliorate them; 3) Attempts to tame wicked problems result in policy cascades; 4) Policy cascades misdirect energy and efforts to lower level responses rather than focusing on the highest possible societal level of the problem; 5) Domestic violence policy cascades result in practices that de-center survivors and do little to focus the work on more substantial changes. We use the Oregon House Bill 3476 to demonstrate the policy cascade and show the misdirection and failure to serve survivors or provide any substantial change to the risk and threat of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence is a Wicked Problem

In this section, we will demonstrate how domestic violence meets the characteristics of a wicked problem. First, while the assumption of domestic violence being a social problem is virtually uncontested, there is no definitive formulation of the nature of the problem. Patriarchy contributes to the problem, capitalism contributes to the problem, poverty contributes to the problem, and power and control is yet another part of the problem. The potential root causes of the problem are inexhaustible.

As a result of not being able to clearly identify the root cause of domestic violence, we may attempt to ameliorate the problem, but there is no unambiguous solution. Therefore, as we work on proposed solutions to domestic violence, we make policy and program decisions that are judged as better or worse based on ideology. For example, the use of the criminal justice system to protect survivors may be considered as improving conditions by carceral feminists, and as worsening conditions by abolitionist feminists.

Furthermore, policy solutions implemented in 1994 resulted in untraceable and intractable consequences including forced system involvement and carceral creep (Kim, 2020).

These consequences are not bound by time, but may become clearer as time passes. Either way, they cannot be undone. The decriminalization of domestic violence will not put domestic violence back to a pre-1994 state and the future consequences of decriminalization have not even been considered, let alone realized.

There is no way to determine if all solutions to domestic violence have been conceived of. While certain solutions might arise (e.g., improve access to housing, criminalization, etc.), they are linked to other wicked problems (e.g., poverty, racism, sexism, classism, etc.) and it is difficult to separate the commonalities between the wicked problems. Which solutions are acted on are based on judgements of importance by the problem-solver in the moment. Finally, isolating the root cause of domestic violence is impossible. Therefore, the focus is on improving some of the symptoms of this wicked problem.

Next, we will demonstrate how treating domestic violence as a tame problem does little to ameliorate domestic violence and has produced what we have coined a *policy cascade* that misdirects energy and efforts, resulting in bad policy solutions with rippling effects that decenter survivors and do little to focus work on more meaningful solutions.

Treating Domestic Violence as a Tame Problem

Using a historical timeline of policies related to domestic violence, this paper will demonstrate how tame policy solutions have incorrectly defined domestic violence by its symptoms, resulting in a policy cascade that distracts from improving overall conditions. Then, using state and federal policies that address survivor confidentiality as an example, this paper will demonstrate how formulating the problem of domestic violence at the micro level has resulted in treating symptoms at the lowest levels which also creates policy cascades. These

policy cascades further remove domestic violence work and research from a focus on upstream problem formulation and only offer marginal improvements for some survivors.

Although this paper will use the example of confidentiality within a domestic violence context, its points could have been made using a number of potential alternatives. A wicked problem produces many symptoms, and when all of these symptoms are treated as tame problems, ineffective and more specialized chains of symptom and solution attempts are produced, creating a fractal pattern progressing further and further away from the macro levels of the wicked problem.

Though we will use domestic violence, it is possible to apply the logic of wicked problems to other social issues. For example, distribution of food boxes in clinics where patients are identified as experiencing food insecurity is a misdirected solution. The food box is a tame solution; the structural realities that lead to a patient requiring food are completely untouched by it, and the inequitable food insecurity experienced by the clinic's patients continues. The food box will address the social need for food, but not the wicked problem of food insecurity.

Changing System Response to Domestic Violence

In the early 1980s, as violence against women became a public policy priority, grassroots efforts pushed for social policies to address domestic violence (Kim, 2020; Schechter, 1982). In 1984, FVPSA was passed as part of the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act. FVPSA defines and proposes solutions to domestic violence within the social service system. Through funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, FVPSA provides grants and technical assistance for community-based programs including 24-hour hotlines, shelters, and other crisis services.

The logic behind FVPSA is that if social needs (e.g. shelter, crisis lines, support groups, etc.) are provided to survivors they can leave the perpetrator. The focus of the policy defines the problem as the survivor's inability to leave the perpetrator. The solution is then created to address the problem as defined: survivors need resources to be able to leave perpetrators. However, this does not address the existence of domestic violence. Once the survivor has left the perpetrator, they are just as likely to encounter another perpetrator as they were before the first one. This type of circular reasoning does not provide any distal outcomes that address the problem of domestic violence. Survivor inability to leave a perpetrator is neither the cause of nor solution to domestic violence. Furthermore, the FVPSA policy solution narrowly defines domestic violence in terms of a crisis, pushes the evaluative focus on service provision rather than prevention, and perpetuates blaming the survivor through questions like "why doesn't she leave?"

As the public focus on domestic violence continued, a spotlight on physical injuries and deaths associated with domestic violence combined with an increased focus in the political arena towards being "tough on crime," and the 1994 Crime Bill including VAWA was passed. Unlike FVPSA, VAWA framed violence against women as a crime rather than a socio-economic or political issue, and entrenched the criminal justice system as the solution to social problems. VAWA was the first federal legislation to provide federal protections for women. It included the first federal criminal law against domestic abuse and required states to enforce Orders of Protection anywhere in the United States.

These two policies worked together to shape the future of domestic violence programs and services by first framing then treating domestic violence as a tame rather than wicked problem. Responding to the social needs (e.g., shelter, economic support, etc.) of survivors and

jailing a perpetrator may provide for immediate safety and support from domestic violence for one survivor from one perpetrator, but does little to prevent future violence victimization or perpetration or to change societal acceptance of domestic violence.

Creation of a Policy Cascade

Using tame policy solutions to address domestic violence, creates competing state and federal DV policy mandates. These manifest in what we are defining as a *policy cascade*. Similar to a prescribing cascade--where medications are prescribed to address side effects of other medications--a policy cascade describes the process of creating policies to address the consequences of other policies. The example below demonstrates how policies that were initially created to protect survivors' information from perpetrators cascaded into other policies that de-centered survivors and forced system involvement. The consequences of policy cascades furthered micro-level interventions (e.g., mandated reporting, no drop prosecutions, advocate training) and distract from the structural level responses. While doing little to address domestic violence, this policy cascade has managed to make it more complicated for survivors to report, seek support, and resist forced system involvement.

Establishing the Need for Confidentiality

As part of the 1994 Crime Bill (Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, 1994), Congress mandated the United States Attorney General to study and evaluate methods the State uses to protect the confidentiality of communications between survivors and advocates to ensure that programs are not undermined while also staying “short of absolute privilege” (Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, 1994). The Attorney General was also tasked with identifying and understanding the ways abusive spouses may find a survivor’s address and other information as a means to locate them (Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, 1994).

The U.S. Department of Justice Report to Congress titled *The Confidentiality of Communications Between Sexual Assault or Domestic Violence Victims and Their Counselors* examined the risks and benefits of protecting communications and provided two model statutes with different degrees of privilege (DOJ, 1995). A second report, the National Criminal Justice Association's *Confidentiality of Domestic Violence Victims' Addresses* (NCJA, 1995), examined policies and practices across public and private sectors and attempted to survey all 50 state DV coalitions (22 states responded) to understand how "abusive spouses obtain information on the location of their spouses" (NCJA, 1995, p. 2).

The reports found it was difficult to protect the confidentiality of survivors, and that abusers were easily able to access survivor location information. Independent of obtaining information from family, friends, and stalking, some of the primary sources for gaining access to information on a survivor's location included children's school records, court documentation, Caller ID/telephone records, and welfare records (NCJA, 1995). The report also noted that, while these sources of information could be identified, it was difficult to control an abuser's access to information. Still, measures could be put into place to limit access (NCJA, 1995). Specifically, the report recommended a review of current laws and policies regarding confidentiality, as well as initiatives to educate the public on the importance of privacy, limit public access to information, and "adopt and enforce a code of conduct for employees of public and private agencies on the protection of confidential information and provide training in the code of conduct and sanctions for violations" (NCJA, 1995, pp 57).

Federal Policy Response to Need for Confidentiality

As a result of these recommendations, federal policies were changed to require confidentiality of survivor information, and restrict the disclosure of information that could place

undue risk on DV survivors. VAWA provides a specific set of confidentiality provisions that protect disclosure of the information the government has on the victim. VAWA also prohibits both enforcement actions being taken at protected locations (e.g., shelters, courthouses, rape crisis centers) and the reliance on information provided by the abuser, crime perpetrator, or their family members in a case against or for the benefit of the victim. Confidentiality protections were institutionalized for immigrants affected by DV, sexual assault, trafficking, and other U-visa crimes through the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA)* and the 2000 and 2005 VAWA reauthorizations. These additional protections include non-disclosure provisions that require the Departments of Homeland Security, Justice, and State to protect confidentiality in order to prevent harm to victims. Immigrant enforcement cannot use information solely provided by a perpetrator (or family member) to take adverse action. The protections also prevent enforcement actions related to immigration in shelters, victim service programs, family justice centers, visitation centers, or courthouse settings if the victim is appearing related to protection order, custody, or other case related to DV.

FVSPA and VAWA state that any shelter, rape crisis center, DV program, or other victim service program that receives either FVPSA or VAWA funding is barred from disclosing to anyone any information about a victim receiving services, including any location information (FVPSA, 1984). Furthermore, FVPSA mandates that the government can offer grants to States only if the State provides documentation that procedures have been developed and implemented to assure confidentiality. Programs that violate the confidentiality of survivors are at risk of losing state and/or federal funding.

Limits of Confidentiality to Exclude Legal Protections

As criminalization was incentivized through the advocacy of groups involved in the anti-violence/battered women's movement, states created policies that included mandated reporting, mandatory arrest, and no-drop prosecution of DV, sexual assault, and stalking as protective policies for survivors (Davis et al., 2001; Ford, 2003; Goodman & Epstein, 2005). While the intention of mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecutions was to shift judicial responsibility and accountability from the survivor to the system, the impact has been viewed by some as a clear mandate for systems involvement, and a simultaneous disregard for individual survivor choice (Davis et al., 2001; Ford, 2003; Goodman & Epstein, 2005).

This disregard is demonstrated through the explicit exclusion of legal protections of privilege and instead the creation of confidentiality policies that were originally instituted to protect information that could place undue risk on survivors which did not extend to criminal justice systems (NCJA, 1995). This meant that, if subpoenaed, domestic violence service providers could be forced by the courts to disclose information about survivors. As a result, DV advocates had to work within individual states to gain confidentiality and privileged communications through state-level statutes.

Overview of State Policy Response to Limits of Confidentiality

State statutes provide additional protection for communications between domestic violence service providers and survivors. This allows domestic violence counselors to have protection against having to disclose information to courts, law enforcement, or immigration officials. In some cases, this also protects against mandatory reports of violence. To gain protection from mandatory reporting and/or court mandates, people providing domestic violence services are given title protection as domestic violence advocates or counselors. Title protection

indicates a person meets certain requirements as defined by state law and is able to use a specific title to indicate the completion of certain requirements.

The training mandates vary widely across the 23 states that mandate training for title protection. First, the amount of training hours ranges from 15 to 40 hours. Colorado requires the least amount of training at 15 hours minimum while most states hover between 20-40 hours. Second, a few states outline specific curriculum criteria that must be included in the training. For example, Iowa requires training to include dynamics of victimization, crisis intervention techniques, overview of state criminal justice systems, and information for victims of crime. Whereas, Oregon, in addition to the dynamics of domestic violence, requires training on anti-oppression, anti-racism, and cultural competency theory and practice, effects of exposure on children, and working with system-based partners. Other states do not outline any specific training content.

Oregon's Policy Response: Oregon House Bill 3476

With an emergency declaration in 2015, Oregon enacted House Bill 3476 amending Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 40.225 (Lawyer-client privilege, 2019) by establishing that the relationship between survivors seeking DV, sexual assault, or stalking services and certified advocates warranted privilege. Even though VAWA requires confidentiality protections, HB 3476 expands them to protect community-based DV advocates from court mandates, e.g., subpoenas. Prior to the passage of HB 3476 in Oregon, DV programs piecemealed guidelines and confidentiality protections from VAWA and other constitutional amendments to resist and quash subpoenas, often with mixed results.

HB 3476 specifically defines certified advocates as employees or volunteers at; 1) a nongovernmental, nonprofit, community-based DV/sexual assault program that receives funding

from Oregon Department of Human Services or Oregon or United States Department of Justice, or a tribal government funded program; or 2) a sexual assault center, victim's advocacy office, women's center, student affairs center, or other program providing DV or sexual assault services on a two- or four-year post-secondary campus (or affiliated) that enrolls at least one student receiving an Oregon Opportunity Grant; and 3) has completed 40 hours of training that has been approved by the State Attorney General (Certified advocate-victim privilege, 2019). The law allows a survivor to assert privilege in order to refuse and prevent the disclosure of: 1) confidential communications (written and oral) made to a certified advocate in the course or receiving services, and 2) records that are created and maintained throughout service provision (Certified advocate-victim privilege, 2019).

Despite opposition from state prosecutors and district attorneys, the law helped to codify the privileged relationship between advocates and survivors and made it clear to district attorneys and judges that survivors choose whether or not to engage in criminal court proceedings (Wahab et al., 2021). It is important to note here that system-based advocates are not eligible to assert confidentiality and privileged communication to escape mandated testimony. System-based advocates were specifically excluded from HB 3476 privilege eligibility because their primary mandate is to provide evidence for prosecution to the State. Unlike community-based advocacy, systems-based advocacy programs are a component of a governmental structure with a primary focus on assisting victims in their role as witnesses to crime. The advocate's primary responsibility is to the State and they must balance the interests of the criminal justice system and the survivor's needs.

The creation and passing of Oregon House Bill (HB 3476) itself can be traced, in part, to the criminalization of DV, the neoliberal prioritizing of efficiency, cost savings, and focus on

individual responsibility, as well as initiatives to professionalize the DV workforce through credentialing (Wahab et al., 2021). It demonstrates the policy cascade created as a result of attempting to use tame solutions on a wicked problem. Each policy solution is based on a particular problem formulation. The unintended consequences create additional problems that are then reformulated and additional policies are implemented. Each time, the policy solutions move further downstream, decenter survivor voice, and render the chance at making any substantial changes marginal at best.

Discussion and Implications

The policy cascade demonstrates the increasingly important need to understand domestic violence as a wicked problem and to address complex social problems upstream rather than on individual levels. It is more difficult to address problems in broader contexts, but neglecting the nature of a wicked problem is futile; tame solutions will lead to minor and temporary amelioration that increases the complexity of the wicked problem. In order to generate both meaningful and creative alternatives of care and accountability, it is important to consider how unclear and competing policies impact survivors and advocate work. While examining Oregon specifically may provide insight on a local and regional level, the larger conversations that emerge may indeed prove fruitful as a foundation for further research across the U.S. more broadly and upstream approaches changes to U.S. policy.

We accept that policies that provide for advocate/survivor privilege are necessary protections against forced systems involvement. The right to assert privileged communication serves survivors by providing confidential and protected spaces to share anything they choose about their lives and the violence they experience without fearing it might be used against them, or the person who harmed them. Furthermore, we accept that confidentiality and the right to

privileged communication with advocates are necessary protections for survivors. This is especially true in the current anti-immigrant and law and order policy and enforcement climate. While codifying privilege for DV advocates is uncontested, linking this privilege to the professionalization of advocacy through mandated training does little to center survivors and reinforces power over survivors.

If confidentiality and privilege were addressed upstream through grant required protections or agency-level protections through state law, it would provide more clarity to survivors about who is a confidential provider to speak with and who is a mandated reporter, or what information cannot be subpoenaed. Uncoupling individual training from privilege and changing the law so that agencies may claim privilege rather than individual staff would provide immediate, obvious protections for survivors as they navigate the confusing, sometimes contradictory helping system. Agency-level protections provide advocates and survivors with clear understanding of confidential spaces and privileged communications.

We strongly encourage changes in all policies that regulate survivor interactions and reduce their access to support. This includes the removal of mandatory reporting requirements from the helping professions and dismantling of child welfare, immigration enforcement, and other institutions that overly regulate families of color and are a substantial source of fear for survivors considering disclosure (Ford, 2003; Incite!, 2006; Kaba & Murakawa, 2021; Kim, 2020; Richie, 2012; Ritchie, 2006; Spade, 2020). Future analysis of the policy cascades that have broadened the scope of mandatory reporting and increased family surveillance through child welfare and immigration enforcement would benefit the advocacy efforts.

We recommend an upstream approach that centers the needs of marginalized communities with the knowledge that meeting these needs will benefit everyone (Spade, 2009).

For example, focusing on societal infrastructure that increases minimum standards of living (e.g., universal basic income) and reduces structural inequality will cultivate communities with lower rates of DV (Krishnan, 2005).

To this end, we support the decriminalization of domestic violence, but caution about the potential for negative unintended consequences, therefore we continue to endorse Mimi Kim's creative interventions model (<https://www.creative-interventions.org/>) for alternate, community-based responses to violence.

Finally, we recommend influencers (e.g. researchers, policy makers, coalition leaders, etc.) treat domestic violence as a wicked problem. To look beyond holism and examine each interaction between the parts and how they exist independently of the whole (Richardson, 2004). We need to trust and support that given resources and opportunities, communities can care for each other without the need for professionals and focus our efforts and energy on getting systems out of their way (Kaba & Murakawa, 2021; Spade, 2020; Incite, 2006). Most immediately, we need to examine and change policies created under the guise of protection that force system involvement.

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