


The Struggle to Address Woman Battering in Slovakia: Stories From Service Providers

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Abstract

Following the fall of communism, Slovakia found itself in a challenging position: to openly acknowledge the existence of intimate partner violence (IPV) and its disproportionate effect on women and children without an infrastructure to address victim safety, and provide resources and legal help. With collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the government responded by developing shelters and introducing legislation that criminalized IPV and created social services for victims. To assess implementation efforts, we conducted in-depth interviews with governmental officials and NGO personnel who provide services for battered women. We focus on the operation and efficacy of shelters to discover what services are most needed for battered women, the criminal justice system's response to IPV, and what long-range goals will facilitate more permanent solutions to the social problem of violence against women in Slovakia.

Keywords

battered women, NGOs, shelters, Slovakia

Introduction

Despite the enduring presence of intimate partner violence (IPV) in most societies, Soviet bloc countries were steadfast in their unwillingness to acknowledge its pervasiveness while under communist control. Following the fall of communism,

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countries such as Slovakia found themselves in a unique position in which they had to openly acknowledge the existence of all forms of domestic violence¹ and its disproportionate effect on women and children without any infrastructure to address victim safety and to provide resources for battered women and their children. The onus was on the government to develop shelters and to create legislation that criminalized IPV and to create social services for victims. Political negotiations between the variety of women's organizations and the Slovak government were lengthy, resulting in limited legislative changes in civil and criminal codes. Moreover, official data and research on the extent, causes, and consequences of IPV remain sparse (Wasileski & Miller, 2010).

Stemming from direct pressure from the European Union (EU) to improve and directly respond to the victims of domestic violence, a great deal of legislation in the area of civil and criminal codes was amended between 1999 and 2008 (Wasileski & Miller, 2010). Particularly, the amendment of Civil Code No. 526/2002 provided a stepping stone in the transformation of Slovak legislation to better respond to violence against women. The 2002 amendment clearly states that in cases of physical or psychological violence, the spouse who committed such violence does not have the right to demand a substitute residence from the injured party (Wasileski & Miller, 2010). In addition, the legislation provides courts with the obligation to decide about discontinuity of apartment tenancy for the offender within 7 days. However, the legal process can last for years as a result of the complexity of domestic violence cases and victims' inability to prove the violence without police documentation or other official means. Therefore, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) pressured the state for an amendment in police enforcement legislation that would add to the reform of regulations and laws to better protect IPV victims. Even prior to the 2002 amendment to the Civil Code, police officers could evict the batterer from the common household for up to 24 hr, even if the batterer owned the house. In October 2008, the Slovak government passed legislation that allows police officers to evict suspected offenders from the household where the victim resides for 48 hr after an incident was reported. Between December 2008 and March 2010, there were 326 offenders removed from the common household (7 of them females). Only 60 victims asked the court to extend the period of 48 hr, and only 48 of these victims were granted such extensions. Police have the responsibility to inform victims that the period can be extended; the small number of victims who ask the court to extend the period of protection could reflect either that the police failed to inform the victims or that the victims are too afraid of batterer retaliation to continue with a law enforcement response.

Slovakia became a member of the EU in 2004. EU rhetoric stresses the development of policies designed to better protect women against IPV. Through the 2003 Resolution on the Elimination of Domestic Violence Against Women and the 2006 Recommendation on Combating Violence Against Women, EU policy expresses a consensus on general principles and describes necessary measures in creating public awareness about domestic violence, establishing support services for victims of violence, legislation, policing, working with perpetrators, education, training, and data collection (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2000). Consequently, member states, including Slovakia, included policies and statutes regarding violence

against women into their legislation. Responses to the issue of violence against women in Slovakia have been lackluster, which many scholars attribute to the lack of public awareness of IPV and a lack of political will to cohesively respond to these issues. In the early 1990s, as part of efforts to establish the free market, the Slovak government implemented various economic and social measures that led to a high rate of unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion of already marginalized groups, such as Roma or women. The legacy of the communist regime still plays a role in public and governmental attitudes toward women and minorities' rights and positions in the society (Wasileski & Miller, 2010).

Importation of Western European standards and the establishment of NGOs influenced Slovakia's fledgling commitment to address IPV. To better connect the diversity of programs developing for batterers in European countries, Project WWP (Work With Perpetrators of Domestic Violence in Europe) was launched in 2006-2008 by the European Commission's Daphne II Program and the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth to develop and implement common standards for treatment programs for batterers in Europe. Consequently, the Slovak government's Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (2005) recognized that they needed to do more to help victims and provide safe housing for battered women and their children and committed resources to prepare standards for work with batterers and to train professionals until the end of 2012 (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, 2005).

Shelters did not emerge without controversy, however, as the Slovakian people did not recognize or prioritize IPV as a pressing problem—and the government did not allocate resources to better assist victims. Membership in the EU mandated that member countries respond efficaciously to the plight of battered women, but without meaningful sanctions from the EU, the Slovak government responded with only superficial adherence, so NGOs stepped in to fill the gap. The social workers and psychologists who worked in the shelters were trained outside of Slovakia, mostly by foreign experts and NGOs, and their beliefs clashed with the policy of trivialization practiced by the Slovak government. Today in Slovakia, however, state and local governments have reluctantly joined the NGOs in a tenuous alliance to provide protection for victims of IPV. Many scholars, advocates, and observers, though, believe NGOs have garnered the most accomplishments in terms of responding to IPV (Fabian, 2006). The lack of political will to effectively respond to battered women forced many NGOs to replace the role of the Slovak government by providing social and legal services to victims with limited or no financial assistance from the state. In addition, NGOs pressured the Slovak government to create and provide legislative foundations for addressing IPV, and financial resources to build the legal and social infrastructure for these victims (Wasileski & Miller, 2010).

Even though the Slovak government did not enact a specific law to combat IPV as a distinct crime, a great deal of legislation that deals with offenses of domestic violence was amended between 1999 and 2008. For example, a statutory change that defines a person who commits violence against a closely related or a dependent person as an offender increased prosecutorial efforts to hold offenders accountable for

harming women and children, and prosecutors no longer need the consent of victims to prosecute cases (Wasileski & Miller, 2010). Data related to enforcement of such legislation—for example, prosecution or punishment imposed—are absent or sketchy.

At this point in time, some legal protection for victims has been achieved, but their protection is compromised by an absence of therapeutic programs and/or meaningful sanctions for perpetrators, and minimal police enforcement and prosecution efforts. The task of National Action Plan 2009-2012 required the Minister of Interior, Department of Criminal Police, to publish a monitoring report regarding the immediate removal of the violent partner from the common household and away from the abused woman and her children. Such a monitoring report is part of the Amendment to the Act of the Police Force through which police officers have gained the authority to expel a perpetrator of violence for 48 hr from the common household in the incident of violence, without prior proof of such offense and without waiting for a court order (Act on Police Force No. 491/2008 Coll.). In addition, the law requires police officers to inform the victim about how to file for a court order that will extend the 48-hr period.

This new legislation became a significant tool to use to tackle the problem of domestic violence, especially since the Amendment to Police Force No. 495/2009 Coll. excluded weekends and public holidays from the 48 hr of protection. Nevertheless, many NGOs identified other flaws, such as the lack of police training about domestic violence and the lack of services for victims following the offender's expulsion from the common household (Sipošova, 2008). Some regions of Slovakia still lack meaningful and comprehensive victim services. Funding for shelters and other services remains an issue of conflict between state and city municipalities. Although broadening the shelter network provides necessary relief to victims as an initial step toward their empowerment, the violence against women movement has been unsuccessful in solving the pervasive structural problems of securing permanent housing and employment for survivors. Even the ability to meet battered women's daily needs, which are particularly exacerbated for women living in poverty and/or members of ethnic minority communities such as the Roma, remains a struggle (see Wasileski & Miller, 2014). Roma women are further marginalized from the larger community because of their isolation, strong patriarchal family structures, residency in settlements, and lack of awareness of legal rights, as well as socio-cultural differences in language, religion, and customs (Council of Europe, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2003).

The purpose of the present research is to explore current responses to IPV in Slovakia following its emergence from communism, the development of its own government, and its subsequent membership in the EU. Despite the Slovak government's passage of the National Action Plan for Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women for years 2005-2008 (which relied on the definition of violence against women in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women), and its pledge to launch legal and social efforts to prevent and eliminate IPV, the government did not allocate any funds or grants for implementing the plan's tasks. Although a variety of municipal Slovak ministries are involved in activities to promote

gender equality and tackle IPV in Slovakia, many NGOs criticize the Slovak Government for its lack of speed in improving criminal and civil legislation, its inadequacy in financing direct social services and public awareness programs, and its reluctance to include gender equality in public education curriculum.

To assess how these efforts have been implemented, we conducted in-depth interviews with two different groups that provide services for battered women: government officials and NGO personnel. All except two respondents were Slovakian; an interview with two leaders in the Czech Republic was also conducted.² We sought to learn about existing institutional programs and policies, and to find out from on-the-ground practitioners what obstacles they encounter when addressing violence against women. Thus, by using in-depth qualitative interviews with a purposive sample of individuals who work in shelters as well as workers who assist in victim advocacy, located in every region in Slovakia, this research focuses on the operation and efficacy of the shelters to discover what services are most helpful and needed for battered women and their children, and to discern what long-range goals are needed to facilitate more permanent solutions to the social problem of violence against women in Slovakia.

Methodology: Sample and Data Collection

Data used in this study were collected by the co-authors in Slovakia during the summer of 2008 through field research.³ The year 2008 was a landmark year in Slovakia because of its focus on violence against women. As part of its membership in the EU, Slovakia participated in a campaign to criminalize IPV that was launched and carried out by the Council of Europe.⁴ The campaign against IPV was an attempt to tackle the global issue of violence against women across the member states. The campaign lasted for almost 2 years—from November 2006 to April 2008—and it involved participation by national parliaments together with local and regional governments, and NGOs involved in protecting women from violence. The member states such as Slovakia were requested to implement social and legal measures that promote support and protection of victims of IPV as well as launch a parallel campaign at the national level.

The campaign in Slovakia was launched under the auspices of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, an entity that provides state supervision of the performance of social services. As a result, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic published online the contact information for organizations and institutions that officially provide help to battered women. The list consisted of 45 different organizations and institutions across Slovakia. In addition, according to the Ministry's list, approximately 32 shelters existed in 2008 that offered temporary protection to battered women and their children. Some of these shelters offered other services to victims, such as legal assistance and resources/counseling to aid the women in living independently.

We made initial contacts with every listed institution or organization using email or phone, inviting employees to participate in the research directly and asking for their assistance in recruiting additional participants. We quickly discovered that the list of resources was misleading; at least 9 of the listed organizations did not provide any

help to battered women, and their social services were oriented toward other groups in need, such as children with a variety of physical and mental disorders, elderly people, the homeless, or physically handicapped people. Consequently, the final sample includes 22 representatives from 16 different state- and NGO-run shelters and service providers in all of the eight distinct regions of the country.⁵

The government of Slovakia is divided into eight independent regions to develop decentralized local and regional self-government. As a result of the highly populated eastern region of the country, Eastern Slovakia alone is divided into two autonomous regions: the Autonomous Region of Prešov and the Autonomous Region of Košice. Participants from both state and NGO shelters were interviewed in each region. Every region finances its own hospitals, social services, and schools, deriving revenue from its own resources in addition to a state subsidy. This arrangement is not optimal: The state is reluctant to support such areas, and the regional governments do not always have enough financial resources to address their needs.

Relevant governmental offices, such as the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, and the Directors of the Regional Plenipotentiary Office for Roma were identified using the country's electronically published home page; official letters explaining the present study and invitations for participation were mailed to key contact persons. Officials from the Regional Plenipotentiary Office for Roma were included because such offices were created to address the needs of Roma communities, an ethnic community that experiences high risk of victimization yet has limited access to state resources.

During the months July to August 2008, interviews were conducted with shelter directors and workers, government officials, and other social service providers. All of the respondents except one agreed to be audiotaped. In addition, handwritten notes were taken by the authors during all the interviews. The length of the interviews ranged from approximately 1 hr to 1 hr 40 min, with an average length of 1 hr 15 min. A total of 22 interviews were completed. Seventeen interviews were conducted with representatives of NGO shelters, of which 12 were with social workers and psychologists and 5 were directors of shelter providers. Five interviews were completed with various government officials and directors of state-run shelters.

All respondents including two sociologists from Rosa in Prague were White and native Slovaks or Czechs. Only seven respondents were males; three of these men were not directly working with clients but held directorial positions. In-depth interviews covered questions about IPV, such as the following: How has the fall of communism and membership in the EU influenced your efforts to address IPV and help battered women? How are shelters funded and supported? What are the roles played by state authorities and NGOs? Who are the shelter workers? What legal options exist for battered women, and what kind of legal help is provided? How has the criminal justice system (CJS) responded to IPV? What are the operating procedures of the shelters (i.e., do they charge fees for services; what kinds of services are provided; how long can women stay in the shelters; what programs exist for job training or education?)?

The interview transcripts were analyzed separately by both authors based on deductive coding.⁶ Following grounded theory techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), several

themes emerged from the data. These themes were counted as major themes if at least half of the sample raised the issue. In the following section, we focus on four themes that emerged from the interview data: (1) the legacy of communism and its influence on IPV policy, (2) shelter structure and resources, (3) limited resources for victims, and (4) the response of the CJS.

Findings

Theme 1: Legacy of Communism and Its Influence on IPV Policy

Under communist rule, the government promoted gender equality through equal access to economic opportunities, education, and welfare, while simultaneously oppressing individual freedom (Fabian, 2006). There was practically no mention of IPV or estimates of its prevalence during communism; consequently, IPV was not legally considered and defined as a separate criminal offense that required an intervention of the CJS. During the communist era, IPV cases were not defined in criminal or civil codes, so IPV was viewed as a general assault committed against another person. Communist ideology meant that the state exerted complete control over the public discourse, refusing to publicly acknowledge such issues as sexuality and domestic violence, and strictly prohibiting state intervention into the private life of its citizens (Brunell, 2005; see also Fabian, 2006). The communist government could intervene in family issues, if necessary, through the labor unions and policies controlling access to contraceptives and abortion (Einhorn, 1993). NGOs that dealt with IPV and other pressing social issues were non-existent until the late 1990s, after the split with the Czech Republic. Thus, the transition period in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989 transformed the issue of violence against women from an invisible social phenomenon to one more prominent in the public view; NGOs devoted to addressing IPV were drawn to Slovakia, spreading Western ideas and practices toward gender issues and beginning to tackle the recalcitrant infrastructure, though not without resistance. Acknowledging the existence of IPV as a social problem is still widely "taboo," given the strong desire to believe that all marriages are peaceful (Robila, 2004). In the last two decades, the interactions between the state, policy actors, and citizens significantly changed. The communist regime promoted women's rights in terms of equal access to education and the labor market. Access to higher education or to labor market opportunities, however, did not necessarily lead to women's empowerment and equality. As Wolchik (1993) argued, the combination of forced gender equality through women's widespread involvement in the labor force, together with a simultaneous lack of changes in gender roles in families, resulted in women responsible for a double burden (i.e., work and family; see Hochschild, 1989). Consequently, many women in transitional societies rejected the idea of feminism and did not support the goals of gender equality (Wolchik, 1993).

In our sample of shelter representatives, almost half indicated that most women in Slovakia still do not understand that IPV is a crime. Several respondents mentioned how strong Christian beliefs and a culture that emphasizes family values that include

a woman's role as key to keeping the family together prevent victims from leaving an abusive relationship: "There is nothing in Christian education about women's rights and her right not to be the object of violence and abuse" (social worker with NGO shelter), and "very often [women] think that they must keep the family together, protect the children, so they must suffer the violence" (male director of a state shelter). Many women experience difficulty even talking with shelter workers about the violence they endured. One of the state lawyers mentioned that psychological abuse goes unaddressed because

our psychologists are badly trained and they then give sketchy psychological evaluations to the court. Therapists do not believe women or they think that abuse is normal and there is no need to worry. Then the judge cannot come up with any other decision, without credible evidence and statements from these psychologists. (A female lawyer with the state)

All of these factors contribute to women's inefficacy in leaving an abusive partner. A majority of respondents believed that this trivialization of abuse and denial that IPV is a crime are even higher among male citizens and male criminal justice (CJ) professionals. As one female government official stated, women learned under communism "to be fearful of announcing their opinions or concerns and that it was better to be quiet about certain things." A social worker who works at an NGO shelter said, it is difficult for battered women to know "they don't need to suffer," and summarizes, "Slovakia still misses the enlightenment." A sociologist who works with an NGO dedicated to pro-choice and women's rights discussed at length that because of communism, Slovak women did not have any experience with real gender inequality; women did not need to fight for the right to work or the right to vote, as these actions were mandatory under communism. However, she adds that true gender equality was never fully realized because women still performed the "double duty" of working in the household after a long day of working outside of the home:

You can see this in communist movies during the 1970s and 1980s, with women sweating [as they carry] three or four grocery bags, running home from the work, cooking dinner, opening bottle of beer for her husband, handing him that beer and newspaper.

The respondents' words reveal the long reach of communist rule in contemporary Slovakia. As the presence of IPV was not acknowledged under communism, no infrastructure existed to respond to this crime, so the foundation for addressing battering was imported from legal and social service organizations in Western countries. Culture clashes exist, as many Slovak women reject the feminist theoretical grounding that analyzes men's violence committed against women. Sexist coverage by newspapers exacerbates the dismissal of calls for women's equality. As one respondent from an NGO describes,

The problem is how Slovak society and Slovak people view position of women. For example, when we were lobbying for enacting of sexual harassment legislation, many

newspapers were against this and published every day some article about how now men will be punished even for making compliments to woman. . . . Nobody will press charges anyway . . . because every woman that is a victim of sexual harassment is worried that she will lose her job.

These are insightful comments about women's lack of power and how this is reinforced by the media; most of the respondents acknowledged that backlash expressed by both men and women against progress for women remains strong. Within this context of silence about social problems, coupled with women's lower position of power within and outside of the family, IPV remains an issue easily ignored and trivialized.

Theme 2: Shelter Structure and Resources

The respondents' accounting of women's unequal position in Slovak families and society is reinforced by the haphazard approach used to offer protection for battered women in government or NGO-run shelters. The state has not established or funded any shelters designed to exclusively house battered women and their children. Rather, extra bed space or room(s) are added to shelters that were created to help the homeless, the elderly, and people with psychological problems or mental retardation. As a ROSA representative declares, "Everyone is on one pile," highlighting the fact that the existing structures are not optimal for battered women, as they are located in known public places and allow anyone to enter the buildings, including batterers (in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia). Even shelters that were established by NGOs prioritized residence to homeless single mothers with children or pregnant women and not necessarily battered women and their children. Only three of the NGO-funded shelters attempt to keep their addresses secret, but anonymity is virtually impossible as shelters are typically located in small villages where everyone knows everyone else. All shelters impose limits to the time one can live there; typically, residents can stay for up to 1 year, though the directors and shelter workers said that they would not kick anyone out at the end of a year. Yet, Slovak law "on the books" allows for housing for battered women to be for a 6-month maximum stay. Part of this leniency in stay length could be due to the unavailability of other housing options in Slovakia, and the recognition on some level that there are "no magic fixes in 3 to 6 months" (female social worker with NGO). At the same time, however, many respondents believed that if battered women stay too long, they become more passive and resigned to their situation, and they rely too strongly on NGOs for support and do little to help themselves.

A common response was that the state only funded shelters if they provided housing for "single parents in social needs," which is a catch-all category that could include battered women, but there were no additional efforts to train personnel or respond to specific needs of battered women. Battered women also have to jump an extra hurdle to be accepted: a requirement that women see a psychologist for evaluation. This creates a burden for battered women that others do not have because psychologists are not typically on-site (except to see children), women have to pay for this evaluation, and

it is often difficult for a battered woman to open up, trust, and reveal private details to a professional with whom they will not have an ongoing connection, even though the majority of battered women indicate to shelter workers that they desire access to multiple therapy sessions. In addition, some shelters require a medical exam culminating in a certificate that states the battered woman carries no infectious diseases. Most shelters are registered as facilities for single mothers with children who are in social need; they do not have accreditation for their centers to provide help for victims of IPV. The state also hosts a large number of adults who have been under state care since they were children and are now pregnant. In contrast to the government-funded shelters, the NGOs that provide services often lump the homeless; abandoned, abused, or neglected children; children in foster care; single parents with social needs, including IPV victims; and old people together, but strive to empower the residents, believing in the philosophy, "Help me so I can do it later on my own" (social worker at NGO shelter). They tend to rely more on grants, private sponsors, presents, and donors for operating expenses, though social workers at state-run and NGO-run shelters help battered women get the documentation necessary to receive welfare (and all shelters ask women to contribute some of the welfare payments to help defray costs of their stay). Overall, for the shelters operating (where we conducted interviews), between 0% and 25% of the living space is designated for sheltering battered women.

Introducing battered women to daily life residing in a homeless shelter is not without problems, of course, because battered women's needs are very different. As a director of an NGO center for single parents states, "Usually they are very scared and they do not trust anyone . . . since they are victims of physical abuse; you can see their fear of possible physical attack when you come close to them." Although there are workers who try to connect residents to employment through the labor department, most of the time there are no psychologists or therapists available who specialize in understanding IPV victims. Moreover, the social workers who help victims register for unemployment benefits (welfare, medical insurance, and so forth, including securing welfare to contribute to their stay at the shelter) do so because unemployed people have to be registered as unemployed in the labor department to receive welfare benefits; this bureaucratic procedure does not address issues of victim empowerment or economic independence from batterers through gainful employment.

All of the respondents declared that much tension exists between the state and NGOs, reflecting a difference in understanding about battering that emerges in how the problem and the individuals are "framed" in discussions. For instance, the NGOs talk more sociologically about gender and power asymmetry between men and women, the lack of a state response to the structural causes of battering, and efforts to reform the law and work on prevention issues. State officials seem at a loss about what to do, while remaining complacent about the plight of battered women, and rarely, if ever, mention how power and control of men over women seem to be at the crux of the problem that allows men to batter with impunity.⁷ The state officials (and even some social workers who did not work directly with battered women) blame women for their plight, saying that they come from a bad family environment or that individual pathologies account for their victimization. In contrast, the NGOs insist that social structural issues are the key, not biological or social determinism. These differences in

basic understandings about the cause and dynamics of battering lead to tension between the two bodies:

The Ministries and other governmental agencies do not want to see NGOs as equal partners. In many instances, we substitute for the state. We are not involved or invited into the legislative procedures—our experience is not taken into account at all. (Female social worker with NGO)

One thing that state officials and the NGO representatives agree upon is how progress is stymied by the lack of state funding (e.g., “provision of funding is abysmal”). Thus, shelters become dependent on private donations; a representative from one of the NGO shelters explained that they maintain the same sponsors for years as “everything depends on our contacts and network.” Overwhelmingly, the respondents felt that the lack of financial commitment from the state indicates that the Slovak government simply lacks compassion and does not care about violence against women. Respondents acknowledge that the NGOs fill in these gaps:

The reality is that non-governmental organizations cover the holes in Slovak social system. The state has not established any shelter or specific social services for battered women. In Slovakia, only NGOs address the issues and problems of battered women. So, the state is using us, but does not provide any financial or other help. (Female director of NGO shelter)

Despite the NGOs’ greater familiarity with battered women’s experiences, the state does not ask them for information about the number of women in their shelters and their most pressing needs, a reluctance that is consistent with the state’s unwillingness to collect data from police or the courts. As one NGO worker stated,

State agencies such as Ministries do not cooperate with NGOs at all. They did not even include us and other NGOs in the campaign. They did not ask us about our work or our clients. They invited us only to the final reception.

Yet, her institution collects statistics with the hope that “someone from the state agencies will use it in order to tackle the problem” (female director of NGO shelter).

Both NGOs and state officials identify a need for increased state involvement, particularly in the area of finding long-term residential spaces; this situation gets dire as women reach the maximum time permitted in the short-term facilities:

Battered women can stay here for some limited time, but then they don’t have anything else. They don’t have any opportunity to find a house or rent something . . . we have nowhere to send woman. We don’t have housing for low-income families. We need some services between shelter and real life. The shelter is only temporary. (Social worker at NGO shelter)

Only one director of a state facility expressed greater optimism about the state’s role, though this hope is tempered by his limited experience of running the facility for less than a year:

Next year we expect to have new legislation that covers social services and we expect to see more protection for victims of domestic violence from the state. I think that finally the issues of domestic violence are becoming visible and not only to the state and government officials but also the general public is becoming aware of the prevalence. We still do not have a sufficient infrastructure of social services or even adequate legal protection for victims of domestic violence, but I think that things are moving forward very slowly.

Clearly, NGOs remain crucial to the goal of assisting battered women as NGOs have extensive connections with and knowledge of other shelters and “can make the problem of domestic violence more visible and push the state to address the issue” (social worker at NGO shelter). Through their close relationships with other NGOs across Slovakia, they can arrange to send victims to a safer location in a different region, though this is not an optimal solution given that some shelters are more reluctant to accept women from other areas because they will not get funds to help women from out of their own region. For NGOs, the shelter remains a temporary solution, one that rests on better orchestration of long-term plans for housing and other assistance. All of the shelter workers see the shelter as a crisis intervention, not the solution. “Shelter should not be the solution. The state and municipalities should step in and face the real problem of victims of domestic violence. In Slovakia we don’t have an infrastructure of social services and help” (female director of NGO shelter).

Another state official from a state shelter is aware of the existence of NGOs; he tends to favor collaboration with other state-run agencies: “Basically we cooperate only with facilities that are administrated by the state. We have the same problems, every 2 months we have meetings.” He acknowledges that NGOs have greater financial difficulties and very limited state support and that “even that limited support is not 100% guaranteed. It might happen, but it can be denied” (male director of a state shelter). The state officials are cognizant that the majority of prevention programs or community outreach is done only by the NGOs, and they try to encourage Slovaks to view IPV as a problem of society, not just of the family: “NGOs have had a significant impact in making domestic violence a visible phenomenon in Slovakia . . . because we do not have tools or resources.”

This scarcity of resources and disagreement over mission creates even more conflict. A lawyer for the state hopes to eventually create a national center for IPV that will cooperate with NGOs, given the state does recognize that NGOs have expertise and victimization experts and sociological background, but some suspicion was expressed regarding how the NGOs would handle more money and responsibility, feeling that the government would be the best keeper:

We would like to create the structure to make sure of its sustainability. That is also the reason why we don’t want to just give money to NGOs. I have contact with variety of these NGOs and they compete with each other; it is normal, they really are very active. And some NGO shelters do not fulfill required EU standards. . . . But we want to have control over the money and plan. So this is our major plan for coming years. The National center would establish eight regional offices and eight shelters. (Lawyer with the state)⁸

Despite the dedication of service providers, they operate in the context of limited resources. Although ambitious about plans for future services, the respondents in NGO- and state-run shelters are stymied in their efforts to provide protection for battered women as short-term shelter and long-term housing needs are dire. No shelter exists that serves battered women exclusively; space is available for one or two women and their children in existing shelters that primarily serve the homeless and pregnant single women who have no place to go. Thus, the unique needs of battered women, such as safety measures and legal assistance, are eclipsed within this context of scarce resources. We elaborate on this issue in the next theme.

Theme 3: Limited Resources for Victims

The respondents were equally concerned about the immediate danger for battered women and victim safety, and the lack of support and resources for longer term housing options and legal assistance. Discussions regarding the dearth of public housing framed many of the interviews, as there are no public housing options in Slovakia today. Under communist rule, public housing did exist, but today's residents are forced to buy their residences, which they can rent out to others, and rents are uncontrolled. Once the women outstay their time in a shelter, there is nowhere to go except perhaps to another homeless shelter in a different municipality:

What we see as the biggest problem and obstacle in helping the victim is hous[ing]. Housing in Slovakia is a huge problem. Once a woman leaves the spouse and they have joint residency and joint ownership of their house, it is very hard for her because of economic restraints to get additional housing. (Social worker in NGO)

This dilemma is compounded for battered women, who are already terrified for their own safety and that of their children, who have no independent economic means of support, and who are under pressure to file a police report and file for custody and child support under a system that valorizes joint ownership of property and has little sympathy for battered women's circumstances.

Once a battered woman makes the decision to leave her abuser, risks of increased and more severe violence escalate (Browne, 1989). Yet, the homeless shelters that exist to help low-income families for up to 3 years refuse admission to women if they have a problem with alcohol or with their spouse. The implicit message conveyed to battered women is to go back home to their batterer, as there is no recourse. Paternalistic comments also flavored the interviews, with many (particularly male) shelter directors, even from NGOs, maintaining that women lack an understanding of basic financial information that could help them survive, while simultaneously not acknowledging that this naïveté was due to men's control over women's financial autonomy:

Women do not know how to manage money because they were not permitted to do it. Very often we have to teach them how to use ATM because they did not have access to money and could not buy anything without their spouse's agreement. (Male director of NGO shelter)

Without a more complete understanding of IPV, well-intentioned help from shelter workers fails to address core concerns of victims. Although shelter workers are eager to help victims gain custody, support, and divorce, they have no understanding of the dynamics of IPV that could make these efforts increase a batterer's anger, and the workers also lack any legal expertise. As one respondent told us,

We have a major housing problem with no low-income housing, and rent is just too high for single mothers. Many of our clients just will end up in some other facility, moving from one shelter to another. The property settlement after divorce takes years here in Slovakia and women just cannot find justice. (Male director of NGO shelter)

Thus, shelter social workers can help with paperwork, but their assistance is limited based on their knowledge about gender and asymmetrical power in relationships (male social worker with NGO shelter). There is only one graduate program in Slovakia that is oriented toward gender issues and trains social workers in this area. Respondents recognize the limits of the law, and how the police and courts' reluctance to enforce laws further dissuades victims' action: "We have legislation in place through which a victim of domestic violence can ask through civil court to remove the offender from the household, but in general, this law is not enforced at all" (male director of NGO shelter). As another respondent stated,

Police officers, judges, and prosecutors do not understand the dynamics of interpersonal violence. For any battered woman, not only Roma woman, to get through investigation and trial process is almost impossible. They are not protected, and the criminal justice agencies' responses are inadequate. The trial usually takes 5-6 years. (Sociologist at NGO organization)

One of the few exceptions to respondents' lack of understanding or knowledge about IPV was voiced by a feminist sociologist at the NGO "ProChoice," an organization that addresses women's issues and gender, such as violence against women and forced sterilization among Roma women, and works toward gender equality, work opportunities, and reproductive rights. She argued that shelter workers blame women for their victimization, rather than viewing interpersonal violence as exemplifying power and control in relationships. She told us,

All those shelters that you have visited so far are not gender sensitive; the workers are not properly trained if at all in gender-related issues. In our organization, we believe that unless we will look at the problem of interpersonal violence from the gender perspective, from the perspective of gender inequality, the role of power control in battering, we will be not able to move forward and adequately help battered women. We really focus and put stress on gender inequality in Slovakia and we believe that the situation in Slovakia is catastrophic in the sphere of social services. (Sociologist at NGO organization)

She identified a huge problem with the social services infrastructure: "We do not have any cooperation between those institutions." One NGO was viewed as the only

organization in Slovakia that really provides adequate crisis intervention and counseling with well-trained social workers, psychologists, and lawyers. It does not accept any financial resources from the state and works well with her feminist organization:

Last year, our organization together with Fenestra,⁹ we have tried to put together all those existent shelters in Slovakia and we have tried to find some common system how to collect data on clients, so we would have some numbers that we can make visible.

They invited shelter directors to meet with them to create common procedures to monitor violence against women and collect data for the entire country. But outside of these two progressive organizations, cooperation from shelters has been minimal. The state-run shelters were seen as particularly egregious because they lump battered women's issues with homeless women and limit funding or the creation of any long-term solutions to housing scarcity and employment.¹⁰

Respondents admitted that social misunderstanding of IPV increased feelings of stigma for victims. For instance, one social worker said that the public does not know what a "crisis center" is, and it is "viewed negatively by the public who doesn't understand the kind of help it can provide . . . usually people see crisis centers as shelters for losers" (social worker at NGO shelter). Victims confided to shelter workers that they were embarrassed about the label "victim," yet "she must face the fact that she was accommodated in the shelter. But when you say the word 'shelter,' people in Slovakia view the victim differently. The victims become stigmatized and labeled for being in the shelter" (male social worker in NGO shelter). This pejorative label is reinforced by a legal system response that forces the victim, rather than the abuser, to leave the home.

The interviews reveal that housing needs remain paramount for women escaping violent relationships. Although shelters exist in every region, they are not dedicated to proactive strategies to facilitate transitions to independent living long term; in fact, battered women are fortunate if shelters can offer only temporary living space. Although concerned about IPV, shelter providers demonstrate very little understanding of victims' legal needs, and their analysis reveals no understanding of gender, power-control, and other issues that characterize domestic violence. Part of this naïveté reflects the overall dearth of IPV training and education; courses about gender and IPV are not yet part of college curricula or training, except for a few workers working with NGOs in the bigger cities. The embarrassment that victims feel when they have nowhere else to go but to a shelter remains unmitigated by social censure of IPV. We turn next to the concomitant issue of lack of training with CJ professionals as well as broader issues related to CJS involvement, our final theme.

Theme 4: The Response of the CJS

The CJS in Slovakia seems to function with apparent differences, depending on whether a victim lives in a large city or in rural areas of Slovakia. By virtue of sheer size, cities like Bratislava (the capital) offered greater resources and options for victims, mostly

because the NGOs were part of an established NGO network and they helped each other. Still, all the shelter representatives we talked with were very critical of law enforcement and dismayed about the lack of legal assistance. Although many shelter directors encouraged victims to call the police or file a petition for abuse, they were resigned about the quality of concern the police would show victims, feeling that “there are almost no benefits for them to file a petition with the law enforcement agency” (male social worker in NGO shelter). Many shelter directors and workers are aware of the legislation in place to assist battered women, but no one credits the police as being well trained or even willing to help domestic violence (DV) victims. “Police will only interview victims when there are visible physical injuries” (social worker in NGO), a refrain echoed by all of the people we interviewed. There is no recognition of other abusive tactics that inspire fear and intimidation. Even more appalling, according to the shelter workers, was the police officers’ absolute refusal to arrest without observing serious physical injuries. “Police will leave without arrest or doing anything, having the expectation that family members will solve the situation” (director of NGO shelter). The officers’ reluctance leaves battered women in an untenable situation, given how much other family may blame them for their own victimization or recognize how economically dependent the family is on the batterer. Police “look the other way” (male director of NGO shelter) and may only intervene in family disputes if it is obvious that the children are affected: “They say, ‘she is adult, she can take care about herself, and she can make a decision on her own to reach for help and ask for accommodation.’ But for children, police make decisions” (male director of a state shelter).

Although at least half of our sample mentioned the 2002 legislation that was enacted to better protect battered women, the police seem blithely unaware of the options available to them, such as removal of offenders from the households. Without exception, all of the respondents said the police need training on IPV and on the law enforcement aspects mandated in the 2002 legislation.¹¹ In particular, the individuals who worked at NGO-run shelters were very knowledgeable about the protections and limits of the legislation. While it was widely acknowledged, even by the state shelter directors, that one of the NGOs published and distributed training and legal material to all police departments in Slovakia in 2006, they maintained that “police officers remain unaware. Who knows who kept the publications in the closet? So we definitely need some training, individual training with each police officer” (social worker with NGO shelter). There is also a recognition that NGOs work more closely with the police, sometimes explaining the law to police to convince them that the abuser should have to leave the household and not force the victim/mother and her children to leave (social worker from NGO shelter).

All respondents agreed that it is “not common for women to report violence to the police, often because she is in shock and sometimes abusers follow her to shelter and threaten her” (social worker at NGO shelter). Batterers are often emboldened because of the lack of law enforcement; they are also able to find and stalk women at shelters, as the locations are not secret. According to the respondents, police officers rationalize their inaction by saying they were not trained to respond differently to battering. While we were conducting an interview at an NGO shelter, the director described a situation that was ongoing:

We have in front of our gate a car with one of our client's husband. We don't have any legitimate power to get rid of him and she is a hostage of the shelter. We tried to reach for help through police, social welfare agency, through lawyers because she has two small children and nobody will help us. Not court, not police, nobody can help because that man has a lot of good contacts, so he knows exactly what he can and cannot do. He is just sitting in his car in the public space and he does not violate any Slovak law. . . . When he saw her and threatened her and cursed over the gate, we called police. Police will make him pay some small fine because he is violating a public order that is a misdemeanor act. Yesterday someone advised us that we can file for physical terrorism, but even then police can hold him for only 24 hours and then he must be released. The woman pressed charges for several times, but so far nothing happened. With his connections, he is able to overturn every charge.

A victim's situation worsens if she needs a lawyer. Legal assistance is scarce. Most places do not have legal aide on-site, though there are typically more opportunities to speak to lawyers through NGOs in larger cities, like Bratislava, given NGOs' connections to lawyers (external to the shelter) who can help. In rural areas, NGOs typically have some kind of exchange or subcontract worked out with local lawyers who visit the shelters; their role, however, is limited to providing information and writing proposals for divorce (establishing property settlements and child custody). Even securing temporary custody or getting a restraining order takes an inordinate amount of time. In addition, lawyers do not represent their clients in court; due to financial constraints, their role is limited to helping with filing forms and filling out paperwork. Most battered women have no money to hire private legal representation, so they have to be willing to face their batterer in court on their own, an intimidating prospect, even if a victim has legal representation. Although social workers can attend court with victims to offer emotional support, they can only speak at a hearing if the case involves children directly, such as in cases of custody and child support (but they cannot address the violence in the household that indirectly affects the children). So, although "we have the law on our side when woman is a victim of DV, without a good lawyer it is very hard to achieve justice" (social worker in NGO). Respondents were also clear that most often the lawyers were generalists and knew little about IPV.

The state workers (and the NGO workers) acknowledged the crucial role that NGOs play in providing training for law enforcement and judges; indeed, no one credited the state for sponsoring any such trainings. However, respondents universally agree that judges are reluctant to cooperate with NGOs. There is a sense that judges believe they are the legal experts and do not need guidance from social work professionals, who are immersed in the daily realities of battered women's plight. The respondents were even more dismissive about the lack of understanding judges have of IPV. As one respondent stated, "The judges totally ignore us; they cannot or don't want to help the victims of domestic violence" (female social worker with NGO). Judges respond to the situation as if mediating a dispute between two people, without acknowledging the battering dimensions of the relationship. Court delays and inefficiency are also points of contention, a critique heard from shelter representatives in state-run and NGO-run shelters in both urban and rural jurisdictions:

Court decisions can take a longtime; the courts are time-consuming and their decisions are very often delayed. Even to enforce child alimony is so hard and it takes months. And in almost any instance, she cannot find justice without a lawyer. (Male director of NGO shelter)

Several respondents stated that an IPV trial would take 5 to 6 years from beginning to end, a length that would be untenable for a victim to endure.

A final issue that emerged from the interviews involves deterrence. Given the reluctance of police to arrest and the difficulties of getting legal assistance or redress in a court, offenders continue to abuse women with impunity. As one of the directors of a state facility summarizes,

I don't think that we send a clear message to offenders in terms of prosecution or punishment. We are at the beginning of some change, but I believe that the change is still in the public level. Though there is more public awareness of this problem, I don't think that offenders are very often prosecuted and punished for their crimes against women. I am not aware of any case when a man was actually sentenced to prison. We still have a lot of problems to convince women to press charges. (Male director of a state shelter)

When victims feel unsupported and unrepresented by the legal process, it follows that the bonds of cultural constraints and economic issues will prove too powerful to break, and battered women will remain unprotected in abusive relationships.

The interviews reveal a glaring lack of awareness of legislation enacted to assist battering victims, which is exacerbated when dealing with CJ professionals. Respondents' comments about police and judges show that they have received little or no training about IPV, and often fall back to relying on blame-the-victim stereotypes when encountering such cases. Police offer only superficial protection to victims, as they require visible and serious injury before they will make an arrest. Similarly, lawyers seem ill-situated to assist in criminal matters, and instead help mainly with civil issues involving child custody. Respondents noted, in particular, that judges actively resist involvement and often make pronouncements about IPV that reveal their lack of training or disinterest. Although activists and scholars scattered throughout the country challenge these prevailing stereotypes and CJS inaction, their efforts receive little support from the state and its CJS representatives.

Discussion and Conclusion

Despite the increased attention to the plight of battered women in Slovakia, it is clear that the legacy of inattention under communist rule, coupled with a lack of understanding of the gravity of IPV situations, continues to influence effective service provision, legal assistance, and other decisive responses to end this enduring social problem. The trivialization of IPV by the government does not take place in a social vacuum; unfortunately, it reflects a larger dismissal of gender equality measures by the state. This sexism has not gone unrecognized. In March 2010, feminist NGOs and activists

launched protests against the Slovak Republic's Prime Minister because of his sexist comments voiced during a celebration of the International Day of Women; more than 200 supporters signed a letter and returned roses to him, challenging him to address gender inequality rather than bestow roses on women and tell sexist jokes.¹² The Slovakian government's apathy toward the issue of IPV is challenged by EU mandates that have spurred efforts to address this issue. More ballast could emerge with the upcoming dissemination of results from an EU-wide survey on violence against women conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights across the 27 EU Member States in 2011-2012.¹³

Over the last two decades, Slovakia has transformed its legal system to harmonize with EU and other international standards. As a response to international pressure, significant changes have been made to Slovak legislation that addresses the issue of violence against women. However, the process of implementing the international standards in areas of criminal and civil law, effective assistance to victims, and professional training is slow, and many activists and scholars express concern specifically related to the quality of social services that remain under-regulated or underdeveloped. Any changes to enforcement and victim resources depend heavily on the political will and interest of Slovak society to enact such measures, weighed against the proposed costs of implementing the international mandates.

The role that NGOs play is crucial; they are often the providers of a safe refuge for battered women, and they have established networks to connect victims to needed legal resources. Yet, their best efforts are curtailed by the lack of meaningful collaboration and financial support from the state. The Slovakian government is long on rhetoric and short on action. Given the NGOs' deep commitment to fight gender inequality and violence against women, they need to be recognized as major partners with the state and granted a larger role in the political process. Of course, this is easy to suggest as outsiders looking in; from the interviews with social service providers from both NGO and government-led organizations, it is equally clear that the cultural context that tolerates a lackadaisical response to IPV has to be challenged. Slovakia's response has developed in large part in ways that reflect the many NGO workers who completed trainings about gender issues and IPV sponsored by activists and scholars from the United States and other countries that have a more developed state and NGO apparatus devoted to combating violence against women. Problems can emerge when the rule of law and legal norms from the West are exported to countries that have their own distinctive cultures and histories (Merry, 2006).

Indeed, there are a growing number of scholars and activists who caution against the uncritical exportation of "Western" values, legal norms, and programmatic structures to combat violence against women. Regardless, the "Western" view is typically the lens through which changes are implemented with legislation and policies worldwide because of the far-reaching influence and agendas of funding agencies in the United States and the EU (see Merry, 2006). In fact, much research suggests that community-based efforts and other alternative strategies could work better than the rule-of-law approach, even providing more safety for women victims (see, for

example, discussions of such efforts in rural areas in China and in Fiji, Merry, 2006; in India, Choudhury, 2011; in Chile, Parson, 2010; and in Bangladesh, Terry & Hoare, 2006). Human rights advocates also stress that the law is not enough, and that greater reliance on the state in women's lives is not always optimal. Rather, looking at structural issues of housing, unemployment, inaccessible or unavailable health care, and non-existent child care that are linked to gender inequality and women's subordinate status may be more fruitful than a focus on legal changes (Erwin, 2006).¹⁴

Slovakia has its own structural issues, such as bleak housing prospects, marginalized Roma minorities, and high unemployment, that will remain untouched by changing laws to help battered women. These problems are exacerbated for women living in more rural parts of the country, for Roma victims, and for any woman too poor to access legal representation. We heard clearly from the service providers interviewed that passing anti-violence legislation does not mean it will be meaningfully enforced or that attitudes held by the CJS or society will automatically change to take violence against women more seriously. As our respondents pointed out, a reliance on the CJS could even make things worse if there is nothing in place to rehabilitate perpetrators, or provide victims with legal representation, or to deal with larger prevention efforts. Many NGOs stressed the importance of improved cooperation between experts in the governmental branches with the regional and local government and NGOs. Only the cooperation and coordination of services can lead to the establishment of standard procedures for assistance to victims of IPV and begin more culturally responsive efforts to prevent IPV. In addition, NGOs recommend more programmatic work with offenders of IPV to comply with European standards. Slovakia is one of the last countries of the EU that did not implement and develop such therapeutic programs for batterers as part of a larger strategy to reduce and eventually eliminate IPV.

Ultimately, legal change and reforms can provide a foundation for declaring to politicians and society alike that battering will not be tolerated. Their efficacy and power rest on individuals' and organizations' commitment to challenge gender inequality as well as to address the structural conditions that exist and contribute to violence against women.

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Notes

1. Although we are specifically concerned with intimate partner violence (IPV) in this article, the respondents, the law, and the socio-legal context in Slovakia use the term *domestic violence*, which incorporates a larger set of relationships (e.g., parent-child abuse, elderly

abuse, sibling abuse) than does IPV. Thus, in the article, we use the term *IPV*, but maintain the term *DV* when used by legal statutes and respondents in Slovakia.

2. Until 1993, Slovakia and the Czech Republic comprised one common state, Czechoslovakia. The differences between the two nations were repressed by the centralized communist rule through federal laws and reforms applicable for both countries. Even though the split of Czechoslovakia led to a division of financial assets, the Czech Republic retained greater financial and cultural capital. Czech's industrialization and more developed services promoted foreign investments as well as Westernized ideas, in contrast to the predominantly agricultural Slovakia. Although both nations' starting points of independence entailed the same legislation and political system, the Czech Republic's more progressive and Western approach to gender equality, and particularly in their response to violence against women, is used as an example by many Slovak non-governmental organizations (NGOs). For example, since 2006, batterers in the Czech Republic can be evicted from a common household and banned from re-entering it for 10 days; the Slovak legislation only mandates 48 hr of separation. In addition, the Czech government played a key role in establishing intervention centers where trained personnel contact victims within 48 hr and provide services and legal help related to the process of eviction. There is also an obligation to ensure cooperation and information exchange among other social service providers, child welfare authorities, municipalities, law enforcement, and municipal police departments as well as among other institutions of public service (60a, 4, 108/2006 Coll. about Social Services). In addition, Czech sexual harassment legislation has been fully harmonized with European standards by the amendment of the Labor Code in 2004, which introduces a definition for sexual harassment. Similar legislation was not introduced in Slovakia until 2008. Consequently, we conducted interviews with founders of ROSA, one of the NGOs established in the Czech Republic that provides help, services, and support to women, particularly victims of IPV. Including interview data from these key informants in the Czech Republic provides us with an interesting background and a wider perspective to the development of policy and programs in Slovakia.
3. One of the authors is fluent in Slovak and English and worked as a social worker in her native country of Slovakia.
4. The Council of Europe is based in Strasbourg (France), and now covers virtually the entire European continent, with its 47 member countries. Founded in 1949 by 10 initial countries, the Council of Europe seeks to develop common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and the rule of Law in Europe. The Council of Europe is different from the European Union (EU) that has only 27 member countries. The two entities are inextricably connected: The Council of Europe regularly meets (at least twice a year) with the heads of state or government from the member states of the EU for the purpose of planning EU policy.
5. The Ministry list shows that three main organizations serve the region of Košice; one is Fenestra, an NGO feminist organization that does not provide shelter; one is an organization related to the Red Cross that does not deal with DV victims; and one provides social services but no shelter for battered women. Košice is in the eastern, more rural part of the country, with high unemployment (18% in 2010) and with a larger Roma population (Roma living in Košice comprise 17% of the total Roma population in Slovakia). Although there is a Roma services office in that region, the resources are even more limited for victims.

6. A 95% inter-rater reliability was achieved.
7. Gender issues are also ignored at higher education institutions, such as at the Comenius University in Slovakia, Department of Social Work. One respondent stated that though feminist organizations contacted the department several times to advocate for adding courses related to gender to their curriculum, the requests were ignored. At the time of this writing, only the gender program at the Department of Political Science addresses gender issues, though the curriculum follows a more philosophical tradition, rather than looking at the social and economic contexts of domestic violence.
8. This was part of the National Action Plan for Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women for the period 2009-2012 and projected for 2009, but as of early 2013, it still had not materialized.
9. Fenestra is an NGO that runs a Crisis Center, which provides a wide range of services to victims of violence against women, such as crisis intervention, counseling meetings, and free legal consulting and advocacy paid by the organization (<http://www.moznostvolby.sk/Szena/engl/ngos.htm>).
10. These issues are exacerbated for Roma ethnic minorities (see Wasileski & Miller, 2014).
11. On this point, earlier research conducted by one of the authors found that from a total of 286 surveys distributed to police officers from all over Slovakia, only 26% of police officers believed that they should always handle family disputes; 42% of the police officers did not receive any training in handling IPV incidents (Wasileski & Turkel, 2008).
12. According to one of our respondents, this protest follows a common attempt to link the International Day of Women to communist ideology about women in the labor force. The propaganda photos apparently showed the women in a factory, working with men, so the day was ridiculed: "On March 8th, all men will get drunk to celebrate women and women will get extra work to clean up after them."
13. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) website indicates the availability of survey results as of spring 2013 (retrieved from <http://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2012/fra-survey-womens-well-being-and-safety-europe>).
14. For instance, the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (2000) explored these problems in 10 developing or formerly communist countries (Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Poland, Macedonia, Moldova, Nepal, Romania, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan), but then focused their recommendations on "best practices" based on U.S. practices.

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