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Sharp divisions cleave the scholarship on intimate partner violence. Prominent family violence scholars argue that feminist scholarship has overshadowed all other approaches to domestic violence in both academic and public discussions. Media scholars, on the other hand, argue that texts passing out the media bottleneck generally conform to elite conceptions of the social order, however they arrive in that shape. The research explores ways of looking at this social problem that have been salient to a lay understanding of domestic violence by using news frames to read stories in general news magazines. A content analysis of 58 news stories from 1960 to 2000 reveals that frames pertinent to a feminist understanding of domestic violence exercised the most influence on stories about domestic violence in the 1970's, weakening thereafter, except for brief reappearances in 1993 and 1994. No evidence exists to attribute long-term changes in the framing of domestic violence in newsmagazines to feminism. Implications for further research are discussed.

WHO OWNS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE? A CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF NEWSMAGAZINES, 1960 – 2000

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Prominent family violence scholars argue that feminist scholarship has overshadowed all other approaches to domestic violence in both academic and public discussions. By contrast, media scholars argue that texts generally conform to elite conceptions of the social order. Those producing feminist work - scholars, scientists, and activists - are often regarded, and regard themselves, as critical voices speaking far from the centers of power. But it would be disingenuous to suggest that feminist theories don't themselves serve a particular kind of social order. In truth, successive waves of feminist scholarship have defined themselves partly through criticism of the previous generation(s) of theorizing.¹ Hence, although domestic violence is by now considered an established social problem, the role of feminism in the genealogy of that establishment ought to be questioned. I begin such an undertaking, using a set of pre-existing frames to read stories about domestic violence in general news magazines.

¹ Many current-day feminists either celebrate or blanch at (or both) the writings of Margaret Sanger, the latter for her enthusiastic endorsement of eugenics, the former for her efforts to make contraception widely available (Gordon, 2002). Feminism is divided into waves as a way of describing the history and movement of a discourse without creating a pantheon. First-wave feminism corresponds roughly to the time between 1963, the year Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* and 1975, which inaugurated the UN's Decade for Women. Second-wave feminism roughly began in 1985, when Donna Haraway published "A manifesto for cyborgs," and lasted until around 1995. Current feminist activists, scholars and writers are said to form the third wave. Identification with one of the waves can be ideological, chronological, both, or neither. Lorber's *Gender Inequality* (2005) helpfully clarifies these differences without overgeneralizing the movement(s).

Perspectives of family violence scholars

Many family violence scholars argue that women's advocates have managed to dominate public debates about domestic violence. Buzawa and Buzawa (2003) suggest, in their overview of the field, that women's groups have only grudgingly acknowledged women's uses of violence in intimate relationships, since it upsets the neat division between female victims and male victimizers. More to the point, Gelles (2000), a respected family violence scholar, writes that numerous solutions to battering, many endorsed by women's groups, have in recent years been embraced by a variety of local, state and federal entities. The result, according to Gelles, has been to severely constrain solutions to battering:

Although [grass-roots] advocacy has been important in the process of transforming the personal trouble of battering violence into social problems, advocacy has sometimes hindered the development of effective social policies as well as intervention and prevention strategies.(p. 299)

Theories about framing and social movements would seem to agree with him. Among social constructionists it is widely accepted that the groups which formulate social problems must be considered broad influences on how issues come into and remain in public consciousness (Best, 1990). Given that grassroots women's organizations in the 1960's and 1970's organized to speak out against women's inequality in its many manifestations including pay inequity, sexism, and yes, violence against women, it would not be surprising to find out that feminists' claims about domestic violence had been accepted as objective (Brownstein, 2000) definitions of such violence. Dunn (2005), for

example, implies that feminist texts were sufficiently powerful to redefine “battered women” from *victims* to *survivors*.

Perspectives of feminist groups

Still, this may seem like scant evidence for the assertions leveled by Gelles. While it is historically logical that batterer treatment groups run by shelters or hotlines are sometimes influenced by feminist approaches to the topic, especially Pence and Peymar’s (1993) popular and detailed guide to conducting groups according to the Duluth Model, there is no national-level data on the plans used in such groups. Groups labeled “batterer treatment” may consist of quietly religious couples counseling or confrontational group sessions with convicted batterers. Obviously, these groups are unlikely to all serve (only) feminist ends. And pro-arrest policies, while a politically popular way to ‘get tough’ on domestic violence offenders, were not invented by feminist groups, although, to be fair, in many states, victim’s and women’s coalitions have endorsed their use.

Feminist groups began publicly problematizing violence against women in the 1960’s. Women’s advocates, grounded in the rhetoric and experiences of first wave feminist movements, regarded violence against women as one of many forms of female victimization. According to the manifesto prepared by the Redstockings (1969/2005), a radical feminist socialist organization, men’s oppression of women creates a total environment in which violence serves a unique role. “Our prescribed behaviour is enforced by the threat of physical violence.” (p. 221) Note that the common interests against oppressive behavior amongst women are here invisible, since meaningful acts

only happen between *individual* men and *individual* women. The failure to see individual acts of violence as part of a *pattern* of violence becomes, therefore, part of the problem.

Because we have lived so intimately with our oppressors, in isolation from each other, we have been kept from seeing our personal suffering as a political condition. This creates the illusion that a woman's relationship with her man is a matter of interplay between two unique personalities, and can be worked out individually. In reality, every such relationship is a class relationship, and the conflicts between individual men and women are political conflicts that can only be solved collectively. (Redstockings, 1969/2005, p. 220)

For many feminists, then, to hint at gender neutrality is to deny how violence against all women spills over the narrow definitions of family violence to affect women generally in ways that are undeniably gender-specific. Further, one of the challenges of what can broadly be referred to as "the women's movement" is to highlight the misogynist base upon which political and juridical structures are built. Physical, economic, or emotional violence may therefore be regarded as manifestations of a predominantly misogynist culture. This is why, for many women's advocates, preferred solutions to battering may include broad social and structural changes, rather than individual solutions, such as counseling.

However, feminist writing on solutions to domestic violence is also frequently ambivalent about the power wielded by the police, the courts, or other state organs (see, for example, the volume edited by Lamb, 1999). Underneath the victim's rights rhetoric are often mandates on what victims should do, such as cooperate with the prosecution, even if cooperation is contrary to the victim's own best interests. Thus, talk of victim empowerment may in practice translate into its opposite (Christie, 1986).

Perspectives of media studies scholars

As students of how issues emerge in the press, media scholars might take issue with Gelles. Gans (1979) suggests that issues are generally presented within a framework that makes the most sense to elites. His study of printed newsmagazines and network news shows documented the relationships between people in power, on the one hand, and reporters, writers, and editors on the other. Those who ‘make’ the news (in both senses of the word) are generally people in power, with the result that the perspectives of upper-middle class Americans are universalized. Such ends are further helped by the news organizations’ own set of values, which are beholden to a traditional kind of social and moral order. Hence, a number of causes define order and disorder from the perspective of the more privileged. And since feminist groups have historically been marginal, their ability to define domestic violence as a social or moral disorder, it might be inferred, would probably be limited anyway. It is true that the news helps people make sense of events around them. It would be wrong, however, to believe that the influence news stories exercise on the watching, listening, and reading public is hegemonic – that the power to define what stories mean lies with editors.

In fact, a number of different theories about the news ascribe a passive role to reporters, editors, and writers, arguing that such sense-making is inherent in the stories themselves. One of these theories is the understanding of news as a neutral mirror of society, merely reflecting what is there. Another idealized view of the media would ascribe to it the functions of American civil fora praised so by Tocqueville, where contrasting points of view are equally likely to be found and expressed through civilized

discourse. But such an understanding does not allow for an active role--or any role--for the organizations that own media outlets, or the people they employ. Schudson (2002) explains why such an interpretation might be attractive:

Media power looms large if the portrait of the world the media present to audiences stems from the preferences and perceptions of publishers, editors, and reporters unconstrained by democratic controls. However, if the media typically mirror the views and voices of established (and democratically selected) government officials, then the media are more nearly the neutral servants of a democratic order. (p. 257)

Gans' (1979) careful research would appear to contradict such a passive explanation of news and news organizations. News organizations divide the nation into its social and economic institutions, such as the law, religion, culture, science, government and others, which, pieced together, form a nation (p.19). He theorizes that news is, more than anything else, about

...nation and society – their persistence, cohesion, and the conflicts and divisions threatening their cohesion...The nation, in turn, is operationally defined as the federal government, and is often signified by the president and the presidency; but it also includes both nationwide and local institutions which are, in effect, 'nationalized' by the news. (p. 19)

This is not quite the “neutral servant of a democratic order,” nor does it merely “mirror the views and voices of established officials.” But neither is it helpful, however one might be tempted, while trying to find a way to describe the ideology of news organizations, to think in terms of the political left or right. Most reporters are not nearly as conservative nor as liberal politically as detractors of the news might suggest. Instead, according to Gans, stories in the media are shaped by an ideology recognizable as

Progressivism, since they included values well-known to the Progressive reformers of the late 19th and early 20th century: American ethnocentrism, democracy as an ideal, responsible (as opposed to exploitative) capitalism, the virtues of small-town living and a tendency to praise moderation in everything. Gans argues that these values shape the newsmaking of today. This process of shaping may also be known as framing.

Framing

Frames have a somewhat varied history in sociology. In the definition of frames used here, I borrow Goffman's (as cited in Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986) notion of frames as

“...a schemata of interpretation” that enable individuals to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” occurrences within their life space and the world at large. By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective. (p. 464)

The use of a frame decides the terms and language, and in so doing, fixes the possible solutions to whatever social problems are mentioned in the news. As I use it here, framing is a political act performed both by interested agents – the newsmakers – and by news organizations themselves.

All news stories are framed in particular ways by reporters, writers, and editors who individually decide what news is. But across different forms of media, decisions about framing show a remarkable consistency, which, I hope to make clear, is neither necessarily sinister nor accidental. Consistent with this idea, Andsager and Smiley (1998) argue that certain groups are more likely to be ‘heard’ by reporters and journalists. According to Entman (1993), framing is “...the imprint of power – it registers the

identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text.” (as cited in Andsager and Smiley, 1998, p. 185) How powerful groups speak and write about any given issue will most likely bear a relation to how the issue is presented in the news, a supposition entirely consistent with Gans’ findings, and borne out by research summarized here briefly.

Andsager and Smiley (1998) analyzed competing frames in the silicone breast-implant controversy in the early 1990’s to determine which of the interested groups – citizen’s activist groups and patients, doctor’s and other medical groups, or the maker of silicone breast-implants, Dow Corning corporation – were most likely to see ‘their’ frames reflected in the news about this issue. According to the researchers, their study records how newspaper writers were most likely to rely on medical groups’ frames early in the life of the implants story, quietly suggesting there was significant overlap with the media’s own frames. Importantly, the effect of the frames provided by the activists and by the individual women plaintiffs in lawsuits against Dow Corning was minimal. Activists’ frames, mostly untapped in news stories, were primarily criticisms of large entities such as the FDA and Dow Corning. Similarly, individual plaintiffs and their stories received the slimmest coverage possible. Andsager and Smiley concluded that social movement frames may face obstacles to becoming the predominant ways of understanding an issue in the news.

When faced with conflicting interests, the news media tend to rely on the frames provided by the most influential policy actors...If citizen’s activist groups and other similar organizations must attempt to compete with such formidable policy actors in framing news coverage to shape public opinion, our findings suggest that they will meet with little success. (p. 199)

Clearly, then, the two very different ways of understanding domestic violence discourse are in conflict. Either feminist and women's groups have had the greatest say in shaping what domestic violence is, or they are too radical or marginal to have made much of a difference. Which way of understanding domestic violence has dominated public discourse over the last several decades? I argue that the images of domestic violence that can be found in popular media, and what they suggest about the dominant ways of framing domestic violence, merit investigation. But few scholars seem to have approached the topic.

In fact, only a limited number of studies have tackled the issue of domestic violence and its representation in the media. These also vary wildly in scope and in the methods used. Aside from Loseke's (1992) study of representations of domestic violence victims and shelters, and Rothenberg's (2002) comparisons across discourses, other scholars have examined how domestic violence is represented in the television program *Cops* (Consalvo, 1998) and in academic journal articles (Lamb, 1991). A subset of scholars has performed case studies of media treatment of specific domestic violence crimes. Meyers (1994) closely examined newspaper articles on a murder-suicide in Atlanta, while McDonald (1999) compared the media representations of two famous men – one a white male athletic coach, the other a Puerto Rican athlete - accused of domestic violence. Each provides provocative findings that, however, reflect the dissimilarity of their research methods and data. Nevertheless, as they represent the sole relevant studies, more about them is spelled out in Chapter Two.

Arguably the most rigorous and systematic studies have been done by Berns (1999, 2001). She found that domestic violence was framed in popular media as an individual problem to be overcome through appeals to resources, including internal ones, (e.g., willpower) and external ones (e.g., family relationships and financial capital). She also found domestic violence depicted as a gender-neutral problem that affected *both* men and women, the majority of whom, it is supposed, suffer quietly outside the scope of public assistance or non-profit organizations. Her analyses of two distinct types of magazines--general interest women's magazines and political magazines--framed domestic violence as something other than part of a larger structure of gender inequality.

Conclusion

I propose to apply Berns' frames to read stories about domestic violence in general news magazines from the period when domestic violence became a legitimate social problem up to the year 2000. More specifically, I am concerned here with using the four frames Berns developed--which are described more fully below--especially with the frame of domestic violence as a personal and individual problem. This idea runs counter to a feminist understanding of domestic violence.

Given what we know about general news stories and their built-in tendency to focus on personalities, it would be unsurprising to find that stories focused more on individuals than on larger issues or structures. To what degree, then, are structural and cultural explanations visible in stories of domestic violence during this period? Second, does the proportion of stories using these frames change over time? If it does change, does that mean that stories include more structural and cultural explanations? If not,

what changes in story framing do occur over time? Whether such violence is framed as a problem individuals face or something which is properly viewed only in a larger context is important for understanding whether and to what degree public discussions of domestic violence have adopted a feminist understanding. It seems likely, however, that something other than a recognizably feminist frame will dominate stories about domestic violence.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

While there is no shortage of academic studies of victims or perpetrators of domestic violence, or of their interactions with systems, such as criminal justice, legal, and social services organizations, analysis of the broader discourse or of content is scattered. I summarize here the pertinent studies.

Using feminist theories, Lamb (1991) examined the attribution of responsibility for violence in the specific language used in academic journals. Although her study targets academic journals rather than popular media, her examination of responsibility attribution provides an excellent model for analysis of discourse related to domestic violence. Lamb and her team of researchers examined journal articles from 1986 through 1987 culled from the PsycLit database using searches for “battered women,” “battered wives,” “abused women,” “abused wives,” “spouse abuse,” “spouse violence,” “wife abuse,” “wife violence,” “marital abuse,” and “marital violence.” (p. 252) All articles found under these topics discussed male violence against females. They narrowed their sample by including only journals with a large circulation, and by eliminating journals that between 1983 and 1989 published fewer than three articles on the topics above. The 46 final articles came from eleven journals encompassing the fields of psychology, sociology, social work, family therapy, and family development.

Given that different journals mandate different writing protocols, the research focused exclusively on sentences in the introductions, which were found in each article and which were thus considered comparable. Pairs of raters determined whether each sentence obscured the origin of the violence. Problems were manifest according to the following schema.

Lamb and her team found that responsibility for the violence was sometimes diffused, making it impossible to determine who the victim was. This happened when articles named male violence against females “marital aggression,” “couple’s violence,” “violent relationship,” “conjugal violence,” “family violence,” and “domestic dispute” (p. 253). Forty-six per cent of coded sentences diffused responsibility. Second, a small number of sentences, or 1.2 per cent, used the passive voice in describing assaults or injuries, such as in “black women are abused at a disproportionately higher rate than white women” (p. 253). Twenty-four per cent of the authors engaged in a process Lamb called “nominalization,” where the process of violence was named, but who performed it was not. Use of phrases such as “the violent behavior,” “the abuse,” and “the abusive process” were coded as such (p. 253). Authors described what Lamb called “victims without agents” by mentioning the victim without mentioning the identity of the batterer (p. 252). Twenty-eight per cent of coded sentences did so. (Importantly, in cases where “battered wife” or another spousal designation was used, the coders implicitly understood “husbands” as the responsible party.) Finally, the research also coded as problematic sentences where the gender of the victim or of the batterer was unclear. For example, if authors used the words “victim” or “assailant,” or if the article discussed “individuals

who wish to carry out a violent act” (p. 254) without disclosing that the individuals in question were male, the sentence was coded as problematic.

Lamb (1991) concluded that the language used to study the problem of domestic violence is part of the problem itself and analyzed whether gender of author as well as the author’s professional field might correlate with these linguistic conventions. Compared with female authors, male authors or mixed-gender collaborators were more likely to have used problematic language forms. Compared with other professionals, social workers, Lamb found, were the least likely to have used problematic language, while family therapy professionals were the most likely to do so. She attributed this to the use of systems theory in family therapy. This theory regards battering as a dysfunction, the resolution of which depends on all members in the system (ie, the family).

Her conclusions points to other factors which reasonably might have led to a lack of linguistic precision in the academic writing on men battering women. The popularity of the ‘battered husband’ thesis, which argues that a significant percentage of husbands are battered by their wives, might compel scholars to use gender-neutral language. Another factor is the professionalization of the battered women’s movement, as a result of which peer advocacy and self-help work are being replaced by workers with counseling or other pertinent formal education and funded by foundations demanding greater professional accountability. Lamb shows how linguistic forms become enshrined as accepted and standard nomenclature in discussions of a problem, thus marking the acceptable boundaries of discourse. Curiously, while the academic literature on domestic violence has exploded in the last few years, Lamb’s was the only study that

systematically analyzed only academic writing. Rothenberg (2002), meanwhile, studied a combination of academic, legal-judicial, and popular discourses.

Rothenberg's concern was with evaluating the predominance of theories explaining battered women's behavior in, among other discourses, popular media. Her study was conducted in two parts, both of them centering on the question of why battered women remain in harmful relationships. First, she sought out the predominant theories that addressed this question. Then, she found out which of these theories had achieved the greatest salience in academic, popular, and legal-judicial discourses.

In order to compile a list of theories, she examined journal articles and book chapters on domestic violence, and analyzed the bibliographic entries that referred to reasons why battered women remain in abusive relationships. Rothenberg found that the most frequently cited reasons for women's staying in these relationships could be distilled into several theories, each with its own proponent or creator.

Chronologically first was Snell and colleagues' psychological explanation that "men beat their overbearing wives in order to gain control in their relationships" (Rothenberg, 2002, p. 84). Rothenberg explained that in these relationships, a "... husband and wife alternated between] passive and aggressive roles... to achieve a working equilibrium" (Snell, 1964; cited in Rothenberg, 2002, p. 84). Most authors who cited this theory did so, Rothenberg found, in order to refute Snell's explanation for women's remaining in the relationship.

Second, writers cited Lenore Walker, a psychologist who theorized that women remain in abusive relationships because abuse victims suffer from "battered woman

syndrome,”” otherwise known as “learned helplessness” (Walker, 1979; cited in Rothenberg, 2002, p. 85). When escape seemingly becomes impossible, abused partners give up trying to leave, becoming paralyzed and thus trapped. Walker blames much of the difficulty of leaving on sexist social institutions, which remain unresponsive to battered women.

A third theory, that of Gondolf (cited in Rothenberg, 2002), suggests that battered women do try to leave, but when social forces are unresponsive, they cope as best they can to survive. Importantly, Gondolf places responsibility for women’s paralysis on the lack of intervention by social institutions.

A fourth theory widely cited is the work by Straus and Gelles which concluded that married women were more violent than married men (cited in Rothenberg, 2002). Their data showed that 27 per cent of violence in the relationships surveyed was due to the husband, 24 per cent of the violence was due to the wife, and 49 per cent of such violence was bilateral. Rothenberg suggested that their research implied that violence happens between violent people. Authors who cited these researchers, however, were most likely to decry, not endorse, these controversial findings.

Finally, Rothenberg (2002) found that writers cited the theories of Baker, who argues that battered women remain in violent relationships as a way of maintaining independence from the cultural script which dictates dependence on (and gratitude towards) social welfare programs, such as shelters. The same script prescribes that victims cooperate with the police, press criminal charges, or swear out restraining orders. In an apparent paradox, the decision to remain in a relationship with a batterer rejects this

script and simultaneously bestows on each woman a slim amount of agency in her own life.

Rothenberg divided her field of study into three areas, and analyzed each separately. In each of these - the academic discourse, media discourse, and legal and judicial discourse - she attempted to determine which of the five theories predominated in each type of analysis. To survey the academic discourse, she found articles through the Social Sciences Citation Index, and noted how many articles or chapters cited each of the explanations for women's remaining in the battering relationship. She surveyed the legal and judicial discourse by examining court decisions and statutes addressing the admission of expert testimony during trial. Finally, she surveyed the media discourse by examining *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times*.

In the academic discourse and the legal-judicial discourse, she found that Lenore Walker's concept of the battered woman syndrome was used most widely. In the (general) media discourse, she found that appeals to the multiple ways in which women are victimized predominated. Although such appeals are hardly identical to Walker's ideas about learned helplessness, Rothenberg underlined that they share the understanding that battered women are victims. What Rothenberg thus referred to as a multiple victimization theory shared some characteristics of learned helplessness theory. She further speculated about cultural reasons the battered-women-as-victims frame might be successful. For one, Rothenberg argued, Walker's theories identify the individual as the appropriate locus of intervention. Victims need help to see that they are not helpless; only then can they get out and the battering stop. Rothenberg suggested that battering

victims are sympathetic because real victims are powerless and thus cannot be held responsible. While feminists have tried to link battering to the subordination of all women, victims of battering are sympathetic only because their situation is seen as *worse* than that of other women. Most importantly, however, Rothenberg suggested that any explanations of women's reasons for staying in a relationship relied heavily on therapeutic definitions, and fit neatly with Walker's ideas about selves in need of change.

The remaining pertinent studies about domestic violence, to which I now turn in a somewhat chronological fashion, focus on popular media. Meyers (1994) scrutinized two newspaper articles concerning a spousal murder-suicide in Atlanta. Her study is unique in its careful reading and feminist analysis not only of the articles but of the pictures that accompany them, although Meyers points out the need to conduct research with a larger sample, since a case study limits the degree to which findings may be generalized. From the articles about this crime, which were published in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, we find out that in August 1990, Dennis Walters, the chief executive of a popular tourist attraction in Atlanta, shot his estranged wife Wanda when she returned to their home to pick up the last of her belongings; he then shot himself. Meyers found that the articles portrayed the shooter as the real victim - of obsessive love. According to Meyers, Wanda Walters became acquainted with Dennis Walters when she was 14 years old; Dennis and his previous wife then adopted Wanda. Subsequently, Dennis Walters divorced his wife, signed away his adoption rights, and married Wanda. Of all the crimes committed by Dennis Walters, including murder, none could be, Meyers claims, more damning than Wanda's so-called white trash background. In accordance with this depiction, readers

were told that her family of origin was large, poor, and fractured; that Wanda's mother relied on charity; and that social services had placed all of Wanda's siblings in foster care.

Meyers was particularly interested in the choice of pictures that supported this framing. In contrast to businesslike head shots of Dennis Walters, and family portraits including Wanda both as a daughter and as a wife, the paper also published a recent photo of Wanda's mother, barefoot and overweight, watching one of her grandchildren. In the photo, she sat on what appeared to be a dirty porch; two broken household fixtures were in the frame with her. Oddly, the caption alluded to Wanda's mother discovering her then-14-year old daughter having sex with Dennis Walters, a married man 23 years older. More than anything, the overall portrait offered by these pictures was, according to Meyers, that of a woman who "is unwilling to care about her appearance or exert moral control over her young daughter.... Wanda is defined not only by her relationship to Dennis, but by her relationship to her mother. If her mother is trash, so, then, is she" (p. 55).

Myths about sex roles as well as journalistic conventions further helped delineate responsibility. First, Dennis was portrayed as not responsible for his actions, either because he was overpowered by his emotions for Wanda, or emotionally unstable. The killings were called a tragedy rather than a crime, as if the shootings were a natural disaster. Second, according to Meyers, the paper made the victim the object, rather than the subject of the story. None of the articles mentioned what Wanda thought of her relationships, nor of her life. Wanda's importance was secondary to that of her husband.

In one of the articles, Wanda's death was not mentioned until after Dennis' professional struggles were summarized. Meyers argued that an analysis of news about deviance must be informed by explicit class and gender frames. Wanda Walters was a victim of rape, incest, and battering, but incredibly, this did not come across in the articles about her murder. Meyers attributes this absence to the dominance of the class background frame in the stories about her death.

Maxwell, Huxford, Borum and Hornik (2000) examined what short- and long-term effects the O. J. Simpson trial had on newspaper coverage of domestic violence. Using the *New York Times* and two Philadelphia papers, the *Inquirer* and the *Philadelphia Daily News*, the researchers' questions were concerned with the number of stories about domestic violence before, during and after the trial. They anticipated a rise in the number of stories. Given both the duration of the trial and the amount of press interest, they anticipated as well that the number of stories would remain high, even after the trial concluded. They were also concerned with the kinds of coverage afforded stories about domestic violence. As the trial wore on, would journalists looking for fresh angles delve further into the social and cultural aspects of domestic violence? They looked for increases in reports of domestic violence statistics, in coverage of related judicial, legislative and law enforcement activities, in the use of domestic violence experts as sources in stories, in social rather than personal explanations of domestic violence crimes, and in stories mentioning how people other than the police or the victim intervened helpfully.

Using frame theory, they also asked whether more stories were being written to clarify why the general public might concern itself with violence that most likely happens in private. Consistent with Gans' (1979) hypotheses, they investigated this question by looking for lower numbers of domestic violence stories written about murders, and by looking for higher numbers of stories that enumerated criminal sanctions or mentioned what either victims or batterers could do to stop the abuse. Finally, they also looked for stories where domestic violence was a related rather than the entire topic.

A total of 10,568 domestic violence stories were selected and grouped into one of four temporal categories: January 1991 through December 1991, and January 1992 through May 1994. The period of June 1994 through November 1995 included the time of the murders and the length of the *criminal* trial. The final period from December 1995 through August 1997 included the length of the *civil* trial. The researchers found that while all three papers had steadily been writing more about domestic violence in the 4.5 years prior to the murders, all three increased their coverage drastically during the trial. However, after the trial, only the *Times* returned to a level of reporting that was higher than before the trial.

As for changes in content, the researchers used a smaller sample and found that the trial was not linked to any lasting differences in framing the problem. In a test between the two Philadelphia publications and the *Times*, all three papers showed a decrease from the pre-Simpson period to the post-Simpson period in the number of articles using social explanations of domestic violence, although the decrease in the *Times* was less severe than the decrease in the other papers. In fact, publications during

the trial briefly showed an increase in explanations for domestic violence that were personal rather than social or cultural. Finally, examining differences among papers the authors conclude that the *Times*' issue orientations are more socially focused than those of either remaining paper.

In an analysis spanning from 1970 to 1997, Berns (1999) examined all articles related to domestic violence which appeared in women's magazines cited in the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. Primarily interested in teasing out the messages pass from the substantial academic discourses on domestic violence into popular culture, she wondered where implicit and explicit responsibility for abuse was attributed within the popular media, especially in women's magazines. In 111 articles on domestic violence that appeared in magazines such as *Essence*, *Glamour*, *Ladies Home Journal* and *McCall's*, Berns (1999) used four frames of responsibility to classify the attribution of blame in each article.

The "individual" frame of responsibility emphasized that either the victim or the batterer was responsible for the abuse. The "institutional" frame of responsibility argued that a broader constellation of groups was responsible, including the legal, criminal justice, social welfare or educational systems, especially if they had "failed" to stop the violence through a lack of intervention. The "cultural or structural" frame of responsibility blamed larger social forces, including gender role socialization, media violence, the organization of the family, and other patriarchal forces in society. Finally, the "integrational" frame of responsibility argued for the interrelation of all of the above forces and the links between morality, law and politics.

Academic research on domestic violence often focuses on the behavior or demographics of individuals or individual couples, and most of the articles in Berns' (1999) sample did as well. Nearly two-thirds of the articles sampled by Berns attributed responsibility for the battering (and its cessation) to the victim. Stories were either written by formerly battered women who hoped to encourage other women to get out of an abusive relationship or by experts who explained, frequently using psychological theories such as Lenore Walker's battered women syndrome, why women stay in that kind of relationship. An example of this kind of attribution, Berns argued, was the ongoing column in *Good Housekeeping* called "My problem and how I solved it," where, anonymously, women in abusive relationships wrote about how they stopped the abuse, either by going through counseling or by leaving the relationship. She found a few articles appearing in the 1990's which retrospectively examined the lives of formerly battered women and their current exploits. For example, one story on a formerly battered woman described her ascent, after leaving an abusive relationship, to chief of a suburban police department. Berns documented a steady rise in the number of articles appearing in the selected magazines that focused on what victims do or should do - 6 in the 1970's, 10 in the 1980's, and 24 in the 1990's.

A subset of the individually-focused articles was about battered women who killed their partners after years of abuse. While this kind of article may present a sympathetic point of view towards the murdering victim, Berns (1999) argued that it still implicitly left responsibility for ending the abuse with victims, albeit with a twist:

[Focusing]...on individual rather than on institutional responsibility,...there is no suggestion on how institutions can stop the murder or abuse. Instead, institutions are encouraged to accept what is portrayed as an unfortunate but at times inevitable individual solution of murder (p. 93).

Another subset of the individual frame of responsibility included articles where violence in the relationship was clearly indicated to be the batterer's problem. There were four articles of this kind. Three were written as a guide to avoiding certain types of men, while one was an account of a former batterer and the situation that caused him to stop abusing. Yet another subset included 18 articles where the violence in the relationship was attributed to the interaction of the couple - in other words, to both the victim and the batterer. Most were from a regular feature in the *Ladies Home Journal* called "Can this marriage be saved?" in which a wife, a husband and a counselor wrote down their perceptions of the problem in one marriage. Mostly, the marriages were "saved" through counseling. Berns (1999) noted that the number of articles dealing with domestic violence as a problem couples face fell during the 1990's.

A minority of articles used the remaining kinds of frames. Only 23 attributed responsibility to institutions, such as the criminal justice system. Some problems identified in the 1970's were also identified as problems in the 1990's, such as lax enforcement of civil orders. Eight articles used the cultural/structural responsibility frame, most appearing in the 1990's. Another eight used an integrational frame of responsibility. Berns (1999) noted that the proportion of articles using this latter type of frame decreased between the 1970's and 1990's, falling from 21 per cent to 3.5 per cent of articles published on domestic violence .

Berns (1999) also analyzed guidebooks for freelance writers of women's magazines. She argued that the conventions in such guides may have helped to account for the predominance of the individual frame of responsibility in women's magazines. She suggested that the concept of the victim's personal responsibility - disregarding the roles of socialization and discrimination, as well as the functions of law enforcement officers, judges, employers, family and friends - became the dominant frame for discussions of domestic violence. She argued further that, within this frame, victims who were encouraged to leave and yet remained in abusive relationships risked being blamed for the abuse.

In 2001, Berns went on to analyze the frames around domestic violence discourse in some political and men's magazines. She analyzed a total of 36 articles appearing between 1970 and 1997 in *Reason*, *National Review*, *The New Republic*, *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, *Esquire*, *Men's Journal*, *New Man*, *Penthouse*, and *Playboy*. [I should note that her written analysis excludes left-leaning political magazines such as *The Nation* and *The Progressive*, and their absence hampers the reliability of her analysis, given that most of the articles in the latter are written, as she acknowledges, using a "feminist framework" (p. 265). As an analysis of one particular *type* of political discourse, however, this study is illuminating.]

Her hypothesis was that most of the articles dealing with domestic violence assumed a "patriarchal-resistance perspective" (Berns, 2001, p. 265). Such a perspective, employed by 81 percent of the sampled articles, denied the systematic and routine nature of male violence against women in all its forms. This perspective was manifest through

frames that muted the gendered nature of domestic violence, while emphasizing the gendered nature of blame for the violence. Berns cited two ways by which the violence itself was degendered: through the use of statistics to suggest that women batter as much as men do, and through female authorship of critical articles.

Many authors, Berns (2001) found, relied on Straus and Gelles' studies which applied the Conflict Tactics Scales (or CTS), a somewhat controversial measure of individuals' uses of violence in relationships. To refute the factual basis of claimed sexual symmetry of violence, she noted Gelles' own misgivings about the ways in which the CTS has been misused. She also derided the use of citations from a well-publicized but controversial study of husband abuse. Finally, she cited other statistics and researchers to argue that men and women have gendered approaches to using violence, that women tend to overestimate the commission and effects of their own uses of violence, and that domestic violence is as much about intimidation and other psychological abuse as it is about physical violence.

Another way she found the writing in these magazines degendering the problem of domestic violence was more subtle. Female authorship of articles critical of feminism, of battered women's advocates, or of the criminal justice system's role in dealing with domestic violence lent, according to Berns (2001), greater legitimacy to such concerns. Berns did not, however, speculate about whether the use of female authors was a conscious editorial decision.

While the violence was represented as happening equally between men and women, Berns (2001) suggested that blame became a gendered construct in four specific

ways. First, she found women being framed as abusers. For example, some of the articles cited anecdotes of women who were violent towards their partners. One male author mentioned the abuse he endured before he had the understanding necessary to leave. Second, women victims were deemed responsible for their own victimization. Another author refuted the idea that Nicole Brown Simpson was “an angel” while OJ Simpson was “nothing but a cad and a brute” (Baber, 1996; cited in Berns, 2001, p. 270). Third, Berns found that authors claimed cultural tolerance of women’s violence against men to be higher than that of men’s violence against women. A different author argued in *Penthouse* that “women are subtly encouraged to be more violent....Women kicking, punching, and slapping men with complete impunity are...widespread in movies, TV, and books...”(Brott, 1993; cited in Berns, 2001, p. 273). This scenario led, the author argued, to large numbers of male victims who were afraid to protect themselves against female batterers, and to female batterers’ invulnerability. Mention of parallel issues with female victims of male batterers was absent. Finally, Berns found that battered women’s advocates were blamed for the recurrence of domestic violence by maintaining that issues of power and gender are relevant to domestic violence. She argued that authors in these magazines resist perceiving theories about patriarchy and its role in perpetuating domestic violence. Such an understanding pins blame on all men and the social structures that support their empowerment, rather than on the rare deviant, criminal or sick batterers who, by definition, may be cast aside as aberrant. How Berns’ (1999, 2001) frames were used in the current study is addressed in the following section.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The articles I examined were from *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report*, and were found primarily through a search through *The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. Secondary methods of retrieving articles included searching the ERIC database and scanning the remainder of the magazine issues which featured pertinent articles. The *Reader's Guide* indexes articles in popular magazines with the largest circulation in the US under headings that describe the topic of the articles or in some instances, the writer. Topics and subtopics are added to the *Reader's Guide* annually. Since I initially included articles that discussed domestic violence, whether the act of violence was identified as such or not, *Reader's Guide* categories could not be absolute arbiters of what to include or exclude. Nevertheless, using the *Reader's Guide* as a way of getting at a larger pool of potential articles from which the final number was culled proved a useful enterprise.

For anyone interested in national news stories, the three magazines are crucial to this effort. Mediamark, which specializes in magazine subscription and circulation rates, and the Project for Excellence in Journalism, which analyzes readership trends in selected publications, both note that these magazines have traditionally remained classifiable as “news” and as “general interest,” but not as more specialized forms of publications. The Project for Excellence in Journalism compares the changes in mission and format at

magazines such as *The Atlantic* or *The New Yorker*, which make it clear that the big three newsweeklies remain a more dependable historical source for news stories and newsgathering. And if in the pursuit of news, daily papers might seem the more logical choice, these, in turn, offer some distinct drawbacks. Newspapers are regional, which affects the stories that are included as well as their geographic distribution. Even a truly national newspaper such as the *New York Times* is in fact a slew of different papers, depending upon the region of the country where the subscriber lives.

Still, relying on printed newsmagazines might seem risky. We know, after all, that written news is on the decline as news delivery accommodates changing preferences for other formats, where news is delivered not simply via TV news shows but is posted on internet sites and blogs, is streamed over the web, or packaged into podcasts. While analyzing TV news shows might seem useful, it appears that Gans (1979) thought the discourse in the magazines offered a discourse very similar to that found on network TV news shows. Other technologies are not helpful in this analysis because they cannot offer comparable historical material – they are all too recent. Newsmagazines are also ideal because of Gans' thorough ethnographic work with them. In addition, newsmagazines offer substantial amounts of analysis. While the amount may be less than that provided by newspapers, it is certainly more than television, where one of the concerns is on visual appeal and where stories are generally shorter.² Finally, by using only the three magazines mentioned - *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *US News & World Report* - it was possible

² Competing against the spectacle of television may have influenced newsweeklies to include more and larger pictures in articles, especially in the series pertaining to the Simpson trial, a trend which *Time* and *Newsweek* appear to have increasingly embraced since then.

to avoid the problems of finding an increase in the number of articles because of an increase in the number of periodicals.

I culled the entries under headings related explicitly to domestic violence in the *Reader's Guide*, beginning with the 1959 to 1961 edition and ending with the 2000 edition.³ I also examined the headings cross-referenced under these major headings. The entries under each potential heading were scrutinized for relevance, which yielded a pool of 86 pieces. These were read to ensure that domestic violence was a substantial part of the reason for the story. Where that was not true, the stories were discarded. Domestic violence, as I define it here, included violence against current or former intimate partners. It did not include, in my definition, violence against siblings, parents, or children, since in the definition used here, these belong in the province of family violence. For example, one article I eliminated spotlighted the growing problem of elder abuse, generally perpetrated by adult caretakers, often the victims' own children, on older adults. Twenty-five pieces did not explicitly mention domestic violence, and three mentioned it but centered primarily on other topics, thus making their omission necessary, so that the final sample included 58⁴ pieces.

Articles were at first accessed in the way they could most easily be retrieved. As magazine issues have been loaded onto electronic databases in different years, there was wide variation in the number of issues which could be retrieved electronically. Articles from *Newsweek* were indexed electronically beginning in 1994, those from *Time* in 1983,

³ These headings included "abuse", "battering", "domestic abuse", "partner violence", "wife beating", and variants of domestic, including "domestic life", "domestic relations", and "domestic relations court".

⁴ A complete list of the articles used in the analysis can be obtained upon request from the author.

and those from *US News and World Report* in 1984. Generally, printouts of articles that could be accessed this way were in a generic word-processing format, which left the actual layout in the magazine to the imagination and included no pictures, graphs or tables (but did include short descriptions of, and captions of pictures). As I compared photocopies from older issues with the newer articles retrieved from a database, the importance of the visual elements struck me. As Meyers' (1994) research demonstrated, the pictures chosen in stories help readers figure out how to 'read' the piece, and it seemed important to ensure that all stories were read and coded using the visual cues that were available to subscribers. Subsequently, *most* pieces were copied from back issues, and I coded from photocopies wherever they were available.

A Priori Coding

I initially intended to read through the selected articles and code each article by answering specific questions: How is the violence discussed? Who is the violent person and how is he or she discussed or named? Who is the victim? How is the victim discussed or named? Is the violence situated within a larger context? If yes, what is that context? In the end, this coding system had to be completely scrapped. An example of the *a priori* codes I utilized can be found in Appendix A.

A Posteriori Coding

Given the elasticity of the above categories, it will come as no surprise that they were changed during the course of the study. Since there were three kinds of framing – individual, institutional, and cultural/structural - I decided the best way to find out which of these prevailed was to find specific variants of each in the articles. While I expected

that most articles would reflect an individualist understanding of domestic violence, I wanted to find out whether structural frame appeared and if so, how.

But as coding progressed, I realized that this detailed form of analysis might overlook something larger and perhaps more important, which could not be accounted for through simple arithmetic. While an author might mention specific instances which indicated an individualistic framing, the overall tone or slant of the article had to be noted as well. To the coding spreadsheet was added an item to indicate this concept, as was a category which indicated on the whole where the fault of battering seemed to lie. This is not to deny that journalists at least pay lip service to balanced reporting, even if balance does not always appear to result. As Gans (1979) made clear, journalists may be used to elicit publicity for sources, but journalists return the favor as well, since sources and their journalists reinforce one another's mutual needs. Thus, although balanced writing and reporting is the intent, it is always possible to discern something about the images and overtones readers are meant to take away. Here, the data consisted of answers to the questions listed on the coding sheet, using, whenever possible, quotes from the writing itself. These were entered into a simple spreadsheet program. The final coding categories may be found in Appendix B.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter details findings from the content analysis which examined whether individual or structural arguments were most prevalent in talk of domestic violence. The final sample included articles from most of the sections of the magazines, including columns by lay and professional writers, short articles, feature length articles and pieces from sections in the “front of the book” which feature national and international news (Gans, 1979: 4). In addition to the types mentioned above, I also included short pieces which elaborated on specific topics mentioned in some longer articles. These were sometimes placed within shaded boxes set within larger articles, but since they were properly articles in themselves, I coded these separately. Of the 58 pieces, 29 (or 50 percent) of the pieces were from *Newsweek*, 22 (or 37 percent) were from *Time*, and 7 (or 12 percent) were from *US News & World Report*. By decade, the breakdown for the percent of each magazine is shown in Figure 1, below.

Figure 1. Total Number of Articles by Decade

Decade	Decade total	Periodical	Periodical total/Decade total	As percent of decade	As percent of overall total*
1960-1969	1	Time	1/1	100%	2%
Decade total as percent of overall total*					2%
1970-1979	4	Newsweek	$\frac{3}{4}$	75%	5%
		US News & World Report	$\frac{1}{4}$	25%	2%
Decade total as percent of overall total *					7%
1980-1989	16	Newsweek	6/16	37.50%	10%
		Time	6/16	37.50%	10%
		US News & World Report	4/16	25%	7%
Decade total as percent of overall total *					27.5%
1990-2000	37	Newsweek	19/37	51%	33%
		Time	16/37	43%	28%
		US News & World Report	2/37	5%	3%
Decade total as percent of overall total *					64%

* Numbers do not add to 100 due to rounding

As shown, domestic violence and its euphemisms was not the subject of any writing during the 1960's except for one short piece in *Time*. In the 1970's, four articles found their way into the magazines mentioned. In the 1980's, the number rose to 16, followed by 37 in the 1990's (including the year 2000). It is worthwhile to note that six

of the latter 37 articles were published in 1993, while 18 articles were published in 1994, the years of the Bobbitt trials and of O.J. Simpson's arrest and trial, respectively. But in 1995, the number of stories had dwindled to four, and it continued doing so through 1996 (three stories) to 1997 (two stories) and 1998 (one story.) No stories on domestic violence were published in 1999 and 2000, respectively. Thus, the year 1994 accounted for very nearly half of the articles published during the 1990's. Because dividing the time frame into decades is a somewhat arbitrary way to divide up the time during which the pertinent articles were published, and because of the excessive numbers in 1993 and 1994, I chose not to use a mean-articles-per-year as an indicator of anything, whether calculated within each decade or divided over the 40 years. One can safely conclude that the sheer number of times the reading public has been confronted with domestic violence within the pages of these magazines has, in general, increased over time.

Using a table to gauge the sheer number of times a problem such as domestic violence was in the public eye may seem helpful. For example, it would appear beneficial to a public-arenas model of social problems (see Hilgartner and Bosk, 1988) that domestic violence was the subject of a story 37 separate times from 1990 through 2000. However, other named and defined social problems entered the cultural lexicon at around the same time. Urban and rural poverty, by now well-established in the social-problems pantheon, were then highlighted in the Kerner Commission report following the Watts riots of 1969. Earlier that decade, in 1962, "The Battered Child Syndrome," an academic article, had described and labeled child abuse for medical practitioners (Pfohl, 1977). Since the 1960's, the pace with which new social problems are introduced has,

according to Best (1990), accelerated. What can be said about domestic violence in particular is therefore somewhat difficult to conclude. Given that I don't compare data on these and other social problems, it is impossible to judge whether the numbers for domestic violence were relatively large or small. Were other social problems, like homelessness or drug abuse, just as likely to be mentioned in stories? How does the increase in articles covering such issues compare with the trajectory of domestic violence? Perhaps other forms of interpersonal victimization, such as child abuse and its near relatives, including child sexual abuse, child ritual abuse, child neglect and other variants were more likely to be the subject of stories than domestic violence. On the other hand, if one examines only the numbers arising from this study, is it strange or normal that only a handful of stories on domestic violence have been written since 1994? I suggest that the totals alone yield very little of use if we don't know anything about the actual content of the stories, which is why we now turn to the articles themselves.

Individuals

Batterers and Their Problems

As previously mentioned, the final coding schema drew attention both to pre-existing and emergent themes. In thirty-seven of the articles (64% of the total sample) violence was attributed to batterers. These attributions tended to emphasize, in turn, the hazards of alcohol or drugs, batterers' problems with anger, and the dependent relationship between interpersonal violence and susceptibility to stress or other psychological problems.

Alcohol and Drugs

Seventeen articles linked battering to abuse of alcohol or of drugs. Of these, five mentioned an explicit causal link. In “The wife-beater and his wife,” *Time* (1964) cited the widespread belief that all domestic violence or wife-beating is simply an “unlovely but all too frequent byproduct of alcoholism”(p. 81). This belief has a long history. The same article illustrates the timeless nature of such a connection with a George Cruikshank engraving. Cruikshank, a well-known 18th century artist and crusader against drinking, depicted in this work an enraged and disheveled man grabbing his terrified female companion with one hand while balling up the other fist, all while two children tear at him in a futile effort to make him stop. A table and canteen, both tipped onto their sides, round out this painting of the “fearful quarrels” that result from drinking (p. 82). The subject matter was not limited to the early periods, however. The five which mentioned an explicit link were from an unexpectedly long time range--from 1964 to 1986--while publication dates of the twelve others, which mentioned a connection but did not make that connection a matter of cause and effect, ranged from 1983 to 1998.

In 1976, *Newsweek* announced that “as special-interest groups begin to investigate the violence, much of it [was] the result of alcoholism and drug abuse...”(Francke, p. 47). That same year, *US News & World Report* quoted a shelter worker who declined to see drinking as the whole story:

...Lisa Leghorn, coleader of Women's Transition House, a Cambridge, Mass., refuge for battered women, says that alcohol may be merely an excuse. Her view: “In many cases, men drink to have justification for beating their wives.” (“Battered wives,” 1976, p. 47)

Further on, this article used both nameless experts and the examples of a “normal” battered women’s shelter to contradict these conclusions. First, the author mentioned that “other causes of wife battering, some analysts [said], [included] drugs and psychological stresses”(p. 47). Second, the author described a “typical” shelter which exclusively served victims of violent alcoholics:

Haven House in the Los Angeles area, [was] founded in 1964 and funded by California's alcoholism fund and Los Angeles County revenue-sharing funds. During the last two years, Haven House...served more than 800 females. It is limited to those whose attackers have a drinking problem. (“Battered wives,” 1976, p. 48)

In 1984, *US News & World Report* suggested that "...personal and economic setbacks, alcoholism and the greater strains modern society puts on many families" were the reasons why there had been a "surge in family troubles," according to Dr. Bertrand New, psychiatrist at Westchester Medical Center - New York Medical College (Thornton, p. 66). That belief was shared by other decision makers quoted in 1986:

The root problem, they find, isn't anger per se but alcohol abuse. “If we can get those persons to seek help with their drinking then we'll be able to resolve some of the repeated weekend fighting,” [said Atlanta police department] Deputy Chief W. J. Taylor. (Press, p. 59)

The other twelve articles cited specific instances where batterers in the news were drunk, although drugs were sometimes cited as well. Joel Steinberg, who battered his companion and killed his adopted daughter was described as a frequent user of drugs (Hackett, 1988). In a 1994 story in *Newsweek* profiling with light irony a battered-men’s shelter, a (male) victim who sought shelter told the reporter he was there because “he was

desperate to escape a cocaine-abusing girlfriend who pummeled him without provocation” (Cose, 1994, p. 49). A story on battering published in the same issue as OJ Simpson’s flight from police cited Lackner, Gelles and Wolfner’s more circumspect conclusions. Their study found that “...one of the risk factors for becoming a batterer is that ‘male uses illicit drugs at least once each year’” and that at least 40% of the families with seven or more of the risk factors were violent (as cited in Ingrassia, 1994, p. 29). Reversing the normal order - that alcohol ingestion is followed by violence - the director of probation for the New Orleans Municipal Court, Michael Groetsch, stated that “[a batterer] drinks to beat, he doesn't beat because he drinks” (O’Reilly, 1983, p. 24). Unlike the expert cited in the article about women seeking shelter from alcoholics, quoted above, this presumed expert was not contradicted in the remainder of the article. But on the whole, attitudes that countered the presumptive causal link between alcohol ingestion and battering were rare in this sample.

Generally, the link was not only there; it was explicit. A woman writing in the “My Turn” section of *Newsweek* discussed a particularly wrenching conversation she had with a member of the batterer-treatment groups it is her job to moderate. After the regular group session, the group member revealed to the writer/moderator that one night, “just before midnight, my mom called me for help. Dad was drinking and beating her. Like times before, he pointed a shotgun at her, but this time they wrestled with it and she shot him” (Kwuon, 1998, p. 18). In a story about a man setting fire to his estranged wife, the batterer’s violence and alcoholism coincided: “When Joe drank and became abusive, his wife quietly took the beatings. About 11 years ago Joe gave up on alcohol.

‘To my knowledge, the beatings stopped with the drinking,’ says Gerald Baade, a friend and neighbor” (Karlen, 1984, p. 38). If batterers were not alcoholic, they were often at least "alcohol or drug-dependent" (Andersen, 1983, p. 19). According to a long, analytical piece from *Time*, written after OJ Simpson’s freeway flight from law enforcement officers, “... men who kill often abuse alcohol or drugs...” (Smolowe, 1994, p. 24).

Work-Related Stress and Strain

A frequent theme was the idea that battering could be a response to forces acting on the batterer. In eight of the articles (14% of the total sample), the world of work was responsible in some way. Work could cause stress which then could precipitate violent episodes.

‘It's easier to take out [the] frustrations [like personal and economic setbacks, alcoholism and the greater strains modern society puts on many families] on family members,’ says [Murray] Straus [head of the Family Violence Research Center at the University of New Hampshire] ‘simply because they are there,[yet] the close emotional ties tend to keep abuses from becoming known to others.’ (Thornton, 1984, p. 66)

Pressures might affect men at any socio-economic stratum. “A lot of men are under the same frustrations, whether they're rich or poor,” according to a Chicago police commander (Francke, 1976, p. 47). According to Charlotte Fedders, author of a memoir about her time as a victim of battering,

“Rich men like to have the control at home that they get elsewhere. There's very little difference between the stress of a man climbing the corporate ladder and the stress on a guy who's out of work.” (Toufexis, 1987:68)

Low wages could themselves be the reason for violence.

During long strikes in the New York City area, the Brooklyn legal-services office has observed a noticeable increase in its case load among the wives of strikers. A legal-services-office spokesman comments: "The men are out of work, frustrated and without much money, and so they give vent to this economic pressure by knocking their wives about." ("Battered wives" 1976, p. 47)

College students, aware of adult expectations and demands, but held back by their inexperience and youth, feel this strongly as well. According to one campus counselor, a student senses the "economic frustrations and tensions and the feeling that you have no power in the world. So you show your power against someone who can't retaliate" ("Socko performances," 1981, p. 67).

John Fedders, the chief of enforcement at the SEC, was fired not long into his tenure at the organization when in a very public divorce his wife testified that he had repeatedly beaten her over the course of their 18-year long marriage. The story merited mention in all three of the newsweeklies, although none of the stories were more than one-third of a page long. In those short articles, Fedders' violence was chalked up to a number of forces having to do with work. Financial problems arose because he decided to accept a less lucrative public position in lieu of the previous, private one.

His problems and his wife's, Fedders told reporters, also stemmed from trying to maintain on a far smaller government paycheck the...lifestyle they became accustomed to when he was a partner in Arnold & Porter, a Washington law firm. The couple, who have five sons in private school, spent far more than Fedders' ...starting salary with the government, relying on bank loans to make up the difference. ("Capital watches," 1985, p. 12)

Note that *US News & World Report* here did not comment on the fact that Fedders' wife reported beatings *throughout* their marriage, not simply during John Fedders' short, unremunerative tenure as a public servant.

Work and personal demeanor were linked in other ways. "Fedders had a history of 'black moods,' and these apparently were exacerbated by a 1982-83 federal grand jury investigation of Southland, the Dallas-based operator of 7-Eleven" ("Capital watches," 1985, p. 12). The other force over which Fedders had no control was his obsessive and controlling nature. Being pathologically obsessive served him well at work, though:

Fedders admits that he always put work before family. At home he was a fastidious, obsessive man who did not permit anyone to wear shoes on the carpeting; on the job he was a demon for organization, logging long hours as he supervised a 200-strong enforcement staff and meticulously reviewed proposed cases. (Stengel, 1985, p. 32)

Such an understanding of the problem of domestic violence, as manifest in one couple was further underlined when Fedders was quoted as saying that "he termed the incidents [of domestic violence] 'highly regrettable' and said he was seeking psychiatric counseling and a reconciliation with his wife" ("Capital watches," 1985, p. 12). Fedders was not alone in claiming, however, that his work habits could be the cause of battering. A Newsweek story on battered women noted how stress at work becomes a legitimate way of explaining battering to children:

[Battering] is not usually the lurid, sadomasochistic dance imagined by sidewalk psychiatrists, but something even more insidious, because it happens so often within the charmed circle of the family. "Daddy had a hard day at the office today," says the mother, hurriedly making excuses to shield the child who has just

witnessed her beating--and to deny that her marriage is in trouble. (Gelman, 1988, p. 65)

In a story about domestic violence in the armed services, most of the reasons given for battering were explicitly linked to changes in the work environment.

The rise in abuse of spouses and children, researchers and the Pentagon believe, may be connected to the painful reduction in US fighting forces following the end of the cold war. ...And the problem isn't restricted to low-level or poorly performing soldiers. "Often those in the most responsible and stressful positions," the report says, referring to noncommissioned officers, "appear to be more likely to be involved in abusive episodes."... "Familial stress" increases due to "long absences of the breadwinner," downsized expectations for employment and pensions, and "financial issues," according to a Pentagon official...(Thompson, 1994, p. 48-50)

Quotes from individual servicemen interviewed anonymously supported this understanding.

Some [soldiers] acknowledge that the prospect of watching lifelong dreams shatter as the military shrinks can make them lash out in rage and frustration. "It stresses you out, but you can't hit the officers," an Army man says. "So you wait till you get home and take it out on her and the kids." (Thompson, 1994, p. 50)

Psychiatric Disturbances

While outside forces acting on individuals was the reason some batterers became violent, most of the articles citing stress or strain did so in reference to the batterer's mental health. The quest to understand the psychology of battering continued throughout the study period. An article in *Time* which introduced rape, child abuse and domestic violence to readers suggested reasons why the nature of such crimes meant their perpetrators merited study.

For those who commit private violence, who abuse children, beat wives and rape, the usual reasons behind public violence--greed, dementia, vengeance, feral antisocial anger--do not generally apply. How to explain acts of brutality so personal and thus so specially [sic] disturbing? (Andersen, 1983, p. 18)

What batterers might be remained, on the whole, an intrapersonal issue to be resolved with the help of specialists. In the sole article written in the 1960's, battering, it was noted, was a type of therapy for *both* parties. Batterers, according to the psychiatrists cited, were generally “shy, sexually ineffective mother's boys....The periods of violent behaviour by the husband...served to release him momentarily from his anxiety about his ineffectiveness as a man”(“The wife beater,” 1964, p. 82). This theme--that battering was a kind of mutual benefit for victims and perpetrators--never reappeared in any the articles in the study.

However, experts cited throughout the study period agreed that batterers needed individual treatment of some kind. As early as 1973, *Newsweek* cited British Labor MP Jack Ashley as wanting “local sanctuaries and better legal protection for abused women--and psychiatric treatment for their husbands” (“Britain: Battered Wives,” 1973, p. 39). The divide between mental health and illness was apparent in the Hedda Nussbaum case, where both victim and perpetrator were considered mentally unwell, though the latter far more than the former. By the time of the O.J. Simpson trial, the frontiers of research on domestic violence and the biology of mental illness had converged.

There may be other psycho-physiological links to violence. It is known, for instance, that alcohol and drug abuse often go hand in hand with spousal abuse. So does mental illness. A 1988 study by Maiuro of Seattle's domestic-violence program documented some level of depression in two-thirds of the men who manifested violent and aggressive behaviours. [Maiuro] reports that “it appears

that [taking Paxil, the antidepressant] appears to be having some benefits.” (Smolowe, 1994, p. 24)

Batterers were consistently depicted as possessing a kind of aberrant internal makeup--one very different from the rest of the world. One difference was the enormity of batterers' insecurities. According to Lenore Walker, the woman is the man's “...emotional glue that holds him together. As a consequence, he is desperately afraid of losing her” (O'Reilly, 1983, p. 26). In the same piece, Michael Groetsch, director of probation for the New Orleans Municipal Court, notes that batterer's “tantrums are very similar to those of a two-year-old” (p. 25). In its lengthy 1994 piece, *Time* quoted several experts on batterer psychology:

“A restraining order is a way of getting killed faster,” warns [Dr. Park] Dietz. “Someone who is truly dangerous will see this as an extreme denial of what he's entitled to, his God-given right.” (Smolowe, 1994, p. 25)

“In a last-ditch, nihilistic act,” says Roland Maiuro, director of Seattle's Harborview Anger Management and Domestic Violence Program, “[the batterer] will engage in behaviour that destroys the source of that threat.” And in the expanding range of rage, victims can include children, a woman's lawyer, the judge who issues the restraining order, the cop who comes between. (Smolowe, 1994, p. 24)

In its expository piece from 1983, *Time* summarized the batterer's psychology and compared him with other deviants:

[Batterers, rapists, and child molesters] have some rough affinities....All three species tend to have low opinions of themselves; they get violent, psychoanalysts say, because it gives them a cheap squirt of power. Like most criminals, they are immature and impulsive. Everything they want they want instantly. (Andersen, 1983, p. 19)

Similarly, the *Newsweek* article published on the eve of O.J. Simpson's flight from police detailed a psychiatric classification of batterers. The "first type feels remorse, doesn't do it often, and 'when they use violence, it reflects some lack of communication skills, combined with a dependence on the wife'" (Ingrassia, 1994, p. 30). The second type includes men who are "intensely jealous and fear abandonment. Most likely, they grew up with psychological and sexual abuse." (p. 30) As they are very controlling, they often and quickly accuse partners of infidelity. Finally, the third type is "the smallest and most dangerous group, [which] encompasses men with an antisocial personality disorder. Their battering fits into a larger pattern of violence and getting in trouble with the law" (p. 30).

An unusual article published at the same time interviewed one lone batterer who had experienced a personal transformation:

The bad thing about it is that it never gets better without intervention. Every time I abused my wife, it got worse. Eventually, I would have killed her if I hadn't gotten help. It wouldn't matter if I had divorced her and gotten another wife--the same thing would have happened because the problem was within me. ("I would have killed her," 1994, p. 31)

A final theme that appeared in this subcategory was that batterers' psychology rendered them particularly unpredictable and therefore dangerous. A batterer-treatment group leader wrote in *Newsweek's* section "My Turn" about her experiences.

When a group member shakes my hand or brings flowers in gratitude, I remember that emotional intimacy is dangerous for both victims and victimizers. Batterers usually injure only those they care about. Getting close to one is like building a home on the slopes of a dormant volcano. (Kwuon, 1998, p. 18)

Comparing batterers to volcanoes may not be as incongruous as it appears at first glance. Good domestic violence programs help repeat victims prepare for the next time by going through a checklist or safety plan: when an argument happens, steer away from sharp items in the kitchen or hard surfaces in the bathroom, think out an escape route beforehand, keep money ready and bags packed *just in case you have to leave*. But they cannot tell victims how to prevent an assault, nor how to predict one--except by maintaining unshakable vigilance, much like the researchers that monitor Alaska's near-constant seismic activity. The movement of tectonic plates, the movement of violent significant others--these are properly greeted with similar readiness and preparation. Such an approach glosses over the fact that domestic violence is a routine occurrence, that it happens not in the rare household, but to millions of women every year, that women are routinely bound to their abusers through legally enforceable commitments as wives, parents, and co-owners which can make sprinting away from the eruption, as one does from a volcano, at the very least, judicially unwise, and that the response from agencies intended to help, including those that provide resources women need to start over, are routinely insufficient.

Intergenerational

That battering is learned and transmitted within the family was a frequent theme.

[According to Richard Gelles, the family violence scholar], "the husband will beat the wife. The wife may then learn to beat the children. The bigger siblings learn it's O. K. to hit the little ones, and the family pet may be the ultimate recipient of violence."... Family violence is "like a poisonous plant sending out spores."
(Andersen, 1983, p. 19)

The result of this violence could be most clearly felt in adulthood. According to the batterer-treatment group leader,

recovery begins when men can express anger without intimidating others. It continues when they can recount how often they saw their mothers slapped, choked or his with a two by four. I encourage them to share painful childhood experiences, but remind them there is no excuse for abuse. (Kwuon, 1998, p. 18)

Writers worried about domestic violence as an endless series of begetting victims and perpetrators.

“The worst thing that can happen to kids is to grow up in an abusive family,” says [University of New Hampshire professor Richard] Gelles. Research has shown that children reared amid violence....risk repeating the pattern when they become parents...Former surgeon general C. Everett Koop says domestic violence is often three-generational; in families in which a grandparent is abused, the most likely assailant is the daughter--who's likely to be married to a man who abuses her. Together, they abuse their children. (Ingrassia, 1994, p. 33)

Youngsters often witness wife beatings, and can be adversely influenced for the rest of their lives. One study has shown that in nearly all cases the children will side with the father, indicating that some day they will repeat the experience either as aggressor or victim. Florence Morgenroth, co-ordinator of the Dade County, Fla., Task Force on Battered women, recalls an 8-year-old who threatened that if his mother didn't do as he demanded, “I'll tell Daddy to beat you up.” (“Battered wives,” 1976, p. 47)

The men who kill...have...witnessed abuse in their childhood homes...Fully 80% of the male participants in a Minneapolis, Minnesota violence-control program grew up in homes where they saw or were victims of physical, sexual, or other abuse. Women who have witnessed abuse in their childhood homes are also at greater risk of reliving such dramas later in their lives, unless counseling is sought to break the generational cycle. (Smolowe, 1994, p. 20)

Ownership Reasons

That batterers should have reasons, historically sanctioned, for treating wives or female partners as inferior beings were mentioned infrequently in reference to larger cultural forces.

There is nothing new about wife beating. It has always happened, everywhere. Often it is accepted as a natural if regrettable part of woman's status as her husband's property. Throughout history unlucky women have been subjected to the whims and brutality of their husbands. The colloquial phrase "rule of thumb" is supposedly derived from the ancient right of a husband to discipline his wife with a rod "no thicker than his thumb". (O'Reilly, 1983, p. 23)

"Male violence against women is at least as old an institution as marriage," says clinical psychologist Gus Kaufman, Jr., cofounder of Men Stopping Violence, an Atlanta clinic established to help men face their battering problems. So long as a woman was considered her husband's legal property, police and the courts were unable to prevent--and unwilling to punish--domestic assaults. (Gibbs, 1993, p. 41)

More often, references to feelings of ownership were depicted as individual and without the justification of cultural precedent.

[According to Lenore Walker, author of *Terrifying Love*], A violent man...typically acts out of a powerful need for control--physical, emotional, even financial. He may keep his wife under close surveillance, isolating her from family and friends, forbidding her to work or calling constantly to check on her whereabouts....Counselors have found that men resort to violence because they want to control their partners, and know they can get away with it--unlike in other relations....(Gibbs, 1993, p. 39)

Police Indifference and Training

Thirty-nine articles (50% of the total sample) mentioned at least one cultural or structural reference for battering and its causes. One of the more structurally inclined

causes for the perpetuation of battering was the police response to it. Domestic violence as a social problem and pressure on law enforcement officers to bespeak it appeared nearly simultaneously. Erin Pizzey, who founded the first refuge in the United Kingdom, revealed in her 1973 book, *Scream quietly or the neighbors will hear*, how police officers time and again refused to get involved in matters that concerned the family. Interest in studying what happened between police and victims began in earnest in this country with studies financed by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), which devoted a large part of its budget to research on police practices and domestic violence.

To many, it appears that police have a responsibility in situations involving domestic violence. Consequently, that police had done or were doing a poor job of responding to this need, a theme that appeared in 16 of the articles in this study, has a fairly long history itself. This theme appeared throughout the articles in the study, from 1973 through 1998. In an article from 1976, police were not mentioned in positive terms: “Many women are said to feel that police and the laws are against them.” (“Battered wives: Now they’re fighting back,” 1976, p. 48) Police admitted that this feeling was well-grounded, but provided, in turn, reasons for the lackluster response:

Law-enforcement officials admit that they hesitate to answer calls from quarreling spouses. According to [national figures], 149 officers were killed between 1965 and 1974 answering “disturbance calls.” Says the 1974 FBI report: “Any officer who has answered disturbance calls remembers situations when he became a substitute target in a husband-and-wife quarrel.”...[Also, batterers] are seldom held in jail, and police officers, knowing this, discourage wives from pressing complaints because of the consequences they might have to face later. (“Battered wives: Now they’re fighting back,” 1976, p. 48)

An attorney who worked with battered women thought police should be trained better.

Somehow, though it is not clear what that training should be about:

“The police don't seem able to differentiate between a woman in danger and a woman just trying to put a scare into her spouse,” says Brooklyn divorce attorney Marjory D. Fields, who estimates that about 40 per cent of her 700 low-income clients have been beaten. (Francke, 1976, p. 47)

What did victims want from the police? Most of all, they wanted the violence to stop, and experts seemed to think that arrest would be the most expedient way to make that happen. *Time* noted that the conclusions from a Police Foundation paper were, “It is clear that the recidivism measure is lowest when police make arrests” (O’Reilly, 1983, p. 26).

In one of the handful of lengthy articles that followed OJ Simpson’s arrest, police responses were still depicted as problematic. “...Police often walk away if the victim refuses to press charges. Though they act quickly to separate strangers, law-enforcement officials remain wary of interfering in domestic altercations, convinced that such battles are more private and less serious”(Smolowe, 1994, p. 18). In the same article, police responded to a trespassing by telling the female victim, “We don't put people in jail for breaking a restraining order” (p. 24). In a story on the growing requests for clemency for long-term battered women who killed their spouses or partners, police action let one victim know not to expect officers who cared whether they could distinguish between aggressor and victim.

Two weeks before the shooting, the police arrested them both: him for aggravated assault because she was pregnant, her for assault with a deadly missile and

violently resisting arrest. She had thrown a bottle at his truck. (Gibbs, 1993, p. 43)

More important than what officers were or were not doing were their attitudes towards the work of responding to domestic violence. Chiefs of police and their representatives recognized the public relations problems that insensitive responses entailed.

Sergeant Louis Mancuso of Manhattan's Ninth Precinct... does not think arrests are always the best solution. He believes there are often extenuating circumstances, observing after hearing about one brutal assault, "Maybe she wasn't giving him what he needed sexually." Detroit Executive Deputy Police Chief James Bannon explains such lingering attitudes, "Police officers are as violent in domestic relations as others. Probably more so." (O'Reilly, 1983, p. 26)

Changes in police demeanor seemed key to making a difference in investigating cases and bringing charges. If officers could understand the problem better, they might be of more use in the desperate situations to which they were called. Several articles alluded to officers who arrived on a scene and, *in the past*, would have been unable or, more likely, unwilling to change the situation. Adding to this official paralysis, misdemeanor statutes generally used to require the offended party to swear out a warrant herself, a time-consuming, bureaucratic process sure to raise the hackles of the potential arrestee. Only if police officers observed a crime taking place could the officer arrest the perpetrator at the scene of the crime. At the time of writing, "once exasperated police officers....are beginning to understand the dimensions of the problem" and were, therefore, beginning to make misdemeanor arrests based on probable cause (O'Reilly, 1983, p. 26). "In Duluth,...82% of those arrested for spouse abuse are convicted, up from

20 % in 1979” and according to “a recent Police Foundation working paper...’It is clear that the recidivism measure is lowest when police make arrests” (p. 26). Nevertheless, some types of violence were still beyond the understanding of police. Regarding gay or lesbian couples, Claire Renzetti was cited noting that “law enforcement officials ‘think of it like a cat fight or two women going at it” (King, 1993, p. 75).

The promise of changes to be wrought by changing the minds of authority figures, including doctors, attorneys, and law enforcement officers, remains largely unfulfilled. Only law enforcement officers have been placed under a severe amount of scrutiny, to the exclusion of other institutions that can play important roles in ensuring the welfare of the state’s citizens. This scrutiny, I argue, is due to the largely criminalistic framing of the problem of domestic violence--a problem to addressed at the end of the nightstick, so to speak, rather than in Congress or anywhere else.

No Structural or Cultural Explanations

Eighteen of the 58 articles (31% of the total sample) contained no references whatsoever to any structural reasons why battering occurs in intimate partnerships. A majority of these articles mentioned domestic violence, but were not expressly written to explain any facet of it. Most of these focused on the Bobbitts, on facets of the O.J. Simpson trial but not the accusations per se, or were short news stories involving celebrities accused of intimate partner violence. One article in particular, which discussed ways batterers can be ‘treated,’ lingered exclusively on ways that individual batterers can be reformed through therapy, treatment groups, even jail (Cowley, 1994).

Few Structural or Cultural Explanations

In a four-part set of articles published in the September 5, 1983 issue, *Time's* cover story discussed spouse abuse, rape and incest as individualistic issues. All are private forms of violence; all reproduce themselves across generations like “a poisonous plant sending out spores,” and victims of all three tend to be ashamed and humiliated “rather than hurt”(Andersen, p. 18-19). Forms of victimization and their reproduction overlap; thus, “most violent criminals were raised in violent homes. Children of punched-out women, accustomed to seeing family business transacted with fists, are prone to become battered wives and battered husbands themselves”(p. 19). The focus in this long set of writing (11 pages total, with minor illustrations) is on how deviant individuals learn violent behaviors, and in turn teach or infect their own families with that violence.

That this article reverts to an individualistic framework is also evident in the discussion of differences among the three types of crimes. The differences mentioned have to do with evaluating assaults from a reasonable distance. Thus, the distinctions between serious and inane are, or should be, obvious. “Slapping a spouse is different from shaking a child” because the child has fewer options due to his or her size (Andersen, 1983, p. 19). Some guidelines are suggested: “when the violence is so ugly and utterly inexcusable, you just throw the book at the sick bastards” (p.19). But what crosses the line into inexcusable will vary by each individual act. Rapists, for example, are “real criminals,” but when “a man rapes his wife..[or when] fights [break out] between spouses that are not pat, villain-and-victim episodes” it is less clear, the author

says, what we should think or do about such acts (p. 19). The writing throughout this introductory essay suggests that judgment be issued case by case, underscoring the tentative status of such crimes, perhaps to encourage us to simultaneously rethink something about these types of crimes, while questioning the propriety of labeling them as crimes at all.

That same decade, John Fedders' ouster as head of the SEC yielded one article in each publication. Fedders, who was admirably cited as an excellent boss, was asked to resign when Charlotte Fedders testified in divorce hearings that she had been beaten repeatedly during their 18-year marriage. The stories on the Fedders provided specifics on the forms of violence perpetrated against her, but they also either mentioned that stress over Fedders' smaller, government salary was to blame or that Fedders had a bad temper ("black moods"[Stengel, 1985, p. 32]). In both *Time* and *US News & World Report*, the real story was that Fedders was asked to resign, because his private actions contradicted his boss' purported stance on spouse abuse.⁵ But the specific *nature* of those reasons appeared to be of secondary importance. The process through which Fedders was fired was important. All three stories noted that Fred Fielding, the White House counsel, had remained passive after receiving a letter with details intended for the President, from Charlotte Fedders. The stories in all three magazines described how Fedders was fired only when the abuse became publicly known. In all three stories, the resignation, not the violence itself, was the story. *Time's* piece, however, was at least three times as long as

⁵ In this instance, Fedders' personal actions came up against a fairly recent decision on how the government should approach domestic violence. At the end of September, 1983, President Reagan departed from previous White House policy when he convened a task force headed by the Detroit chief of police to study what the government, both at the federal and the state levels, could do about child, elder, and spouse abuse ("Family feuds," 1983: 18).

the others, and included quotes from Charlotte Fedders. It also described the abuse in much greater detail than either of the other two pieces. However, it also described in detail what Fedders had accomplished in his work life, and quoted a “top Washington securities lawyer” who said: ””You may not like what [Fedders has] done at home, but you’ve got to admit he was first-rate in the job”” (Stengel, 1985, p. 32).

Domestic violence made the news again, but only in *Newsweek*, in 1988, when Joel Steinberg was placed on trial for killing his foster daughter. The most important witness for the prosecution was Steinberg’s partner Hedda Nussbaum, a woman whose physical disfigurement spoke to years of battering. Immediately before leaving for a business appointment, Steinberg had hit Lisa, their four-year old, in their apartment so hard she fell unconscious; he left the girl with Nussbaum and told the latter he’d take care of the girl when he returned. Lisa died of her injuries when an ambulance was eventually summoned, many hours later, and several hours after Steinberg had returned from his appointment. Although Nussbaum failed to help her daughter, writing in this story was clearly sympathetic. This may be because pictures were more important than the story, or that, as with television, they were the story.

Even though a year had passed between the arrest and the trial, *Newsweek* remarked that Hedda had “a boxer’s face,” and described in detail her injuries (Hackett, 1988, p. 56). Included with the article was a set of pictures entitled “A battered woman’s brutal metamorphosis,” which juxtaposed three pictures of Nussbaum: a portrait in her twenties, a snapshot taken during her arrest where the bridge of her nose, cheeks,

cheekbones are ominously dark, and a still from a videotape made by the district attorney's office depicting her right leg covered with "detailed ulcerations" (p. 56).

But the story here was clearly about this far-from-ordinary family. What it showed was a freak show so different from the middle-class façade which the family was described as putting up that, for readers, it must have become nearly impossible to relate to Nussbaum's experiences. Steinberg was depicted as a monstrosity with "Svengali-like power" and the ability to practice "mind control" (p. 56). Describing how she never spoke to family members by phone without having Steinberg in the room, Nussbaum was quoted as saying he "...would say buzzwords that would put me in a trance through posthypnotic suggestion" (p. 61). In a related article on child abuse, a trauma professional worried that this couple was so different from the rest of the world that the public's assumptions about the exceptionalism of child abusers might be reinforced rather than questioned.

For all the interest the Steinberg story has stirred up, some experts worry that attention on such an extreme case may lead the public to believe that only seriously disturbed people hurt children. "The publicity actually provides the public a chance to distance themselves from the problem," says Blair Justice, professor of psychology....(Kantrowitz, 1988, p. 59)

But this commentary was buried deeply in one of the related stories, and hardly managed to counter the portraits of Nussbaum and Steinberg. While these articles acknowledged the existence and widespread nature of both child abuse and domestic violence, neither included structural explanations for this universal problem.

The stories around Lorena Bobbitt, from 1993 and 1994, showed, on the other hand, a different kind of freak show. Briefly, what all agree transpired is this: John Bobbitt, a nightclub staffer, came home after drinking on June 23, 1993, and wanted to have sex with his wife, Lorena, who was by then already in bed. He then did or did not rape his wife and fall asleep. Sometime during the night, Lorena rose, went into the kitchen to get something to drink, and while there, saw a filet knife. She grabbed the knife and dismembered her husband. Immediately afterwards, Lorena ran to her car, got in, and started driving. As soon as she realized she was holding her husband's remains, she flung them out the car window, and proceeded to a friend's house. The friend then called police.

Many battered women's advocates would have recognized the "marital Armageddon" (Kaplan, 1994, p. 54) in which Lorena Bobbitt was mired. She described "a husband who bragged of affairs with other women, used 'Marine Corps torture techniques' to hurt her,...taunted her about an abortion he forced her to have" and frequently raped her (Kaplan, 1994, p. 54). Indeed, one of Lorena's cited supporters, herself a survivor of domestic violence, Evelyn Tawana Smith, was quoted by Newsweek as saying "I feel like we're kindred sisters" (Kaplan, p. 51). But a sympathetic treatment wasn't clear in most of the articles. The Bobbitt case was described as "tawdry," "a replacement soap opera for the *Buttafuocos* of Long Island," and "a downmarket *War of the Roses*" (Smolowe, 1993, p. 45), a "cautionary fable" and "a modern Gothic tale" (Kaplan, 1994, p. 52), and "your show of shows" (Waters, 1994, p. 55). Rush Limbaugh agonized in a guest commentary that the fascination with the Bobbitts signaled the

beginning of the public's never-ending search for more "...titillation, more and more [violence], more and more degradation and rot" (Limbaugh, 1994, p. 56). Such disdain for the persons involved began with the headlines.

Stories about the battering of Hedda Nussbaum and the death of Lisa Steinberg had been solemn ("...And thousands more. One death underscores a national tragedy" [Hackett, 1988, p.56]). Headlines for the Bobbitts' cases can only be described as gleeful. It is true that it is hardly possible to discuss what happened to John or Lorena without explicit mention of sex organs. But can discomfort alone explain the uses of the following puns, which headed and summarized articles on the Bobbitts?

- "Hanging by a thread: A Virginia jury lets John walk like a man. Lorena still faces her day in court. Rest assured, America, that the Bobbitt saga continues"(Adler, 1993, p. 50)
- "The unkindest cut: Justice: A notorious marital division" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 75)
- "Swift sword of justive: The tawdry case of the Bobbitts of Manassas heads for Round 2" (Smolowe, 1993, p. 45)
- "Your show of shows" (Waters, 1994, p. 55)
- "Now for the movie" (Sachs, 1994, p. 99)
- "Bobbitt fever: Why America can't seem to get enough" (Kaplan, 1994, p. 52)

In a number of ways, the writing in each of the articles refused to frame Lorena Bobbitt as a victim. Both *Time* and *Newsweek* mentioned in several articles the short excerpt from her interview from police: "He always has an orgasm and doesn't wait for me....It's unfair" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 56). Whatever Lorena had meant to say, the

magazines made it clear she wasn't a victim of rape--merely a sexually dissatisfied wife. *Newsweek* called her "act...the handiwork of a bedroom vigilante..." (Kaplan, 1994, p. 55). *Time* responded to Lorena's quote by citing John Bobbitt's defense attorney: "That doesn't sound like the statement of a woman who has been raped" (Smolowe, 1993, p. 45). In addition, the medical problems at hand weren't the possible repercussions from Lorena's repeated rapes--they were whether John Bobbitt would regain sexual function. John Bobbitt's surgeon was quoted as saying, "it 'looks excellent,' [and although] 'these aren't the kind of scars he can show off in public, obviously, but he's doing very well'" (Kaplan, 1993, p. 56). Also, in describing the charges for both, it was clear that John Bobbitt's defense was the truth, while Lorena's was a fabrication, a story she made up. Typical of these reports was the following description:

His [John's] defense is simple. He says he didn't assault her and that he's a victim not only of her violence but now of the legal system. She fully admits her deed but describes it as self-defense. If she stands trial, she will likely call herself a 'battered wife' who acted reasonably even with her husband asleep. (Kaplan, 1993, p. 56)

The last article to be published on the Bobbitts was a short article that mentioned the outcome in Lorena Bobbitt's trial for mutilation. *Time* quoted "Stanford law professor" "Lawrence Friedman," who suggested that the jury had gone soft in finding Lorena temporarily insane. "Fifty years ago, Lorena Bobbitt would have been convicted without a shadow of a doubt...They would not have listened to any argument that her deed was justified by a history of abuse" (Sachs, 1994, p. 99).

Most Structural or Cultural Explanations

The most structurally minded of the articles were published in the 1970's and at the time of the O.J. Simpson trial. Four stories made it into the newsweeklies in the 1970's. The first three of these used structural and cultural reasons to explain domestic violence, although these were not the sole pieces published during that time. The last piece to see publication during the 1970's was published in *Newsweek*. This 1978 story sounded an alarming note about battered women who killed abusive husbands and received lighter sentences than they ostensibly deserved. However, the other three articles from this decade were clearly written from feminist points of view.

The first published article was also the most radical. A women's shelter, the first of its kind, was established in the British city of Chiswick, but the *Newsweek* story from 1973 wasn't primarily interested in this fact. Instead, the piece noted an embarrassing report by shelter attorneys on officials' neglect of victims of domestic violence. The tone criticized the prevailing way the government, judicial system, and professionals dealt with domestic violence, criticizing, for example, passive physicians who did nothing to help patients with obvious marks of abuse, attorneys who jeopardized the safety of their female clients by taking too long to file separation papers, and "the welfare," Britain's social assistance system, which assisted women who were deserted but not those who 'voluntarily' left their homes for any reason. While the reason offered for men's battering was individualistic, the referent was clearly cultural: according to a progressive Member of Parliament, some men batter because they still think of wives as property:

“It’s a hangover from the old attitude that women are chattels” (“Britain: Battered wives”, p. 39).

This first article this decade is atypical of the rest of the sample, in this decade or most that occurred later. If the report is balanced--and if Gans’ (1979) was correct--the government should not be criticized without at least a chance at a serious retort. What can account for the explicitly structural and cultural explanations that would make any first-wave feminist crow? Perhaps the story placement provides a clue. The piece is written as one of several short news stories from countries around the world – the next column discusses the diplomatic problems France has encountered testing nuclear missiles in the Pacific, and includes a drawn map. Since these are reports from the rest of the world, one can argue that the tone here is not terribly important – we are, after all, talking about foreigners and their (potentially) quaint domestic habits. It therefore would make sense that nondominant ways of seeing domestic violence become more apparent. What we think of Britons doesn’t always shore up or disturb what we assume is true about Americans.

Nevertheless, the other two stories in this group were only somewhat less likely to feature structural attributions. What made these articles stand out was not the use of individual attributions--in this they differed not too significantly from the rest of the sample. Two of the articles connected alcoholism or drinking to battering, a different two connected the violence to beliefs about ownership rights of men over their wives, and two others blamed battering on the general frustrations that arise from life. Finally, one of the

articles alluded to the intergenerational transmission of violence theory, noting that many batterers have themselves either been abused or have watched mothers being abused.

However, this trio of articles strongly implicated structures and institutions for the perpetuation of domestic violence. That the police, lawyers in court, whether in criminal or civil court cases, and the courts themselves should be doing more to help victims was clear from specific and troubling anecdotes in all three. For example, a *Newsweek* story mentioned a severely beaten woman who sought help, in vain, from "...the Washington, DC, Citizens Complaint Center, where an assistant US attorney declined to press criminal charges because there was no evidence of a dangerous weapon" (Francke, 1976, p. 47). Two of the three described how laws were causing harm to the interests of battered women. Even social assistance agencies were not off the hook: two of the three stories showed women unable to leave for a shelter because of the small number of shelters or because of the lack of space at the few in existence.

Framing in the entire sample of articles did not see a return to a wide-ranging group of structural causes until OJ Simpson's arrest for the murder of his wife Nicole and her friend Ron Goldman in 1994. On the one hand, the long, analytical articles which appeared in all three newsweeklies during the month of July and August 1994 were the most conscientious about the lack of discussion of domestic violence in the media to date. They described the Simpson case as a kind of watershed in public knowledge of domestic violence and its consequences. Wrote *Newsweek* in the immediate follow-up to the famous Bronco freeway chase: "His story is certain to kindle a new national debate about domestic violence and the legal system's failure to protect battered spouses" (Turque,

1994, p. 18). In amongst the public educated by this national lesson in spousal abuse, of course, were a large number of victims:

“Before, women were ashamed,” says Peggy Kerns, a Colorado state legislator. “Simpson has almost legitimized the concerns and fears around domestic violence.” ...”A woman told me right off this week about how she was hit with a bat,” says Carole Saylor, a Denver nurse who treats battered women. “Before, there might have been excuses. She would have said that she ran into a wall.” (Smolowe, 1994, p. 24)

One of *Newsweek's* two large stories interviewed reformed men who at some point were themselves batterers, questioned the approach of the courts, and interviewed several former victims. *US News & World Report's* long cover story used the stories of victims and of relatives of victims to discuss domestic violence. In none of the stories were victims assumed to carry responsibility. Instead, responsibility belonged on the batterer, on police who failed to protect, on defense attorneys, or on public opinion. Immediately after Nicole Simpson's murder and around the time of OJ Simpson's arrest, the newsweeklies published the most progressive stories about domestic violence.

One of these articles was Margaret Carlson's column on the sporadic and dismissive mentions Nicole Simpson had received in the media. She criticized public attitudes towards Nicole, and victims in general - including those belonging to media personalities.

Radio host Rush Limbaugh with 20 million listeners had an on-air epiphany, when he played the tape [of Nicole's call to 911] for his listeners and found out it was another man that OJ was furious about. He took pleasure in pointing out that O.J. was only yelling. He broke down a door, big deal. He didn't break her.....Even the US Senate got in on the chorus. In chamber on Friday, the

chaplain offered a prayer for OJ: “Our hearts go out to him...Our nation has been traumatized by the fall of a great hero.” (Carlson, 1994, p. 27)

What the lasting value there may have been in the few pieces like Carlson’s is discussed in the next section.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In contrast to Berns' (1999) conclusions, the publication of many stories in the current sample was driven by the potentially criminal, and hence interesting, behavior of well-known persons. Since the magazines, as Gans (1979) predicted, should obey internally similar rules as regards the newsworthiness of stories, it was easiest to compare treatments of domestic violence in such stories. In turn, the number of stories around celebrities or personalities dwindled quickly once figures faced no more civic or criminal liabilities. One might therefore conclude that no changes were exacted on the issuance of stories, and that compared with previous numbers of stories, few changes or consequences resulted.

But in a strange paradox, these short periods yielded pieces which most radically 'discoursed on the discourse,' whether these were more reactionary or more feminist. While the attention given to the trials of John Bobbitt, Lorena Bobbitt, and O.J. Simpson may to ironic observers have seemed excessively sensationalistic, showing tabloid journalism at its very worst, it is also true that the coverage opened up a space within which commentaries that otherwise would have seemed too radical could be published and brought to readers. At the same time, such critical pieces, which criticized the prevailing cultural logic, were published as columns by invited or staff writers, ensuring that while criticism of media and of media coverage was published, it was bracketed in a

way that allowed readers to identify it as one writer's, not the magazine's--and thus not some omniscient authority's--opinion. The most structurally critical of these commentaries occurred during the O.J. Simpson trial; the least structurally critical, during John Bobbitt's and Lorena Bobbitt's trials. But it would be faulty to claim that long-term changes in framing resulted from the publication of such writings. Indeed, between the categories studied, there were no significant changes in attribution of responsibility for domestic violence. In a column on family values, social commentator Barbara Ehrenreich compared the lack of discussion on domestic violence in some otherwise well-publicized criminal cases with the interest in the issue after OJ Simpson's trial.

Consider the matter of wife battery. We managed to dodge it in the Bobbitt case and downplay it as a force in Tonya Harding's life. Thanks to OJ, though, we're caught up now in a mass consciousness-raising session, grimly absorbing the fact that in some areas domestic violence sends as many women to emergency rooms as any other form of illness, injury or assault. (Ehrenreich, 1994, p. 62)

As might have been expected, I found multiple and often contradictory meanings, some of them embodied in the same texts. I found it helpful to remember Meyer's (1994) suggestion to keep in mind explicit class or race frames when discussing news of deviance, including domestic violence. Viewed through such lenses, the coverage afforded whatever forms of domestic violence made the news cannot but make sense. The Bobbitt and Simpson cases are the most clearly comparable in this regard.

With the Bobbitt cases, magazines covered the trials while self-conscious of the fact that the subject was beneath our dignity. But why should these events be considered tawdry, not tragic? And why were the Bobbitts depicted as squabbling, temperamental

toddlers? The prosecutor during John Bobbitt's trial for sexual assault was quoted in *Newsweek* as saying that the two "perhaps deserve[d] each other" (Smolowe, 1993, p. 45). Reporting was done at a remove from either of the persons involved. Readers could without guilt shake their heads in disbelief at the soap opera presented by the nutty couple from Manassas. Second, while the newsweeklies repeatedly assured readers that they knew the subject was too gory or titillating or just too distasteful to be covered, this was overtly rather disingenuous. The fact that Lorena's actions were so gory and titillating was precisely the reason the Bobbitts made it into the magazines in the first place. Had Lorena filed charges for sexual assault without first dismembering her husband, the national press would probably have stayed away from John's trial for rape. Such events happen each and every day to average women so that it is, by definition, not newsworthy. Although in both instances, distances between reader and object, as well as between the normal and the deviant were rendered visible, they were not of the kind that created a space sufficient for reflexivity or criticism. Hence, when Rush Limbaugh wrote in his column "No tears for Lorena" that "Americans seem to require more and more titillation, more and more violence, more and more degradation and rot to capture their attention," it may have seemed as if he was rightly critical of reporting on the sorts of issues that make people turn away from the decent, good, and boring social order (1994, p. 24). But his article was hardly a critique of the media. It was an attack on Lorena's, or anyone's, right to call herself a battered woman, and as such, it wasn't incisive commentary or critique, but very much of a piece with the articles it was ostensibly criticizing.

The O.J. Simpson case, on the other hand, was depicted as the template for abusive relationships. I suggest that this event offered up a racialized narrative, similar to that McDonald (1999) discussed in her research. When violence is perpetrated by men of colour it serves a different function than when it is perpetrated by white men. In the former event, it serves as a “racist characterization of cultural deficiency,” which, in the end, rather than critique a male-dominated social order, serves to shore it up (McDonald, 1999, p. 111). O.J. Simpson’s presumed cultural deficiencies made possible Margaret Carlson’s critical piece on how other media outlets were talking about Nicole Simpson, as well as Barbara Ehrenreich’s two columns on poor women and domestic violence. As is evident by the totals over the years, however, even these changes were impermanent.

It must be kept in mind that newsweeklies have changed substantially during the course of the period of time covered here. Best (1990) suggests that the newsweeklies changed because news became available via C-SPAN and the cable news channels which have proliferated since the early 1990’s. This seems a compelling theory warranting further investigation.

I found that substantial changes in framing did not occur over the span of time studied. It is of course possible that the frames I used to indicate first- or second-wave feminist ownership of the problem of domestic violence were not true to the way in which activists or scholars who identify with that wave would characterize it. Is it possible that individual and not structural and cultural explanations were further from activists’ own conceptions of domestic violence? Although I proceeded on the assumption that this was not the case, the contrary remains a possibility.

Originally, I set out to find out whether the questions being asked about domestic violence have changed. The continuity of the depictions of domestic violence found in this piece of research suggests that these questions have, on the whole, remained unchanged. Further research may help uncover more specifically why this is so. Part of the answer may be institutional inertia, but more likely, changes have been slow for other reasons. A possible reason for changes in the public unveiling of domestic violence, which I have not explored in this study, is the entry of women into professional careers such as reporters, writers, and editors. This may have had a greater effect on whether or how domestic violence was depicted during this period than anything else. Future research can also delve into how ways of framing domestic violence is received by audiences and readers. While being among the readership of a newsmagazine is overwhelmingly a passive activity, newer forms of news delivery have changed the relationship of power between producers and consumers of news. If such changes also augur, as they almost certainly must, changes in the content and approach of news stories, researchers who believe that the fragmentary approach to domestic violence and other feminist causes performs a disservice, should find this a promising topic for investigation.

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APPENDIX B

A POSTERIORI CODING

Name of magazine, volume number, date and year.

Name of author, title of article, page numbers, name or description of magazine section

How long is the article?

Is there allusion to a public set of attitudes or feelings?

If yes – about what?

Violence is blamed on:

batterer and attributed to....

drug/alcohol problems

“traditionalism” in gender roles

Frustration, anger or other psychological reasons

victim

lawyers

courts

other local/state entity (such as doctors)

police and attributed to....

indifference

lack of expertise/unfamiliarity with problem

a federal entity (which one?)

In what ways does the piece support a feminist understanding of DV or not?

Who is to blame for the violence?