

# Domestic violence: beyond patriarchy

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Domestic Violence: Beyond Patriarchy In the Beginning The Battered Women's movement of the 1970's enlightened society about a much secreted, and what at the time, was considered a family matter, that of violence against women by their male intimate partners. Many lives have been saved as a direct result of society's public awareness of this much-hidden scourge on our families. Federal and state laws prohibiting Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) have been enacted, and funding has been put in place for battered women's shelter programs.

These changes have made a significant difference in the lives of battered women and children over the last few decades. The feminist theoretical perspective of IPV has been depicted throughout our society as well as how victim services, and batterers intervention programs (BIP) are modeled. " Our culture has historically exhibited certain patriarchal values observable in religion and social custom. Working against the backdrop of this history, feminism quite naturally saw an antidote in ending social oppression of women.

Wife assault, kept largely out of the public view and tolerated by prevailing attitudes, was regarded by feminists as an evil symptom of patriarchy. " (Dutton, page 17, 2006) Feminist theory defines IPV as a social problem with a single type of victim i. e. heterosexual women and one root cause, that of male privilege and patriarchy, which supports male domination, power, and control and the oppression of women. The need for services for IPV BIP's for female perpetrators is obscured and trivialized by this " one size fits all" view.

Dutton describes feminist theory on IPV as being a "paradigm:" [A paradigm is] a set of guiding assumptions or worldview, commonly shared within a group and serving to ward off recognition of data that are dissonant with the paradigm's central tenets. This theory views all social relations through the prism of gender relations and holds that men hold power over women in patriarchal societies and that all domestic violence is either male physical abuse to maintain that power or female defensive violence used as a self protection. (p. 2, 2005) developed through the anti-rape and battered women's movements.

This perspective has been the guiding light for how the social problem of against men by women and The violence against women by men paradigm is so entrenched that if anyone pursues any other theories or presents any data that is contrary to that perspective it is automatically considered anti-domestic violence movement. (Dutton, p. 44, 2005) Lucal (1995) found that attempts to discuss the idea of battered husbands started an emotionally charged and fiercely contested debate among researchers which has been the classic debate filled with claims and counterclaims.

Much of the debate has been centered around whether or not there are very many battered husbands. Most of the debate has been about whether or not battered husbands are a social problem worthy of support. (pp. 95-96)

Revealing Statistics Dr. Murray Straus, co-founder and co-director of the University of New Hampshire's Family Violence Research Laboratory, has studied IPV and child abuse for over thirty years. In study after study he has

found that both men and women are capable of being victims and committing IPV.

For instance: (I? E(Busing data from the National Family Violence Survey of 1975, Straus (1980) found that 11. 6 (2. 6 million nationwide) of husbands reported having been the victim of severe violence by their wives. Severe violence was defined as behaviors, such as kicking, punching, beating, or using a knife or gun, that have a high probability of causing physical injury. (as cited in Hines Malley-Morrison, p. 77, 2001) Presenting data that defies feminist logic has caused Dr. Straus and his colleague's substantial risk.

As a result of the depth of the objections to our finding on assaults by wives, some of us became the object of bitter scholarly and person attacks. These attack included obstruction of my public presentations by booing, shouting, and picketing. In elections for office in scientific societies I was labeled as antifeminist despite being a pioneer feminist researcher on wife beating (Straus, 1973, 1996 as cited in Straus, pp. 225-226, 1992). Suzanne K. Steinmetz, a co investigator in the first National Family Violence Survey, was the victim of more severe attacks.

There was a letter-writing campaign opposing her promotion. There were phone calls threatening her and her family, and a bomb threat at a conference where she spoke. (pp. 225-226) Studies such as the National Violence Against Women Survey tend to filter out male reports of victimization because of the "set" of the survey (criminal victimization of women) (Dutton, p. 4, in press). However, the National Violence Against

Women Survey in 2000(a) reports that more than 834, 000 men are raped or physically assaulted by an intimate partner each year in the United States.

This translates into about 1.32 assaults per 1, 000 men. (Tjaden & Thoennes, p. 11) Since the respondents in this study were told they were being interviewed about " personal safety" issues it's quite possible that this number is an underestimate as many of the men may not have perceived the violence that their wives or girlfriends were perpetrating against them as a threat to their safety. (Hines & Malley-Morrison, p. 77, 2001) The

#### Establishment of Services for Male Victims

Spreading the word as news of the availability of DAHMW's helpline became more known, calls from men and those concerned about a male relative or friend whom they thought were in an abusive situation started coming in from around the country. A website was created with information on male victimization and other resources and tri-fold brochures specifically addressing IPV against men were designed, printed and distributed through mailings and placements on community bulletin boards. Consequently, two years after its inception, DAHMWIPV. as highlighted in the National Crime Prevention Council's book, " 50 Strategies to Prevent Violence Domestic Crimes. " (2002) as, "[one of] 50 promising programs [that offer] new and alternative methods to aid under-served victims of violent domestic crime including teens in dating relationships, elderly victims of late-life abuse, child witnesses to violence, battered immigrants, male victims, and survivors in the gay and lesbian community. " In 2003 Verizon began to publish the crisis line in a number of their phone books.

Incoming calls to helpline have grown exponentially from fourteen a month in 2001, to over three hundred calls a month in 2006. The vast majority of the calls continue to be from or about a male victim (and children) of female Information gathered from male callers to the helpline suggests that some violent women use highly physically disabling tactics on their victims. "

According to qualitative accounts, several physical attacks [are] reported to have occurred to the groin area, as in the following examples: "'G reports that his estranged wife frequently targeted his testicles in her attacks, which included head butting and choking.

Police were called to his home six times, one call resulted in the wife's arrest.

" "'I was writhing, crying in the corner, I couldn't get up for two hours she kicked me in the groin at least 12 times. "' "'She held a knife to my balls and threatened to cut them off. "' (Hines et al, p. 66, 2007) The stigma attached to being a man abused by a woman is profound. Many men report that they were taught never to hit a girl, be strong, do not cry and do not tell your personal business to anyone from their parents and caregivers. There is also a cultural belief that men should be able to defend themselves.

However, if a man does defend himself against his abusive female partner and the police are called, the man is the one that will be arrested. When Dwayne Bobbit had his penis cut off by his wife in 1993, it was a big joke for late night comedy. Lorena Bobbitt was found not guilty by reason of temporary insanity. The reaction would have been entirely different had the genders been reversed. (Dutton, p. 148, 2006) Law Enforcement and the Court's Response The concerned family members and the victims

themselves to the DAHMMW helpline have recounted reports of the lack of concern for male victims: Misconceptions and Realities

Feminists' theorists assert that women's violence against men is less likely than men's violence against women to result in serious physical or psychological harm. (Dutton & Nichols, p. 697, 2005) They use this claim to dismiss women's violence against men and male victims. Women, in general, may not be as big or strong as men are, however, what women lack in size and strength they make up for with the use of weapons. Research conducted at an emergency clinic study in Ohio (Vasquez & Falcone, 1997, as cited in Dutton & Nichols, 2005 ) revealed that 72).

The authors reported that burns obtained in intimate violence were as frequent for male victims as female victims. As this study demonstrates, community samples, unless they require subjects to self-report as crime victims, show a different and more equivalent pattern of violence by gender than that alleged by the feminist perspective. Regardless of the variations in the studies, two conclusions seem reasonable: (1) women are injured more than men, and (2) men are injured too, and are not immune to being seriously injured. Simply because the injury rates are lower, men should not be denied protection. (Dutton & Nichols pp. 97-678, 2005) The feminist perspective of IPV being predominantly patriarchal in nature also excludes much of the victims in LGBT community. The LGBT community has had to set up their own domestic violence shelter programs that primarily or exclusively protect, educate and serve LGBT individuals who are victims of IPV. (e. g. see the [www. gmdvp. org](http://www.gmdvp.org), [www. lagaycenter. org/FamilyViolence](http://www.lagaycenter.org/FamilyViolence)

etc ) According to Helfrich & Simpson (2006) lesbians have a difficult time accessing services through the traditional battered women's shelter programs due to the lack of policies to screen lesbian survivors and identify batterers.

Lesbian batterers may use deception to access services through the same agency as the survivor and there are little to no stopgap measures taken to deal with those situations. (p. 344) Beyond Patriarchy, Alternative Theories on IPV Dutton (2006) asserts that the best predictor of intimate partner violence is not gender but personality disorder (p. 153). Since the beginning of the battered women's movement, researchers who have studied maritally violent men have often treated batterers as a homogeneous group. They have measured violent husbands by comparing them to nonviolent ones.

However, more recently they have found that violent husbands vary along a number of important dimensions, including severity of violence, anger, depression and alcohol abuse. (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, p. 476, 1994)

More recently, researchers have begun to investigate what attachment styles and personality disorders have to do with IPV. The focus for this paper regarding typologies of batterers is on the dysphoric/borderline subtype and so a full description of each subtype of batterer is beyond this review. For more information of the various subtypes please review, Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Holtzworth-Munroe et al. 1997; Holtzworth-Munroe et al. , 2000; Waltz et al. , 2000; Babcock et al. , 2003; Carney & Buttell, 2004)

Researchers have found that batterers are more likely a heterogeneous than a homogeneous group and within that heterogeneous grouping various



subtypes of batterers exist. Seminal research done by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) studied violent men and ascertained various typologies of male batterers. Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart categorized three major subtypes and they labeled them, family only, dysphoric/borderline, and generally violent/antisocial. (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, p. 76-482, 1994)

Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart described dysphoric/borderline batterers as those who engage in moderate to severe wife abuse as well as psychological and sexual abuse. Their violence is primarily towards the family; however, they suggested that some extra familial violence and criminal behavior may be evident. Additionally, they found that these men are the most dysphoric, psychologically distressed, and emotionally volatile and that they have evidence of borderline and schizoid personality characteristics. They may also have problems with alcohol and drug abuse. (ibid. According to Dutton (2006), " Across several studies, implemented by independent researchers, the prevalence of personality disorder in wife assaulters has been found to be extremely high. These men are not mere products of male sex role conditioning or "male privilege" [as the feminist theory of IPV suggests]; they possess characteristics that differentiate them from the majority of men who are not repeat abusers. " (p. 185) In addition to research on subtypes of batterers, there is also evidence to suggest that early attachment has bearing on what type of person may have the propensity towards perpetrating IPV.

Buttell et al (2005) states that the presence of batterer subtypes is widely accepted in the field and that findings from [their] study seem to suggest that issues of attachment and dependency may be related to the

development of an abusive personality for one type of batterer. They state that if true, efforts to improve intervention may need to focus on distinguishing batterer subtypes and developing intervention strategies relevant to the need for each subtype. (p. 216) Attachment styles may be the key to unlock many doors for both female and male perpetrators of IPV.

Dutton in his book, *The Abusive Personality*, reiterates Bowlby's findings on attachment styles: In his landmark series of books entitled *Attachment and Loss*, Bowlby developed the notion that human attachment was of ultimate importance for human emotional development. In his view, it had sociobiological significance. His views encompassed the possibility of individual differences that came to be called "'attachment styles'" referring to entire constellations of thoughts and feelings about intimacy.

Reactions to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of early attempts at attachment set up life-long attachment styles described as secure, fearful, or dismissing. The dismissing people tend to be wary of and stay out of relationships. The secure ones are comfortable with closeness. The fearful ones are stuck in the middle, exhibiting ambivalence toward intimacy and to those with whom they are emotionally connected. (as cited in Dutton, p. 116, 1998) Dutton (1998) further postulates that this push-pull reaction of the fearful attachment styled person resembles the ebb and flow of what he has coined the "cyclical personality. Dutton reports that in his notes on phrases used by female victims to describe their male batterers (who were clients of Dutton's) there was a recurring theme. They would express that their partners would act like "Jekyll and Hyde" and appear to be two different

people at times. They also said things like, " He's like living with an emotional roller-coaster," and describe their mates as moody, irritable, jealous and changeable. (p. 53) This cycling was first recognized by Lenore Walker in her book, *The Battered Women*, as the "battering cycle." (as cited in Dutton, *ibid.* As Dutton set out to gain some understanding of a cyclical or phasic personality he came across a book by John G. Gunderson entitled, *Borderline Personality Disorder*: Dutton's research regarding attachment, borderline and the batterer's cyclical personality has been focused on male on female IPV, however, in his recent book, *Rethinking DV*, he discusses female perpetrators: Recent research has begun to explore the role of [fearful attachment, borderline traits, and chronic trauma symptoms, which generates what Dutton calls the abusive personality] among female perpetrators of partner abuse.

Follingstad, Bradley, Helff, and Laughlin (2002) generated a model for predicting dating violence in a sample of 412 college students. (as cited in Dutton, p. 201, 2006) They found that anxious attachment resulting from early life experiences led to the development of an "angry temperament," which in turn related to attempts to control and use abuse against an intimate partner. The model predicted abusiveness for both genders (*ibid.* ) Other researchers have also hypothesized about subtypes of abusive males and females.

For instance, Buttell et al (2005), states that researchers are beginning to explore the role of attachment theory and develop hypotheses on abusive behaviors relevant to different subtypes of abuser in order to improve

intervention efforts for batterers. (p. 211) Gormley (2005) concluded that, " Insecure adult attachment orientations affect half the adult population, helping to explain the prevalence of men's and women's IPV. Women with insecure adult attachment orientations may be as much at risk as similar men of psychologically and physically abusing romantic partners, oing damage to relationships they may be socialize to value highly(I? E(B. " (p. 793) Female Batterers Scant research has been done on female batterers; however, due to the changes in mandatory arrest policies more women are being arrested than ever before. The debate about whether or not women perpetrate IPV has changed noticeably of late due in part to the fact that women are increasingly being arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced to intervention programs for domestic violence offenses.

Women's arrest for IPV is a direct result of legislation that has mandated the arrest of perpetrators in cases where police become involved when a domestic dispute has occurred. Warrantless arrest legislation gives police the power to arrest the abuser and press charges themselves when called to a domestic dispute. The victim no longer needs to press charges against the perpetrator. The arrest of women was certainly an unintended consequence of this legislation and has had a dramatic impact on the national debate regarding female initiated IPV. Carney & Buttell, p. 249, 2004) Feminist theory of IPV has created a dilemma regarding intervention services for female batterers. At present, the most prevalent legislated BIP's the system has set up are for dealing with batterers comes from the feminist model of IPV. Female batterers who are convicted of domestic assault and court ordered to attend a BIP have little choice but than to attend the feminist

model of BIP's when court ordered to do so. (Carney and Buttell, p. 50, 2004)

In addition, research on these [Duluth Model] BIP's indicate that few men who complete treatment benefit from it to the extent that they demonstrate positive changes in their behaviors. Of course, if men are not benefiting from a program that is specifically designed for patriarchal batterers then certainly abusive women will benefit even less. (ibid. ) According to Babcock & Siard (2003) some of the women arrested could have been acting in self-defense and were therefore falsely arrested but others with extensive violent histories may in fact be primary aggressors. p. 153) Men who are arrested are not given the same latitude. Babcock et al. (2003) mentions that in a study of women arrested for IPV, Hamberger and Potente (1994) found women who could clearly be identified as primary aggressors of IPV, yet in the treatment setting they were generally treated the same as those women who used self defense. (as cited in Babcock & Siard, p. 154). Babcock et al. (2003) proposed two categories of female batterers, those that were partner-only and those that were generally violent.

The partner-only category covered women who may be more likely to use violence in self-defense and the generally violent women (of more interest for this paper) were women who used violence in any manner of situations including against their romantic partners. (pp. 153-154) Many studies on male batterer's include reports from their female victims; however, the researchers in this study did not ask the male victims for reports of their partner's violence. It is interesting to note that violent women were asked to report on their male partner's violence against them. (p. 57) They further note that power and control seems to be an issue for some abusive women

and they suggest that women's power and control issues, traumatic histories, and psychological distress should be explored and indicate that clinicians may want to assess for psychopathology (i. e. post-traumatic stress disorder, borderline personality disorder, etc. ) (ibid. ) Recent studies have found that women's and men's violence share similar correlates (Giordano, Millhollin, Cernkovich, Pugh, & Rudolph, 1999; Magdol, Moffitt, Caspi, & Silva, 1998; Moffitt, Robins, & Caspi, 2001 as cited in Babcock et al, p. 53, 2003) therefore, they may also share similar motivations and circumstances. Female Batterers from Victims Reports Hines et al's (2007) research provides some insight into female batterers from their male victims. " Female abusers likely have a history of childhood trauma, may be suffering from a mental illness, and are likely to use alcohol and/or drugs. Further, these women have a high rate of threatening either suicide and/or homicide. " (p. 9) As previously stated, women have been asked to report on their male batterers and although this is not the ideal way to obtain information on batterers, feminist researchers have been gathering information in this way from battered women in shelters for years. (e. g. Walker, 2000 as cited in Hines et al, p. 69, 2007) Conclusion Men are victims of female perpetrated IPV and need services such as shelter, legal aid, support and counseling much the same as their female counterparts. Additionally, men's reports of victimization should not be called into question but treated with the same respect as women's reports.

Protocols should be put in place within the domestic violence shelters programs, for law enforcement and the courts that will screen out potential female and male batterers so that victims are not judged by their gender.

There is a dearth of research of female batterers and what has been presented from the feminist theory suggests that violent females use violence in self-defense. As we move away from the feminist theory of IPV researchers are discovering that childhood trauma, insecure attachment styles, mental illness, and/or alcohol and substance abuse play a role in IPV for both genders.

Not all male batterers fit into the feminist theory of IPV, there are subtypes of batterers and attachment style plays a role in who perpetrates IPV. The subtype that is the focus of this paper is that of the borderline, cyclical batterer. Female batterers also show symptoms of having subtypes evidenced by reports from male callers to the DAHMMW. Studies are beginning to assess psychological factors that predict female intimate partner violence. What is emerging is evidence of personality disorder, attachment style, and constricted affect that has also been seen in male abusers.

Female abusers share much of the same traits as male abusers especially antisocial and borderline personalities. (Dutton, p. 203, 2006) As Babcock et al. (2003) explain, "[the] feminist perspective should be holistic, examining both the positive and negative sides of women's behavior. Bringing attention to some women being in the role of perpetrators, not solely as the victims of intimate partner abuse, involves viewing women as they are, not as we would wish them to be. " (p. 160) References About The Author