

Conflict and pure sociology: the case of lizzie borden assignment

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Andrew Borden made his fortune through real estate and banking. When the opportunity arose, he bought up several blocks of downtown property, tore down the existing Structures, and built the massive Andrew J. Borden building, renting it Out to various businesses. Though wealthy, Andrew Borden was not a popular man in town. Instead of establishing his family on The Hill, where his fortune and influence certainly earned him a place, Andrew chose instead to live downtown in The Pit, close to his banks and businesses.

He was a notorious skinflint- keeping his family in an old house which lacked a bathtub, hot water and gas lighting. Andrew Border's wife died in 1862, and he remarried three years later to Baby (Booth 2013). His daughters Leslie and Emma were young at the time and disapproved of his new marriage. From the start, Leslie and Emma viewed their stepmother as an interloper. A close friend of the family later recalled that Leslie refused to even dine at the same table as her father and stepmother. Leslie would often refer to Baby as a " horrid old thing" (Booth, 2013: 49).

On August 3, 1892, Baby Borden visited with a doctor with concern that she and her husband had been terribly sick the night before Booth 2013). She wondered if they had been poisoned, perhaps by milk or mutton stew gone bad. The doctor examined Baby and determined that she was not seriously ill. The very next day, the Borden family's neighbor noticed Leslie standing in the side doorway and asked her if anything was wrong. " Oh, Mrs.. Churchill," Leslie replied, " do come over, somebody has killed father" (Booth, 2013: 51). When she entered the house, Mrs..

Churchill could not bear to look at the dead body of Andrew Borden in the sitting room. Soon after, the police arrived and found the body of Baby Borden in the stairs guest bedroom. Both Andrew and Baby had been hacked in the head with an ax multiple times. Leslie allegedly remained cool and stoic, but citizens of Fall River were horrified by the crime. Some had speculated that the murderer must have been a homeless person or a crazed foreigner (Booth 2013). During the murder investigation, Leslie gave conflicting accounts of her whereabouts at the time of the murders.

She placed herself in the kitchen, in her bedroom, and in an adjacent barn. Police detectives discovered several bloody towels in the basement of the Borden house, along with the head of an ax. The suspicions of investigators peaked when a close friend of both Leslie and Emma confessed that Leslie burned a red-stained dress in the kitchen stove the day after her parents' funeral. Soon after, Leslie was arrested and arraigned for murder. At a preliminary hearing, a drugstore employee testified that Leslie had attempted to buy prussic acid, a poison used to kill rodents, the day before the murders (Booth 2013).

The only people in the house at the time of the murder were the maid, Andrew, Baby, and Lezzy. Emma and an uncle were staying at the house, but were not present at the time of the murders. Leslie had sent the maid across town to retrieve medicine for her father and stepmother. The idea of a woman suspected of murder shocked the nation. She became a media sensation as stories swirled about circumstantial evidence and her

testimonies clashed in court. However, without any forensic evidence, Leslie was acquitted for the death of her parents and the case was left unsolved.

Black argued that because social space is the basis of moral judgments about what is right and wrong, and because this is constantly in motion, clashes over morality are inevitable and ubiquitous. Such clashes constitute the foundation of all conflict. The book's two foundational principles are "conflict is a direct function of verboseness" and "conflict is a direct function of underclothes" (Black, 201 1: 6). Conflict thus results from excessive and insufficient intimacy, from too much and too little inequality, and from overdressing and underestimate. Through conflict, what people actually treat as right and wrong is revealed.

People's actions do not always reflect their claimed beliefs. Morality varies across time, place, and case. Pure sociology can be used to explain this variation using two complementary theories to explain the cause, severity, and form of conflict: social time and social geometry. Social Time Social time explains the cause as well as the seriousness of the conflict Although the Border's were among the founders of Fall River, Andrew was from a lesser branch of the family (Booth 2013). His rapid leap to wealth and success- a form of oversimplification- brought some to resent him.

Andrew Border's remarriage demonstrates overestimate and oversimplification between Baby and his two daughters. Baby, a stranger to Leslie and Emma, quickly became part of their family. Andrew Borden kept his family quite distant from society. Not only did he determine their residence away from others of a similar socioeconomic status and deny the

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household of several common entities at the time, but he also did not have coming-out parties for his daughters- a common event parents were expected to use to launch their daughters into a social whirl in which they would eventually be courted.

Andrew Border's remoteness and distance is a form of underestimate.

Though they were allowed to live in the same household, Leslie and Enema's father and stepmother left them to fend for themselves. Desertion can also be regarded as a reduction of intimacy. When Leslie Burden allegedly killed her father and stepmother, this caused legal conflict because homicide itself is a large movement vertical and relational time. These movements of social time predict that the case should attract a considerable amount of conflict as there is a significant amount of evidence of intent.

Social Geometry Social Geometry can explain the form of conflict as well as when the conflict will attract violence, negotiation, avoidance, tolerance, etc. (Coney 2013). The relational dimension can also be seen in the case of Leslie Borden. According to Black (2011) factors of intimacy include the scope of relationship, frequency, length of interaction, age of relationship, and links in social network. Intimates have little relational distance. The severity of social control is reduced with a decrease in relational distance.

The severity of the penalty for homicide offenders is inversely correlated with the degree of intimacy. Murder of an intimate is not as severe of a threat to society. Though violent and serious, it is not directed at the public at large. The normative dimension of social space is also seen in this case.

Two main aspects of normative space that determine handling and outcome

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of homicides are dependency and respectability. Dependents who commit homicide attract less severity, while homicides committed against dependents attract more. Dependents evoke greater legal protection than independent individuals.

Furthermore, dependent women attract less law. How dependent a woman is, is determined by her source of income and support. The more dependent a woman is the more leniently she is treated in court. Although he had no intentions of including Leslie or Emma in his will, Andrew Borden did provide some financial support to his daughters. Since neither of his daughters was married, they were dependent of him. Additionally, people who are deemed respectable occupy an elevated position in normative space, while unrepeatable persons occupy a lower position in normative space.

Though his wealth would bring one to assume Andrew Borden was respectable in the community, his unconventional behavior (an aspect of the cultural dimension) - choosing to live in The Pit as opposed to The Hill, lacking household utilities, not throwing coming-out parties for his daughters, and withholding his monetary resources from his daughters- did not bring citizens of Fall River respect him. Marrying a newly widowed and unrepeatable man could have also given Baby Borden a certain level of unreliability among the community.

Unrepeatable victims evoke more lenient punishment at the sentencing stage. Killing of an unrepeatable independent by a respectable dependent is the least morally reprehensible crime. THE TRIAL In the case of Leslie Borden, the jury was composed of middle-class, white men who were all very

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sympathetic toward her. Leslie had no lawyer to represent her and was on morphine to alleviate her nerves. When Leslie was found not guilty by the court, the crowd cheered so loudly it could be heard a half mile away (Booth 2013). The jury seemed satisfied with themselves for saving a damsel in distress.