

**Violent Touch:  
*Breaking Through the Stereotype.***



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# **Violent Touch: Breaking Through the Stereotype.**

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## **Preface**

At times people ask me why I became interested in the topic of male victims of domestic violence. Is it because I personally experienced domestic violence in my life or have I known a close male friend or male family member who has been a victim of domestic violence? The answer to both of these questions is, *no*. I became interested in this topic quite by accident.

In 1990 I became the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) manager for the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), with my office in Sacramento. Our EAP is an internal program, which means that I actually work within the department directly serving approximately 4,600 state employees. The EAP confidentially assists employees with personal or work related issues, in the hope that by doing so it will reduce job performance problems.

Educationally, I did my undergraduate work at U.C. Davis in the early 70s. In 1980 I married my first and current wife. I then received my Master's of Science degree in Counseling from California State University of Sacramento (CSUS) in 1983. In the early 90s, I started thinking about getting my doctoral degree in psychology. In 1994 I began my doctoral program at the Professional School of Psychology in Sacramento. Like most doctoral students, I had to start thinking early about the focus of my dissertation. Dissertations are usually original research. Initially, I was leaning toward doing something in the area of the Employee Assistance Program, but got redirected by an unexpected visit from one of our CDSS employees.

About eighty percent of the calls I receive from employees are self-referrals. This means employees call because they know we are there to help them with their personal or work related problems. Usually, they are not in trouble with their supervisors or managers, nor facing any formal corrective action. But about twenty percent of the calls I receive are Formal EAP Referrals, which means that the manager is concerned about some aspect of their employee's job performance or behavior. As a departmental policy managers are required to formally refer these employees to EAP for help when there is a job performance or behavioral issue at work. In 1995 I received a call from one of our managers whose male employee was

missing more days at work than usual. When the manager questioned his employee, he said he was having “family problems.” The manager made a Formal EAP Referral to my office.

Several days later when I opened my office door to the employee, I was greeted by a six-foot young man. I invited him to share with me what was going on in his life that was making him have to take so many days off from work. He hung his head down and in a soft-spoken voice began to share the concern he had about his wife’s physical discipline of their two young children. She would spank them in anger and it would leave bruises. A few days later he brought his two children into my office. The children showed me bruises over most of their backs. They told me that their mother had done this to them. I contacted Child Protective Services, the agency that investigates these kinds of situations. During the course of working with this young man, *I asked him something I don’t believe I ever asked a man before.* I asked him if his wife ever hit *him*. When a woman comes into my office and tells me she and her husband are having major conflicts between them, I will typically ask her if he ever pushed or hit her. And if a man said the same thing I would ask him if he ever pushed or hit his wife. But, I never asked the woman if she ever hit her husband or boyfriend, nor did I ever ask the man if he was hit by his wife or girlfriend. This experience made me aware of my own bias when it comes to domestic violence. I tended to view women as victims and men as perpetrators of domestic violence. After all, this is what I have been taught in the presentations and workshops that focus on this topic of domestic violence.

In the weeks and months after this experience I made a conscious decision to ask men the same questions I would typically ask women about their experiences with domestic violence. I had a number of men begin to share with me their stories of abuse at the hands of their female partners. They seemed very embarrassed to talk about it. I have worked with a number of female victims of domestic violence over the years. What stuck me about the stories these men were telling were that they were so hauntingly similar to the stories I had heard for years from women who were abused. At times I thought I could close my eyes and think I was listening to a female victim instead of a male. Over the next few months I referred these men to local domestic violence shelters and centers for help. When I did my follow-up calls to find out if they got the help they needed, they all told me one of two things in response. Either the shelters and centers never returned their calls, or they were told by the workers that they really don’t have services for male victims of domestic violence. What I have learned since then is that a number of shelters will work with male victims, but it is by *accident*, not by *focus*. In other words, if a male victim *happens* to show up at their door they will try to help him, but they have no *active outreach* program or services specifically set up with the male victim in mind. Some of the men felt they were treated at these shelters and centers more with suspect than respect.

As an EAP manager it is my job to find resources for *all* of my employees who need help in some area of their lives, regardless of their gender. This experience frustrated me since I didn't see these men getting the help they really needed. It was this experience that led me to consider doing my doctoral dissertation on the topic of male victims of domestic violence. Little did I know how controversial this topic would be in some quarters. I was soon to find out. For the next three years I went to domestic violence conferences, domestic violence shelters, read many articles from around the world on the subject, talked or corresponded with other researchers, and talked to a good number of male victims who were so glad someone was willing to hear their story. What I learned is that these men were ashamed to talk about their experiences, and were afraid that, if they left their intimate partners, the family court system would still give primary physical custody of the children to their abusive wives. That was a chance these men could not take, so they remained in the abusive relationship in pain, shame, and often deep silence.

*Violent Touch: Breaking Through the Stereotype* is a summary paper of much of what I wrote in my 188 page doctoral dissertation, which can be purchased from Bell and Howell Information and Learning (formerly UMI) by calling 1-800-521-0600 or [www.umi.com](http://www.umi.com). *Violent Touch* shares a lot of statistics and charts that will be useful to better understand the truth about domestic violence. During my dissertation research my eyes were open to this very serious problem of male victims of domestic violence, and I received a more complete picture of what is really going on in partner conflict, as well as the often mutuality of abuse. I hope by reading this paper you will also expand your view of this important topic, and request appropriate changes in domestic violence centers, public policy, and current laws.

## Introduction

Over the past twenty-five years increasing interest has been directed toward the topic of domestic violence against women by their male partners. Forty to fifty years ago few people wanted to discuss spousal abuse in this country. Arrests by law enforcement of people in the general public were avoided when they involved couples in the home. In the early seventies some courageous women who were physically assaulted by their male partners did begin to speak to others about their painful secret. Feminists groups rallied around these women and gave them a voice and political power to encourage legislators and community leaders to focus more attention on this issue. These feminists became strong advocates for these women and were slowly joined by concerned politicians and civic leaders. As a result, funding and services for women and their children were established to help rebuild their lives (VAWA, 1994). Although these feminists have helped thousands of women escape abuse by their male partners, I have come to see that they have addressed only half of the problem.

In general feminists, especially *gender feminists* as compared to *equity feminists* (Hoff-Sommers, 1994), are primarily, if not exclusively, interested in showcasing the maltreatment of women by men in society, and are not particularly interested in showcasing the maltreatment of men by women, especially in the area of spousal abuse and child abuse. When they do discuss spousal or child abuse they try to place the primary blame and therefore responsibility for the abuse at the feet of men, highlighting the problem of living in a patriarchal society which oppresses women. As John Archer (2000, p. 651) puts it, "The feminist view regard partner violence as a consequence of patriarchy, and it therefore follows that it largely involves male perpetrators." Feminists also suggest that either women are abusing male partners primarily in self-defense, or that women abuse children only because of abuse they have first received from their male partners. I heard one speaker go so far as to suggest that child abuse would end if women were safe from the abuse of men. As a result of these beliefs, the only domestic violence discourse we hear from gender feminists is the abuse which happens to females by males and not the other way around. Yet, what if there were a significant number of male victims of domestic violence by women not done in self-defense? Who might these men be and how many of them are there out there in the general population?

In this paper I make a distinction between the terms **domestic violence**, **domestic abuse**, and **sexual assault**. Definitions are very important when we discuss this topic. As Murray Straus (1990) points out, the motivations and consequences of the violence may be important, but should not be included in the operational definition of violence. For the purposes of this paper, the definition for *domestic violence* covers only that form of abuse which is non-sexual yet physical in nature. It is an act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to one's spouse or domestic partner. The definition of

*domestic abuse* not only includes physical assault, but can also include verbal, emotional, psychological, financial, and other forms of non-physical abuse. The definition of *sexual assault* addresses issues of rape, sexual acts against another's will, and assaults of a sexual nature such as sexual mutilation or injury to sexual organs in either men or women.

### **Wife Abuse**

The reality of spousal abuse goes back centuries. It was recorded as far back as 2500 BC. One ancient law instructed husbands to engrave the name of their "verbally" abusive wife on a brick that would then be used to knock out her teeth (Steinmetz, 1980, p. 335). Sir William Blackstone wrote of ancient law that a man be given power to chastise, *without physical violence*, his wife as one would chastise his children. He reminded his readers that "...the husband was prohibited from using any violence to his wife." (Sommers, 1994, p. 205) A husband was given this authority because at the time he was legally and financially responsible for the actions of both his *wife* and children.

Two Southern American judges made mention of an earlier law that gave a husband permission to beat his wife with an implement that was no bigger than his thumb. It should be noted that both of these judges did not support this law. It should also be mentioned that there have been laws against wife beating in America before the Revolutionary war, and that the origin of the term "rule of thumb" *did not* originate from this early law for beating a wife, but from wood workers who used their thumb as a measuring tool (Sommers, 1994, pp. 204-208). Nevertheless, it did appear that these two judges *tolerated* the idea that husbands could use some level of *physical* chastisement against their wives. History has told us that a number of husbands have been given social permission to physically chastise their wives. Over recent years we have been trying to send a clear message to husbands that such behavior is not only wrong, but also criminal. Wife abuse has been with us for thousands of years.

### **Wife Abuse Compared to Husband Abuse**

The data tell us that women are murdered by husbands and boyfriends at a higher rate than husbands are by their wives. In 1992 and 1994 the U.S. Department of Justice reported that females are two times more likely to be murdered by husbands and boyfriends than husbands are by wives and girlfriends. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1995, NCJ-154348, p. 3, 1996, NCJ-162602, p. 2) In 1998 the U.S. Department of Justice estimated that women are almost three times more likely to be murdered by their intimate partners than men are by their intimate partners. In 1996 1,326 (72%) female victims were murdered compared to 516 (28%) male victims, a figure which includes same-sex partners (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998, NCJ-167237, p. 37). Warren Farrell (1999, p. 151) makes some interesting comments concerning these kinds of statistics. He raises the point that women are more likely

to kill their partners with poison, or by hiring a hit man or persuading a boyfriend to do the killing for them. These last two approaches would be captured by the FBI statistics as *multiple-offender killings* vs. intimate partner killings. Ferrell found that there are four times more multiple-offender killings of husbands than wives. We may therefore find that more men that are killed by their female partners, but in more indirect ways such as hiring a hit man or persuading a boyfriend to do the *dirty* work. Looking only at the statistics that report intimate partner murders would therefore not give us an accurate picture.

Nevertheless, the 1985 National Family Violence Survey suggests that 33% more wives than husbands were beaten up by their spouses (Straus & Gelles, 1986, p. 471). The National Violence Against Women Survey found that 8.5% of women reported having been *beaten up* compared to 0.6% of men who reported the same (Tjaden, P. & Thoennes, N., 1998, p. 7). The U. S. National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) states that women are ten times more likely to be raped than men (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993, Table 2). These statistics suggest that women are still more likely to be raped and physically beaten by their partners than men. **Of course, this information is of little consolation to the men who are murdered or physically beaten by their wives or girlfriends every year.**

### **What About Husband Abuse?**

Is the abuse of men by their female partners therefore worthy of public concern? There are historical records of husband-beating, which suggest that husbands who were beaten by their wives not only experienced the shame of the beating, but also public humiliation and condemnation for not “controlling” their wives better.

**“In France, a husband who allowed his wife to beat him was made to wear an outlandish outfit, ride backwards around the village on a donkey while holding onto the tail.”** (George, 1994, p. 137)

This is how one woman justified her attack on her husband:

**“I know I was stronger than him, when he was drunk that is, so I gave him a good shove and kick-whatever I could kick- I didn’t aim. And then he’d end up on the floor and I’d beat the daylights out of him.”** (Steinmetz, 1980, p. 336)

### **Can Women Show Aggressive Behavior?**

Although aggression may have instinctual roots, the method of displaying aggression “appears to be learned behavior.” (Steinmetz, 1980, p 334) A group of researchers reviewed 72 studies that measure aggressive behavior in both men and women. They found that nearly *two-thirds* of the studies “did not show the expected higher male than female aggressiveness across all conditions” (Frodi et al., 1977, p. 634). They also found that when women feel an aggressive act is *justified*, and they

receive *permission* from society to assault, there is little gender difference in the incidents of aggressive behavior between the sexes (Frodi et al., 1977, p. 647).

Is testosterone the cause of male aggression? Is aggressive behavior gender-specific or hormonally-based? Patricia Pearson (1997), who has done extensive study of female aggression, looks at the role of the male hormone testosterone and its influence on aggressive behavior. She states that the research to date is “utterly inconclusive on the influence of male hormones on violence.” She goes on to say that one of the major methodology flaws in testosterone research is that the men who are usually tested are prison inmates. This fact is important because “testosterone, like adrenaline, increases in people exposed to conflict” (p. 8). Prison settings typically are environments full of perceived or real conflict. Pearson also mentions that there are elevated levels of testosterone in female prisoners. Although she raises an interesting point, it does not completely rule out the idea that higher levels of testosterone in either males or females raise the level of aggressive behavior. One can speculate that a large number of prisoners came from an environment that also exposes them to conflict on the streets and in neighborhoods where they live.

Sapolsky (1997) has studied the effects of testosterone in the body, and has found that if someone is *already* aggressive, testosterone will increase aggressive behavior but does not cause it. He explained that giving higher levels of testosterone to a man who is not normally aggressive does not radically change him into an aggressive man. In recent years there have been some surprising studies that challenge the concept that aggression in men is a result of high levels of testosterone. Cook (1997) writes that the 1995 conference of the Endocrine Society produced papers “contending that a deficiency of the ‘male’ hormone testosterone was more likely to produce aggressive behavior, not high levels of the androgen.” Another study found that the female hormone estrogen “was a source of aggressive tendencies” (p. 33). What new scientific research may be finding is that *any imbalance* of testosterone or estrogen may lead to higher levels of aggression in *both* males and females who are *predisposed* to aggress. This finding may place the discussion of aggression more in the area of choice, childhood trauma, head trauma, and hormonal imbalance in both men and women, rather than simply being a *male problem*. Research also shows that approximately 60% of women who are arrested for assaulting their husbands had prior criminal records (Jurik, 1989; Jurik & Gregware, 1989).

### **Is There a Double Standard for Domestic Violence?**

Are women also given social permission to “physically chastise” their husbands or boyfriends for behaving badly? This author heard a fourteen year old young woman tell her boyfriend who had made a sarcastic remark: “If you don’t stop that I’ll kick you where it really hurts!” She gave herself permission to threaten



sexual assault against her boyfriend for what he *said*. It is tragic that injuring a man's reproductive system in the movies is seen as comic relief and engenders laughter by the audience.

The following matrix demonstrates how we tend to treat men and women differently when it comes to expressions of anger and aggression.

**Anger and Aggression Matrix:**

	<b>Aggressive Behavior</b>	<b>Angry Emotion</b>
<b>in Women</b>	Are we more likely to <u>excuse</u> a woman's aggressive behavior because we try to justify the anger behind the aggression?	Are we more likely to <u>accept</u> the reasons for a woman's anger as justified?
<b>in Men</b>	Are we more likely to <u>not excuse</u> a man's aggressive behavior because we discount the anger behind the aggression?	Are we more likely to <u>not accept</u> the reasons for a man's anger as justified?

**Permission to Physically Chastise**

Dr. Richard Gelles quotes one female respondent in his study as saying:

**“He would just yell and yell - not yell, just talk loudly, and I couldn't say anything because he kept talking, so I'd swing.”** (Steinmetz, 1978, p. 504)

When women give themselves permission to physically chastise or retaliate against their husbands, they give the message to their spouses *and* children that violence is allowed in their home. This is a wrong and dangerous message. The painful truth is that a number of mothers, as well as fathers, may be increasing the risk of their children becoming adult perpetrators in the next generation.

Pearson (1997) writes that the most well documented cause of domestic violence for both men and women stems from transfer of learned violence from one generation to the next. She writes that learning violence from parents and siblings has a far stronger influence on a boy or girl than gender conditioning. Pearson also mentions two studies (Langhinrich-Rohling, J. et al, 1995 and Malone & Tyree, 1991) which found that boys and girls who are abused by their fathers are more likely to become victims of domestic violence in their adult lives, whereas those who are abused by their mothers are more likely to become perpetrators of domestic violence

in their adult lives. Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al. (1995) speculate that this is because “fathers may teach children how to respond to authority,” resulting in learned helplessness, and “mothers may be more responsible than fathers to teach their children about how to resolve differences and handle conflict” (p. 173) by engaging in violence to resolve conflicts. Pearson supports this theory by saying that men may be more likely to instill submission in their children, which can contribute to their victimization as adults, while mothers who are abusive toward their children may be more likely to instill aggression as a means of communication with others. If this is true, it is significant because most of the physical abuse of children is directed toward boys, and more often by their mothers or female adults. We then wonder why some men have issues of anger toward females when they grow up. All of this suggest that there is a strong link between child abuse and domestic violence. Other researchers also support the concept that child abuse sets the foundation for future adult violence (Karr-Morse & Wiley, 1997). Mothers as well as fathers may need to be seen as a major contributor to the growing number of perpetrators of domestic violence in the next generation.

### **What Does the Research Say About Domestic Violence?**

Researchers use different methods to study a phenomenon. The two most commonly used for studying domestic violence are Archival Research and Survey Research. Both have advantages and limitations.

#### **Archival Research:**

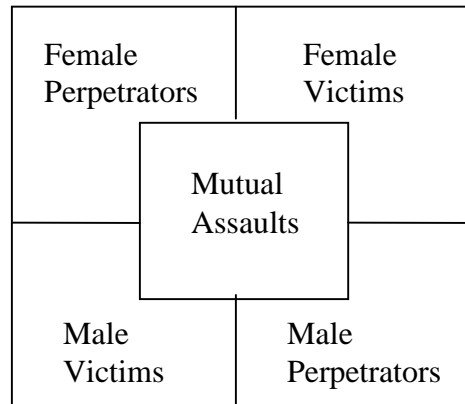
- ❖ **Archival advantages** are that the data is easy to obtain, usually investigated by a third party, and generally low cost to collect.
- ❖ **Archival limitations** are that the data usually comes from specialized or clinical sources that may not represent the total population under study, may have system-collecting biases, and only records that which has been reported.

#### **Randomized Survey Research:**

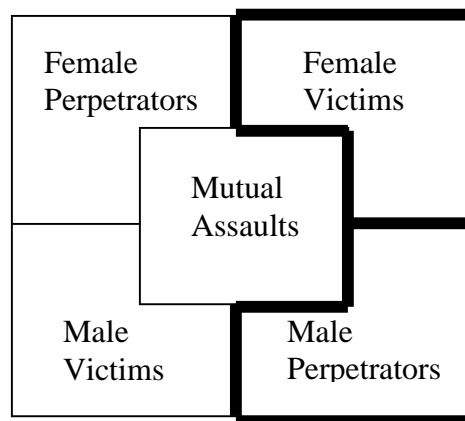
- ❖ **Survey advantages** are that the data is collected from a randomized sample of the entire population, gathers information that is often not reported in archival reports, is typically anonymous, and the results are more generalizable.
- ❖ **Survey limitations** are that the sample size may not be large enough, may not resemble that kind of population that is being studied, may not ask specific enough questions, and the respondent may not be telling the complete truth.

Before we look at the difference between archival and survey research, it would be good for us to take a closer look at the populations we need to study with regard to domestic violence research. There are five different areas of the overall population on which we need to focus on.

## Domestic Violence Population Matrix:



This matrix shows the five possible population samples that can be studied in domestic violence research. The problem, as we will see, is that most of the archival research and even a few survey studies focus only on one or two of these sample areas or *clinical populations*. For example, since most domestic violence shelters and centers primarily reach out to *female* victims of domestic violence, the sample population from these centers and shelters will be primarily female victims, and therefore the data primarily collected will focus on female victims and not male victims. If one is interested in collecting data concerning perpetrators of domestic violence, but gets this information only by going to “Batterers Intervention Programs” (BIPs), which are primarily set up for *male* perpetrators, the data collected primarily will deal with male perpetrators and not female perpetrators. The problem is that some advocates then make global generalizations based on these *clinical* samples, which can be very misleading. The advantage of good *survey* research is that it tries to cover *all* of the five population areas found in the matrix, thereby giving a more complete and global picture of what is really going on in the general population. It also allows us to make more powerful generalizations about these populations, which we cannot do with archival data. The black boarder areas are those that we have historically studied. We need to expand our research to the other areas as well. We will find that most domestic violence is actually mutual in nature.



**The following statistical information is not meant to stop giving attention to female victims of domestic violence, as some fear it will. I support the honest and real efforts of those who have helped thousands of women who have been assaulted by their partners. The data is meant to complete the picture of domestic abuse research. It will suggest that domestic violence is far from a gender-specific event, and represents a family system collapse that needs our full attention.**

Let's start our investigation by looking at what archival data tell us about domestic violence.

### **Archival Data on Domestic Violence**

What do archival data tell us about male victims of domestic violence?

Today when one reads a domestic violence flier or listens to a presentation from a woman's shelter, and the topic of male victims is mentioned, the figure of 5 percent is commonly used with reference to male abuse. Archival data in the 70's suggest this figure.

Some Research Sources	Percentage of Male Victims of Domestic Violence
❖ 1981 San Diego Association of Governments	6.0%
❖ 1979 Detroit Police Department	7.0%
❖ 1978 Dobash and Dobash	1.5%
❖ 1978 Byles	5.0%
❖ 1978 Lenore Walker	1.5%
❖ 1976 Monroe County (New York) Police Department (McLeod, 1984, pp. 172-173)	10.0%

The average is about 5% male victims. Yet, the research is *over* 15 years old. What does more current archival data tell us about domestic violence?

### **Current Archival Data**

**Los Angeles Police Department:** (Bennett, 1997, p. 5)

Year	# of Women Arrested	% of Women Arrested	# of Men Arrested	% of Men Arrested
❖ 1995	1,262	<b><u>14.3%</u></b>	7,513	<b><u>85.7%</u></b>
❖ 1994	1,079	12.5%	7,580	87.5%
❖ 1993	941	10.7%	7,856	89.3%
❖ 1992	732	9.0%	7,426	91.0%
❖ 1991	669	8.3%	7,425	91.7%
❖ 1990	519	6.7%	7,277	93.3%
❖ 1989	501	7.2%	6,492	92.8%
❖ 1988	457	7.6%	5,583	92.4%
❖ 1987	340	<b><u>7.0%</u></b>	4,540	<b><u>93.0%</u></b>

This data indicate that there has been a steady rise in female arrests for domestic violence, from 7% (1987) to 14% (1995).

In Sacramento the arrest rate for male batterers has *decreased* from 3,147 arrests in 1991 to 2,922 arrests in 1996. The rate has actually *increased* for female offenders, almost doubling from 245 in 1991 to 469 in 1996. In 1991 7% of the arrests for domestic violence were of women. In 1996 this figure rose to 14%. Mareva Brown writes that, according to Sacramento's lead domestic abuse prosecutor, Kate Killeen, "few women are arrested in error," (Brown, Dec. 7, 1997).

### **California Department of Justice:**

Year	Arrests Reports				
	Total	Male Arrests	%	Female Arrests	%
❖ 1995	60,279	52,394	87%	7,885	<b>13%</b>
❖ 1994	56,919	50,473	89%	6,446	11%
❖ 1993	50,982	46,063	90%	4,919	10%
❖ 1992	49,547	45,349	92%	4,198	8%
❖ 1991	45,677	42,318	93%	3,359	7%

(California Dept. of Justice, 1997, special run)

This data indicate that the arrest rate in California for female batterers has again nearly **doubled** in five years, with a steady rise in percentage rates of female arrests for domestic violence from 7% (1991) to **13%** (1995).

### **Male Victimization Rising**

This research suggests that the arrest rates for female perpetrators of domestic violence has doubled in the past 5 to 8 years, a fact which one rarely hears from shelters or the domestic violence centers. The Detroit News, April 20, 1997, reported that "...analysis of crime data collected by the Michigan State Police shows that men were victims in nearly *20 percent* of all domestic abuse cases reported in 1995 in Michigan." The latest Petaluma City, California police department statistics show that 33% of the arrests for domestic violence in a twelve month period were of women (Manthey, 1999). Today's "archival data" suggest that the number of male victims who report domestic violence is closer to 15%, or as high as 30-35 percent, not 5% as some still report in the domestic violence literature and presentations.

The 1995 U.S. Department of Justice report suggests that males still make up a much greater percentage of aggravated assaults overall in crime: 83% for men and 17% for women. What is interesting is that the percentage increase for women has grown faster than for men (FBI: Uniform Crime Reports, 1995, Table 35).

## The Uniform Crime Reports

### Percentage Increase From 1991 to 1995

Offense Charged	Total		Under 18	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Arson:	3%	<b><u>27%</u></b>	15%	<b><u>70%</u></b>
Aggravated Assault:	4%	<b><u>37%</u></b>	6%	<b><u>39%</u></b>
Weapons, carrying, possessing, etc.:	2%	<b><u>13%</u></b>	11%	<b><u>42%</u></b>
Offenses against family and children:	35%	<b><u>62%</u></b>	54%	<b><u>77%</u></b>

(FBI: Uniform Crime Reports, 1995, Table 35)

The **U.S. Department of Justice's** Uniform Crime Reports do not collect specific information on how many of the total number of arrests for aggravated assaults were for domestic violence. We only know that a total of 360,522 men were arrested for some type of aggravated assault, and 77,635 women were also arrested for some type of aggravated assault in 1995 in the U.S. (FBI: Uniform Crime Reports, 1995, Table 42).

### **Archival Limitations:**

1. Archival data come from specialized and clinical sources, such as police arrest reports, hospital case records, agency collected data, and domestic violence centers case reports. Men may be less likely than women to report to such agencies. **Lenore Walker**, who has written extensively about battered women, shares the limitations of her own studies when she writes, "These women were not randomly selected, and they cannot be considered a legitimate data base from which to make specific generalizations." (Walker, 1979, p. xiii) Unfortunately, few domestic violence advocates or women's groups have taken her warning or advice.
2. Archival data can be compromised by reporting or system biases. In a study by the Kentucky Commission on Women, Straus writes that researchers "intentionally suppressed" information that "38% of attacks were by women on men who, *as reported by women themselves*, had not attacked them," (Straus, 1997, p. 212). In the latest Alberta, Ontario study, only the statistics which pertained to female victims of domestic violence were presented to the Ontario government. They showed that 12.9% of the men in the study behaved violently toward their spouse. It has recently been noted that the study also showed that **12.5%** of the women behaved violently toward their spouses. The study indicated that women were almost twice as likely to "hit or try to hit" their spouses, 9.0% of the wives compared to 5.4% of the husbands. The government officials *never* saw these statistics, but nonetheless authorized \$858,000 for an "advertising campaign featuring the slogan *Wife assault is a crime. There's no excuse.*" (Laframboise, 1999)

3. Archival data only record that which has been **reported**. If a segment of the general population is less likely to report the data to archival centers, the results are likely to be skewed and incomplete. This is especially important with domestic violence statistics, since we will find that men are about eight times *less* likely to report their victimization than are women.

**Presenting Archival Data:**

Archival Data			
Female Victims	Male Victims		
87%	13%		
473,000*	71,500*		

(\* The U.S. Uniform Crime Reports do not collect the number of male and female domestic violence arrests. The California Department of Justice does collect domestic violence arrests cases. The above data was calculated by using the California percentages and the U.S. Census numbers for married couples to get an approximation of domestic violence arrests in the U.S.)

We next look at what *randomized survey data* tell us about domestic violence.

**Survey Data:**

**The U.S. Department of Justice’s**

**“National Crime Victimization Survey” (NCVS).**

1973-1975 averages: 3.9 per 1,000 women reported being assaulted by their partners, and 0.3 per 1,000 men reported being assaulted by their partners. This means that 94% of reported victims were female and **6%** of reported victims were male. (Gaquin, 1978, p. 636)

1987-1991 averages: 5.4 per 1,000 women reported being assaulted by their partners, and 0.5 per 1,000 men reported being assaulted by their partners. This means that 91% of reported victims were female and **9%** of reported victims were male. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ-154348)

1992-1993 averages: The NCVS was *redesigned* in 1992 to better capture more domestic violence data. The 1992-1993 NCVS shows that 9.4 per 1,000 (0.94%) (less than 1%) of women reported being assaulted by their partners, and that 1.4 per 1,000 (or 0.14%) of men reported being assaulted by their partners. This means that 87% of reported victims were female and **13%** of reported victims were male. The NCVS

shows the same increase in male victims of domestic violence from 6% in 1975 to 13% in 1993, as found in archival data. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ-154348)

The 1996 NCVS indicated that 7.5 per 1,000 (.75%) of women were assaulted (still less than 1%), and that 1.4 per 1,000 (.14%) of men were assaulted, slightly greater than one tenth of one percent. Although this survey shows an increase in the percentage rates for both women and men, the projected numbers for men triples (from 48,983 to 147,896), while for women the rate less than doubled (from 572,032 to 837,899). These numbers are loaded by formula. To unload these numbers, dividing them by 1,500 will give the actual number of survey cases. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ-167237) This means that 85% of reported victims were female and **15%** of reported victims were male. The U.S. Bureau of the Census estimated that in 1996 there was 54 million married couples in the U.S. Using the percentages in the NCVS for 1996 would translate into 405,000 wives (84%) and 75,600 husbands (16%) being abused by their spouses in the U.S.

The National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that there has been a steady rise in the percentage of male victims of domestic violence, from 6% in 1975 to **15%** in 1996. This is what the U.S. Department of Justice says:

“More than 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend occur each year, and about 85% of the victims are female.” (Bureau of Justice Statistics Factbook, 1998, NCJ-167237)

The rest of the victims are males (15%).

#### **Limitations of the NCVS:**

1. The NCVS interviewed the couples together, which may make a wife or husband reluctant to respond honestly about his/her abuse.
2. The NCVS is presented to respondents as a “Crime Survey.” People may only report domestic violence if it is very severe or chronic, and thereby consider it more of a crime to report on the NCVS.

This may explain why the percentage of reported domestic violence in the NCVS is *so small*, less than **1%** for women and **0.2%** for men who report being victims of domestic violence. These percentages project to about **840,000 women and 150,000 men** in the U.S. who reported being assaulted by their spouse. Although the percentage difference between men and women (**85%** female victims and **15%** male victims) is much like the archival data, it also shows a much smaller number of female victims than most advocates report. This may be why most projected numbers used in domestic violence literature come from survey data *other* than the NCVS, often from research that uses the Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS) developed at the Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire.



### Presenting Archival and NCVS Data:

Archival Data and the NCVS			
Female Victims	Male Victims		
85-87%	13-15%		
473,000-840,000	71,500-150,000		

**“But I’ve heard that there are 2 to 4 million women, not 840,000 women, who are assaulted every year by their husbands, and that the FBI reports that every 9 to 15 seconds a wife is assaulted in our country. Where do these figures come from?”**

They come from the **Family Research Laboratory (FRL)** at the University of New Hampshire, founded in 1975, Dr. Murray Straus, co-director. FRL developed the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), a 7-point, 19-item questionnaire designed to assess individual responses to specific situations within the family involving conflict (Touliatos, Perlmutter, & Straus, 1990).

In its first national study National Family Violence Survey (NFVS) as expected, showed a significant number of women, **12.1%**, reported some level of physical assault against them by their husbands or boyfriends, **twelve** times greater than the 0.75% of women who reported being physically abused in the U.S. Government study (NCVS). What was *unexpected* was that the physical abuse rate against husbands by their wives was nearly the same, **11.6%**. Straus readily acknowledges that NFVS captures percentage rates of assaults, **not** the level of **injury** the victim sustains, **nor** instances where the assault was done in **self-defense**.

### **2 Million Women Assaulted:**

Based on this study Straus applied the percentage rate of reported attacks for *severe* abuse against wives, 3.8% (levels N-R), to the estimated population of couples at the time of the report, 47 million in 1975. He states, **“Applying this incidence rate to approximately 47 million couples in the United States means that, in any one year, approximately 1.8 million wives are beaten by their husbands.”** (Straus, 1977, p. 445) He includes kicking, biting, and hitting with something in the category of *“beaten.”* This is where the **2 million** figure comes from that domestic violence advocates report.

### **Every 15 Seconds a Woman is Assaulted:**

The FBI derived this estimate from the book “Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family,” by Richard Gelles, Murray Straus and Suzanne Steinmetz. (Gelles, 1995, p. 1)

❖ Actually the figure is every **17.7 seconds** a woman is severely assaulted.

**This is the Formula:**

3.8% severe assault rate against the wife by her husband.

47 million couples in the U.S. in 1975.

31,536,000 seconds in a year.

3.8% (0.038) X 47 million = 1,786,000 women assaulted in 1975.

31,536,000 divided by 1,786,000 = **17.7 seconds**

**But Every 15 Seconds a Man is also Assaulted by His Wife.**

**Formula:**

4.6% severe assault rate against the husband by the wife.

47 million couples in the U.S. in 1975.

31,536,000 seconds in a year.

4.6% (0.046) X 47 million = 2,162,000 men assaulted in 1975. Two million men severely assaulted every year.

31,536,000 divided by 2,162,000 = **14.6 seconds**

(Straus, 1978, p. 446)

Based on the same research survey a man is assaulted by his wife every  
**15 seconds.**

If you count all assaultive behavior, which includes minor assaults, 12.1% for women and 11.6% for men, a **woman** is assaulted every **6 seconds** in this country, but a **man** is also assaulted every **6 seconds** in this country.

**Assault Time Frame:**

This is what the NFVS data showed.

**For 1975:**

- ❖ Every 18 seconds a woman is severely assaulted by her husband.
  - ❖ Every 6 seconds a woman is assaulted by her husband in some manner.
- ❖ Every 15 seconds a man is severely assaulted by his wife.
  - ❖ Every 6 seconds a man is assaulted by his wife in some manner.

**For 1985:**

- ❖ Every 20 seconds a woman is severely assaulted by her husband.
  - ❖ Every 5 seconds a woman is assaulted by her husband in some manner.
- ❖ Every 15 seconds a man is severely assaulted by his wife.
  - ❖ Every 5 seconds a man is assaulted by his wife in some manner.

### The Commonwealth Fund Survey:

“The Commonwealth Fund states a woman is *beaten* every 9 seconds.” This comes from a **1993 National Survey of Women’s Health**. **8%** of the women reported that they were assaulted by their partners *in some manner*. Unlike the National Family Violence Survey from the University of New Hampshire, which only used **severe abuse** to come up with the 2 million wife abuse figure, the Women’s Health Survey’s calculation also included *minor* assaults, such as pushing and shoving and grabbing. Based on this percentage the survey estimated that **4.4 million** women were assaulted in this country every year. When calculated, this comes to nearly one woman physically abused every **nine seconds** by her spouse. (Plichta, 1996, p. 244)

### Comparing the Commonwealth Study with the two NFVS:

Assault by	1975 NFVS	1985 NFVS	Commonwealth Fund*
Husband on Wife:	5.7 million	6.1 million	4.4 million
Wife Assaulted Every:	<b>6 seconds</b>	<b>5 seconds</b>	<b>9 seconds</b>
Wife on Husband:	5.5 million	6.5 million	*
Husband Assaulted Every:	<b>6 seconds</b>	<b>5 seconds</b>	*

\* Although the Commonwealth Fund interviewed 1,000 men for its study on women’s health, *it chose not* to ask these men the questions that pertained to domestic violence.

It is not only the studies by Straus or Gelles or Steinmetz that suggest that men and women are physically abusing each other at nearly the same rate (a range of 35% to 65% male assault victims depending on the study.)

### Comparison of Survey Studies:

(Commonwealth Fund: Commission on Women’s Health, 1994)

	Male Assaults	Female Assaults
❖ National Probability Samples		
- Straus & Gelles (1990)	116 (48%)	124 (52%)
- Straus & Gelles (1986)	110 (48%)	120 (52%)
- Elliott et al. (1985)	268 (36%)	471 (64%)
- Straus et al. (1980)	121 (51%)	116 (49%)
❖ Local/State Probability Samples		
- Nisonoff & Bitman	160 (59%)	110 (41%)
❖ Nonprobability Local Samples		
- Makepeace (1983)	137 (59%)	93 (41%)
- Brutz & Ingoldby (1981)	146 (49%)	152 (51%)
- Makepeace (1981)	206 (63%)	120 (37%)
- Meredith et al. (1986)	220 (55%)	180 (45%)
- O’Leary & Arias (1988)	340 (45%)	420 (55%)
- Szinovacz (1987)	260 (46%)	300 (54%)
- Barling et al. (1987)	740 (50%)	730 (50%)
- Mason & Blankenship (1987)	18 (45%)	22 (55%)

(Commission on Women’s Health, 1994, p. 20)

Here we see the range of female physical abuse against heterosexual partners ranging from 37% to 64%. This is far greater than the 5% rate that archival sources or domestic violence presentations tell us. The overall average for these particular surveys shows that 51% of the assaults come from women and 49% of the assaults from men, which supports the statement that men and women are assaulting each other at the same rate. The National Probability Samples indicate that about 7% of men assault their female partners and 9% of women assault their male partners.

In a recent U.S. Government funded study 39% of the *men* reported being physically assaulted by an intimate partner. (Tjaden, P. & Thoennes, N., 1998) A comprehensive longitudinal study from New Zealand of 539 males and 498 females found that 34% of the males and 27% of the females reported intimate partner assault against them. This study suggests that, of the partner assaults, 58% were against men and 42% were against women. (Peterson, K., 1999) This all supports what most survey research has suggested for years, namely that men and women are physically abusing each other at nearly or approaching the same rate (35-50 percent male victims or more).

Straus found the same equal percentages in his analysis of the research.

“..every study among the more than thirty describing some type of sample that is not self-selected (such as community random samples and samples of college student dating couples) has found a rate of assault by women on male partners that is about the same as the rate of assault by men on female partners” (Straus, 1997, p. 211).

Steinmetz writes that she

“..found only small differences in the percentage of husband and wives who reported to throwing things, pushing or shoving, hitting with a hand, or hitting with an object. In fact the total violence scores for these three studies were very similar. The data from the nationally representative sample (Straus et al., 1977), based on reports of violence that occurred during 1975, found wives to be slightly higher in almost all categories except pushing and shoving. The total violence scores, however, were identical,” (Steinmetz, 1978, pp. 502-503).

Gelles writes,

“...because any discussion of the problem of ‘battered men’ has been considered ‘politically incorrect’, there are few, if any, available and effective programs that have been developed for male victims of intimate violence. Thus, even if physicians are successful in identifying male victims, there are few agencies or programs that can be used for referral” (Gelles, 1996, p. 3).

Fiebert writes about his exhaustive bibliography on domestic violence research:

“This bibliography examines 85 scholarly investigations, 70 empirical studies and 15 reviews and/or analyses, which demonstrate that women are as physically aggressive, or more aggressive, than men in their relationships with their spouses or male partners. The aggregate sample size in the reviewed studies exceed 58,000.”

Some women’s advocates criticize the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) often used in these studies. What I find interesting about those who find fault with the CTS is that, when it comes to estimating the “projected” number of female victims of domestic violence, these same critics often use data that come directly from the CTS, namely:

- 2 million women are assaulted by their husbands each year (Straus, 1977).
- The FBI reports that a woman is assaulted every 15 seconds in this country by her husband (Calif. Dept. of Justice, 1997).
- 4 million women are assaulted by their male partners each year (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 1997).
- A woman is assaulted every 9 seconds in this country by her male partner (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 1997).

**All** of these statements are *based* on the data that comes from the CTS. Without the CTS none of these statements could be made. Today data from the 1994 Commonwealth Fund Survey of Women’s Health are often used in domestic violence literature, which states that:

“8.4 percent of women between 18 and 65 and living with a man (4.4 million women) were physically abused by their domestic partners in the past year.”

These statistics come from the research of Dr. Stacey Plichta, who refers to herself as a feminist researcher. This is what she says about the CTS:

“Spouse abuse is only measured for those women currently living with or married to a man (both are referred to as her spouse). These questions are from the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), a widely used instrument with *good reliability and validity*” (Plichta, 1996, p.240).

**Survey of Women's Health:**  
The Commonwealth Fund, 1993

	Husband to Wife Violence Per 1,000 couples	
	Number	Percentage
<b>❖ Minor Violent Acts</b>		
Threw something at wife	30	5%
Pushed/grabbed/shoved/slapped wife	50	5%
<b>❖ Severe Violent Acts</b>		
Kicked/bit/hit with fist or some other object	20	2%
<i>Beat up</i>	*	0%
Choked	*	1%
Threatened with gun or knife	*	0%
Used a gun or knife	*	0%

(1993 Commonwealth Fund, p. 20)

What is interesting about the Commonwealth Fund Study on Women's Health is that, even though researchers also interviewed *1,000 men* to compare their responses to the 2,500 women who participated in the study, they *chose* not to ask the men the questions in the survey which related to domestic violence. Had they asked the men, they may have discovered that a man is assaulted by his spouse every 10 seconds or even every 5 seconds. Because the researchers did not ask the men about their victimization, we cannot know from this study how many seconds another man becomes a victim of domestic violence in our country. This was an opportunity missed. But why was it missed? Although many women's advocates use this data to say 4 million women are *beaten* every year in this country (one every nine seconds), the data show that virtually none of the women actually reported having been *beaten up* (0%).

The latest U.S. study on domestic violence by the Center for Policy Research (Tjaden, P. & Thoennes, K., 1998) does suggest a significant difference between men and women who reported being *beaten up* in their lifetime by their intimate partners (a ratio of 14:1). The actual percentage of women who were beaten up compared to all intimate assaults against them was less than 10% (8.5%), still tragic and significant but much less than advocates report in their literature and presentations. This study also suggests that there was no statistical difference between the number of men and women who sought medical treatment for their injuries. What is interesting about this study is that it suggests that **39%** (two out of five victims) of intimate physical assaults and injuries were against *men*. Even though this study does not appear to support equal assault rate between men and women, neither does it suggest that male victims make up only 5 to 15 percent. They make up more like 40 percent of victims of domestic violence who were assaulted by their female partners.

**Whether male assault victims are shown to be 35%, 40%, or 50%, this is still a significant number that should warrant social concern.**

What about the “**repetitive frequency rate**” of assaults between men and women? Is any difference found?

**The National Family Violence Survey 1975:**

The *repetitive frequency* of assaults per year between men and women is nearly the same. In fact, the “mean” totals show that wives are at a slightly higher assault rate than husbands, with overall violence at 10.1 assaults for female batterers per year vs. 8.8 assaults for male batterers per year. Even for “Severe Violence” the data show an average of 8.8 assaults by wives and 8.0 assaults by husbands per year. The “median” totals show even less difference between wives and husbands when it comes to repetitive assault frequency per year. Straus writes:

“...the mean frequency of occurrence overstates the case because there are a few cases in which violence was almost a daily or weekly event. For this reason, the *median* gives a more *realistic* picture of the typical frequency of violence in violent families.” (Straus, 1977, p. 445)

NFVS 1975 (CTS items)	Incidence Rate by Percentage		Frequency			
	Husbands	Wives	Mean		Median	
<u>Assaults by:</u>			Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Severe Violence Index:	3.8	4.6	8.0	8.9	2.4	3.0
Overall Violence Index:	12.1	11.6	8.8	10.1	2.5	3.0
<u>Minor Assault:</u>						
Threw something at spouse:	2.8	5.2	5.5	4.5	2.2	2.0
Pushed, grabbed, shoved:	10.7	8.3	4.2	3.5	1.6	1.9
Slapped spouse:	5.1	4.6	4.2	3.5	1.6	1.9
<u>Severe Assault:</u>						
Kicked, bit, or hit:	2.4	3.1	4.8	4.6	1.9	2.3
Hit or tried to hit with something:	2.2	3.0	4.5	7.4	2.0	3.8
Beat up spouse:	1.1	0.6	5.5	3.9	1.7	1.4
Threatened with a knife or gun:	0.4	0.6	4.6	3.1	1.8	2.0
Used a knife or gun:	0.3	0.2	5.3	1.8	1.5	1.5

(Straus, 1977, p. 446)

In analyzing the 1985 NFVS of women who reported being assaulted, Straus writes:

“According to these 495 women, their partners averaged 7.2 assaults during the year, and they themselves averaged 6 assaults. Although the frequency of assault by men is greater than the frequency of assault by women, the difference is just short of being statistically significant...the fact that the average number of assaults by male partners is higher should not obscure the fact that the violent women carried out an average of 6 minor and 5 severe assaults per year, indicating a repetitive pattern by women as well as by men.” (Straus, 1997, p. 215)

**1975 and 1985 NFVS of Couples:**

The projected number of assault victims calculates to nearly the same between males and females.

**Rate per 1,000 Couple**

Violence Index	1975	Projected		1985	Projected	
		%	Number		%	Number
<b>❖ Husband to Wife</b>						
Overall Violence	121	12.1%	<u>5.7 million</u>	113	11.3%	<u>6.1 million</u>
Severe Violence	28	3.8%	<u>1.8 million</u>	30	3.0%	<u>1.6 million</u>
<b>❖ Wife to Husband</b>						
Overall Violence	116	11.6%	<u>5.5 million</u>	121	12.1%	<u>6.5 million</u>
Severe Violence	46	4.6%	<u>2.2 million</u>	44	4.4%	<u>2.4 million</u>
❖ Number of Cases	2,143			3,520		

(Straus & Gelles, 1986, p. 470)

**IMPORTANT:** When one asks domestic violence workers what is the “percentage” of female victims compared to male victims of domestic violence, they usually go to “Archival” data which currently suggests about “87%” female victims and “13%” male victims. If they do report on “Survey” data, they only go to the one U.S. Government survey that shows the *greatest* percentage difference between male and female victims, namely the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The NCVS reports 85% female victims and 15% male victims. ***BUT*** when you ask these same workers what the “projected” number of female victims of domestic violence there is in the general population, they go to “Randomized Survey” data, *other* than the NCVS. Here they will say “4 to 6 million” women are assaulted every year. What is interesting is that these same survey studies also indicate that men and women are assaulting each other at nearly the *same rate, 50/50*. This mix-and-matching of archival and randomized survey data is highly unethical and misleading when presenting data on domestic violence.

Presenting the Data:

Archival Data and the NCVS		Most Survey Data	
Female Victims	Male Victims	Female Victims	Male Victims
85-87%	13-15%	~50%	~50%
473,000-840,000	71,500-150,000	~6 million	~6 million



What advocates do not say is that the survey data that indicate 85% of domestic violence victims are women come from research that also suggests that 840,000 women may be assaulted every year - a significant number, but much less than the 2, 4, or 6 million female victims most domestic violence presenters quote. Nor do they say that survey data indicating 4 to 6 million women are assaulted in our country every year come from research that suggests that men and women are assaulting each other at nearly the same rate.

**How Archival Data and Survey Data Should be Analyzed:**

When archival data (473,000 female victims) are compared to survey data (6 million female victims), the result suggests what domestic violent workers have been saying for years, that domestic violence is **under reported** for women. This suggests that only **8%** of domestic violence against women is reported.

**But** the male numbers also suggest that **only 1%** of domestic violence against *men* is reported. This is why using archival data to indicate the percentage differences between male and female victims of domestic violence is misleading. If women are **8 times** more likely to report being abused than men, they are more likely to have law enforcement intervention, which will then be reflected in arrest reports (archival data) of male offenders.

**How the Data Should be Presented:**

Archival Data and the NCVS		Most Survey Data	
Female Victims	Male Victims	Female Victims	Male Victims
85%	15%	~50%	~50%
473,000-840,000 (8-14%)	71,500-150,000 (1-3%)	~6 million ←→	

Although survey data suggest a more realistic picture of domestic assaults in the general population than archival data, which come from specialized and clinical sources, there are also differences in survey studies themselves. It appears that, with survey data, the *greater* the projected number of spousal assault victims the *smaller* the percentage difference there is between men and women. The following matrix demonstrates this effect.

### Comparing Survey Research Differences:

National Crime Victimization Survey		National Violence Against Women Survey		Most Other Surveys Including the NFVS	
Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
85%	15%	61%	39%	40 - 60%	40 - 60%
840,000	150,000	1.5 million	835,000	4 - 6 million	4 - 6 million
(0.8%)	(0.02%)	(1.5%)	(0.9%)	(7 - 12%)	(7 - 12%)

The above matrix suggests that the *greater* the percentage difference between female and male partner assault victims, the *smaller* the projected number of victims; while on the other hand, the *greater* the projected number of partner assault victims, the *smaller* the percentage difference between males and females, if not nearly the same. This may be due to the fact that some surveys collect more severe cases of spousal assault, showing a smaller projected number but a greater percentage difference between the sexes, while the surveys which show a small sex percent difference may be collecting a greater scope of assault cases that also include more minor assaults and injuries. This may be why the NCVS shows a greater sex percent difference at 85% female victims compared to 15% male victims, while the NFVS, which shows about 50% female victims and 50% male victims, also has a higher level of partner assault victims cases. The NVAWS is somewhere in the middle.

### Courtship Violence:

Courtship violence is similar in percentage rate to adult domestic violence. Clifton Flynn found that **12% of High School students** reported courtship violence. The students also reported that **72% was “mutual assault,”** that 1.4% was male abuser only, and 5.7% was female abuser only, the remaining percentage being unsure. (Flynn ,1990, p. 165)

In another study of **college students**, Cate et al., 1982, researchers found that nearly **70% was mutual assault**, **10%** was male abuser only and **22%** was female abuser only. (Flynn ,1990, p. 195)

In a U.S. Department of Justice report, a New Zealand study done in 1993 of 961 twenty-one year old adults found the following: **“Three times more women than men (18.6 percent and 5.7 percent respectively) said they kicked, bit, hit with a fist, or hit with an object. When less severe forms of violence are included - such as throwing something, pushing, grabbing, shoving, and slapping - the rates were 37 percent for women and 22 percent for men.”** (Moffitt, Terrie E., 1997, p. 1)

**Comparing the Types of Physical Abuse Used on Partners:  
Rate per 1,000 Couples**

Types of Violence	NFVS		NFVS	
	Husband-to-Wife		Wife-to-Husband	
	1975	1985	1975	1985
❖ <b>Minor Violence Acts</b>				
Threw something	28	28	52	43
Pushed/grabbed/shoved	107	93	83	89
Slapped	51	29	46	41
❖ <b>Severe Violence Acts</b>				
Kicked/bit/hit with fist	24	15	31	24
Hit, tried to hit with something	22	17	30	30
Beat up	11	8	6	6
Threatened with gun or knife	4	4	6	6
Used a gun or knife	3	2	2	2
Number of Cases	2,143	3,520	2,143	3,520

(Straus & Gelles, 1986, p. 471)

These studies, although tragic, show that 11/1,000 of the women in 1975 and 8/1,000 of the women in 1985 reported that they were “beaten up” by their partners, as compared to 6/1,000 men in 1975 and 1985, suggesting that only 1.1% of the women and 0.6% of the men were beaten up by their intimate partners. These numbers *do not* suggest that 26% or 36% or even 50% of women in our country have been victims of a “wife beater,” as some workers would lead you to believe. The following shows the difference between the types of male and female assaults toward their intimate partner based on these two studies.

**Gender Differences in Type of Assault Used from the NFVS:**

**Women were more likely to use the following type of assault:**

Throw something:	86% greater in 1975	<b>54% greater in 1985</b>
*Slap:		<b>41% greater in 1985</b>
Kicked/bit/hit with fist:	29% greater in 1975	<b>60% greater in 1985</b>
Hit, tried to hit with something:	36% greater in 1975	<b>77% greater in 1985</b>

**Men were more likely to use the following type of assault:**

Push, grab, shove:	29% greater in 1975	<b>4% greater in 1985</b>
*Slap:	11% greater in 1975	
Beat up:	83% greater in 1975	<b>33% greater in 1985</b>
Used a gun or knife:	50% greater in 1975	<b><u>Even in 1985</u></b>

These two studies suggest that women used knives or guns against their husbands at the same rate that husbands use them against their wives in the 1985 NFVS.

A recent study by the Center for Policy Research (Tjaden, P. & Thoennes, K., 1998, p. 7) interviewed by telephone 8,000 men and 8,000 women concerning domestic abuse by their intimate partners. Tjaden and Thoennes found that,

although women are about two to three times more likely to be victims of partner assault than men in less severe attacks, this figure changed dramatically when more severe attacks like beating up, choking, or threatening to use a gun are explored. In these more severe cases women are seven to fourteen times more likely to be the victim, if the report rate by men is accurate. Unfortunately, Tjaden's research did not ask women about their assaultive behavior against their intimate partners, as was done in the NFVS. It must be remembered that men are not only less likely to report their own abusive behavior, *but* are also less likely to report the abusive behavior of their partners *against* them, a fact which may have lowered Tjaden's findings for male victims.

CSU psychologist Martin Fiebert recently assembled a list of 70 research studies that show that couple violence is an equal-opportunity phenomenon. (Laframboise, D., 1999) For those women advocates who do finally accept that there are many studies which indicate men and women are assaulting each other at nearly the same rate, they are quick to counter by saying that the research also indicates that women are still more likely to be injured than men. Are women significantly more likely to sustain injuries from the physical abuse they receive from men than men are from their wives and girlfriends? The answer appears to be *yes*, with some side notes.

### **Injury Level by Percentage:**

Women advocates say that many women report to Emergency Department (ED) staff that their injuries are a result of spousal assault. They say this is supported by data from ED visits. Yet according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), an estimated 93.4 million visits in 1994 were made to hospitals in the U.S. Of these visits 39.6 million (42%) ED visits were for injuries (CDC, 1996, May 17). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (1997, August) estimated that, in 1994, 1.4 million ED visits were for injuries of interpersonal violence. Here the term "interpersonal" relates to another person, non-intimate or intimate. This suggests that 1.5% of all visits and 3.5% of all injury related visits to the ED were related to interpersonal violence. **Of the 1.4 million ED visits for injuries of interpersonal violence, 39,000 (2.8%) were against men by "intimate partners", (wives/ex-wives, or girlfriends/ex-girlfriends), and 204,400 (14.6%) were against women by "intimate partners", (husbands/ex-husbands or boyfriends/ex-boyfriends).** (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 1997, August) When comparing the actual *archival* number of women and men who came to ED for injuries from their partners, the percentage difference is 16% male victims and 84% female victims. Although 39,000 male and 204,400 female ED visits are significant, they make up a very small percentage, **0.6%** (243,400), of the 39.6 million ED injury visits in 1994 nationwide.

Journalist Cathy Young (1997) has written that some women's advocates have claimed "domestic abuse causes more injuries to women than rape, auto accidents, and muggings combined." Yet official data do not show this to be true. For example, in 1994 the CDC found that 1.9 million women and 2.1 million men visited the ED for injuries caused by **motor vehicle accidents**, and 4.4 million women and 4.0 million men visited the ED for injuries caused by **accidental falls** (CDC, 1998). The total number of ED visits in 1994 for all injuries was 17.9 million women and 21.7 million men. When compared to about 40,000 male (or **0.2% of all injuries to men**) and 200,000 female (or **1.3% of all injuries to women**) who visited the ED for reasons of spousal abuse injuries, these percentages are very small. This official data suggest that domestic injuries against women or men is **not** the highest factor for ED visits as some have suggested. This suggests that just a little over **1%** of women who are treated in Emergency Departments are a result of domestic violence injuries. Nevertheless, it does show that more women are **treated** for domestic injuries in the ED than men.

In an Sacramento Bee article (1998, August 5) a new study based on the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) was featured. The article stated that **one in three** women reported being a victim of domestic violence in some manner in her lifetime. Domestic violence workers are quick to state that this report reinforces what they have known from previous studies. Several points need to be made about this JAMA report. First, the study actually shows that 2% of the women interviewed said they were in the ED *that day* because of injuries they sustained by their intimate partners. This means that **one in fifty** women who came to the ED did so for medical treatment from domestic violence.

Second, 14% of the women said they had been raped or physically assaulted in the past twelve months by an intimate partner, or **one in seven** women. This is a sobering statistic. Yet, where does the *one-in-three* figure of female victims come from? It comes from asking only women the question if they had *ever* suffered "emotional or physical abuse in their lifetimes by a partner." 37% of the women said yes to that question. Not to minimize this result, but the point needs to be made that perhaps if the men who came into the ED were also queried if they had *ever* been "**emotionally or physically abused by their partners in their lifetime,**" 37% of the men would have answered this question "yes." This is very likely but, like so many recent studies on domestic violence, the focus is directed primarily toward the study of violence against women and not against men.

Third, the report does not tell what percentage of the domestic violence was between homosexual partners. Finally, a study done in a hospital instead of a representative national survey of the general population has less power to generalize about a phenomenon.

As mentioned earlier, hospital records (ED) or hospital surveys may not give an accurate appraisal of actual domestic violence injuries because victims, especially men, may not seek medical attention from hospitals, are less inclined to report the injuries caused by their partners, or to admit to medical staff that they are victims of domestic violence. Men do generally have greater muscular strength and therefore are more likely to cause more extensive personal damage to their partners if a weapon is *not* used, and the assault is *not* done when the other partner is turned away or asleep. Yet, is more extensive personal damage by men against their female partners true in all cases, most cases, a few cases? Although men may have more muscular strength, women are almost twice as likely to assault their partners with an object, which can equalize the level of injury, and are more likely to assault when the man is in a more vulnerable position (Straus & Gelles, 1986; Steinmetz, ABC 20/20, 1997). Are some husbands just too ashamed to tell that their injuries were caused by their partners? Men may avoid the concept that a woman has “beaten” them up. Or are they generally less likely to seek medical treatment for themselves for less serious injuries?

**In the 1985 National Family Violence Survey:**

3.0% of women who were assaulted reported they needed to see a doctor.

0.4% of men who were assaulted reported they needed to see a doctor.

This is a very small percentage for both men and women who reported they needed to see a doctor. Yet, based on these percentages, the female respondents were about **7.5 times** more likely to “**report**” they needed to see a doctor as a result of being assaulted by their husbands. **But is saying women are 7.5 times more likely to report they “needed to see a doctor” the same thing as saying women are 7.5 times more likely to be *injured* than men who are assaulted by their wives?** Not necessarily, as we really do not know this from the research. We only know that women are 7.5 times more likely to “report” they needed to see a doctor. In communications with this author, both Straus and Gelles agreed that the research does not tell us if women are six or seven times more likely to be injured than male victims of domestic violence, only that women were more likely to report a need to see a doctor from the small percentage of women who responded affirmatively to this question. They also agreed that, to determine the level of actual injuries men and women sustain from domestic attacks, an “injury index” needs to be developed. Straus is including such an index in his new Conflict Tactics Scale-2 (CTS-2). So saying women are seven times more likely to be injured than men in domestic violence based on this research is ***not*** accurate, but speculative in nature.

Another way to explore this question is to ask, “if we have a woman and a man who sustain the exact injury, will both be as likely to report the need to see a doctor?” Or will one gender be more likely to seek professional medical attention

for her or his minor or severe injuries? Stets and Straus write that women seek medical attention in general more often than men:

“Previous research reveals that, on average, more women than men make visits to physicians and spend time in bed due to illness, Marcus and Siegel, 1982; Verbrugge, 1985,” (Stets and Straus, 1990, p. 158).

This could be due to the greater embarrassment men are socialized to feel over acknowledging physical pain or injury, especially from a woman. It also may depend on the nature of the injuries. Tjaden’s study indicates that more men do seek medical attention but, as suggested earlier, this study may be capturing the more severe cases of spousal abuse. This all suggests that men may be more likely to seek medical attention for severe injuries, but less likely than women to seek medical help or report to medical staff *less* serious injuries.

Stets and Straus end by saying,

“In general, the differences between women and men victims in terms of the rate of needing to see a doctor, taking time off from work, and being bedridden are not particularly strong or large” (Stets and Straus, 1990, p. 158).

They do suggest that for *severe* assaults, there is “some tendency for women to experience more negative effect than men,” and thereby experience more, “negative effects on their health.” Yet, as they stated earlier, the difference is not that “strong or large.” Hines and Malley-Morrison (2001) report that male victims of domestic violence do report many negative psychological effects from the abuse. They write,

“In sum, the results of these studies show that abused men are at risk for emotional hurt, fear, helplessness, anger, revenge seeking, sadness, shame and humiliation, depression, stress, psychological distress, and psychosomatic symptoms,” (p. 81).

They also found in their studies that 90% of men are experiencing emotional abuse by their intimate partners which can lead to physical violence by these men if no intervention takes place. For example, one man shared with me how his wife would just yell in his face. One day she was screaming while pointing her fingers of both hands close and toward his eyes. He told her to stop, but she wouldn’t. He grabbed her wrists to restrain her. This made her even more furious, and in the struggle he pushed her back and she fell hitting her head, cutting herself. The police arrested him for domestic violence. He was arrested because of the physical injury she had sustained, but was he the *only* one who contributed to the violent drama? The answer is clearly, *no*. She also contributed to the abusive environment, but if she goes to a domestic violence shelter she is likely to be viewed and treated as the victim of this abusive drama and he will be punished as the only perpetrator of the abuse. Something is very wrong with this picture.

Another point that needs to be made about the 1985 National Family Violence Survey is that if only 3% of the women reported they needed to see a doctor because of their injuries, does this mean we should not provide services for the other 97% of women who might have been assaulted, but who did not seek medical attention? Of course we would say they all should receive help. Then might we not also say the same for the 99.6% of men who were assaulted by their wives, but didn't seek medical attention for their injuries?

**One man reported that he took care of a laceration his wife gave him across his bare chest from his nipple to navel with the hook of a metal hanger, and another man reported he took care of his own foot his wife had broken.**

The research by Tjaden, P. & Thoennes, K., 1998 included an actual injury index that captured the level of injuries sustained by both men and women. They found that of the women who reported being assaulted by their partners, 41% reported some level of injury compared with 19% of men who reported an injury when assaulted by their partners. This suggests that, of those who were injured by their partners, there were twice as many women as men. Yet the study also suggests that about 60% of the women who were assaulted sustained *no* injury. The question we need to ask ourselves is whether or not we only help the 41% of the women who are injured as a result of an assault? Most people would agree to help *all* the women who were assaulted, not just those 41% who were injured. Then shouldn't we also help all the men who are assaulted and not just 19% who sustained an injury? I would hope the answer was also *yes*.

There is data suggesting that when it comes to reporting "severe" abuse, men do tend to *under report* their abusive behavior toward their partners. They also *under report* the severe abuse they sustain by their partners. Simply, men tend to under report **both** their own severe assaultive behavior *and* also that of their wives against them. One way to address this problem is to simply collect the survey data from **women** with regard to being assaulted by their partners *and* also assaulting their partners. What do women report about the assaultive behavior of their partners and their own assaultive behavior? The percentages are still nearly the **same** between men and women, even when **reported by women themselves**.

**As Reported by Women:**

Percentages of Assaults on Spouse

For overall assaults:

Husband on Wife	12.2%	Wife on Husband	12.4%
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Minor assaults:

Husband on Wife	7.2%	Wife on Husband	7.8%
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Severe assaults:

Husband on Wife	5.0%	Wife on Husband	4.6%
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(Straus, 1997, p. 211)



### **Projected Number of Male Victims, as Reported by Women:**

For overall assaults:	12.4% ~ 6,696,000 women assaulted their husbands. (12.2% ~ 6,588,000 husbands assaulted their wives.)
Minor assaults:	7.8% ~ 4,212,000 women assaulted their husbands. (7.2% ~ 3,888,000 husbands assaulted their wives.)
Severe assaults:	4.6% ~ 2,484,000 women assaulted their husbands. (5.0% ~ 2,700,000 husbands assaulted their wives.)

(From the 1985 NFVS as estimated by 54 million couples in US in 1985.)

In summary, the research does suggest that, although men and women are assaulting each other at nearly the same rate, women are *twice* as likely to report an actual injury. This does not mean that men are not seriously injured. It also can be said that injury level should not be the only criteria for helping victims of domestic violence, whether they are men or women. Not only can minor assaults escalate to severe abuse, but many of these assaults against men happen in homes with children. Even if we prove that there are more physically injured women than men who are assaulted by their intimate partners, it would be terribly short-sided for us to ignore the fact that children are still suffering from the effect of viewing family violence. Children are always the ultimate victims of spousal abuse, regardless of whether dad is hitting mom or mom is hitting dad. The children are injured emotionally, psychologically, and at times physically by one or both of the parents. To ignore or minimize the effects on children who witness their mother's assault against their father, even if the father does not sustain grave injuries, will never reduce domestic violence in this generation or the next. The simplistic mantra that implies children will be safe from harm when mothers are safe from harm ignores the truth about the effect of domestic violence on children when women are the perpetrators of that violence against men while children watch, or when women are directly abusing their own children directly.

### **The Context or Reason for the Assault:**

Another common response to the idea of female perpetrators is the proposed argument that a woman's assault against her male partner is almost always for reasons of self-defense. What does the research tell us about this concept? What percentage of female assault is actually done in **self-defense**? It is interesting that this same question is never asked concerning men who may need to defend themselves against assaultive wives or girlfriends.

A number of researchers have indicated that the majority of the assaults by women are for reasons of self-defense (Browne, 1987; Campbell, 1992; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Pagelow, 1984, Saunders, 1986, Hopper, 1996). Yet many of these studies come from *clinical samples* of women who seek services in domestic violence centers and social service agencies. Women tend to use these services more than

men. Also, a number of studies that report women assault men for reasons of self-defense are looking at those very small number of cases where the woman “killed” the man. According to the FBI (Uniform Crime Reports, 1996, Table 2.6 and p. 17) about 460 men were killed by their wives or girlfriends in 1995 in the U.S. The 1985 NFVS suggests that 6.5 million men are physically abused in some manner by their wives. Therefore, the number of murdered men compared to all those men who may have been physically abused is extremely small, **0.00007%**. To examine only 7 out of every 100,000 men who are physically assaulted by their intimate partners, and *then* make a generalization based on this very small number of men, is really a stretch in logic. Maybe this is why national surveys give us a different picture.

### **1985 National Family Violence Survey:**

The 1985 NFVS discovered that **48.6%** of the respondents reported the violence was **mutual**, **25.5%** of the violence was by the **woman only**, and **25.9%** was by the **man only** (Straus, 1997. pp. 213-214). This suggests that at *least* **35%** of the all assaults on men are not from their wives defending themselves. And of the other 65% identified as mutual assault, it’s highly unlikely that all of the assaults by the wives were defensive in nature. Jennifer Langhinrich-Rohling et al, (1996) found that **83%** of the couples engaged in “**bi-directional or mutual physical aggression.**” One research group found that only **21%** of the women who killed their husbands did so in response to “prior abuse” or “threat of abuse/death” (Jurik, 1989; Jurik & Gregware, 1989). This suggests that about **80%** of the women murdered their husbands with no “prior abuse” by their husbands. John Hamel, 2002 (p. 4) writes that, although 60% of the women who killed their partners claim self-defense, half of these women killed their partners when they were incapacitated, either drunk or sound asleep. He also found that, when one defines self-defense as “protecting oneself from bodily harm,” which is how most people define self-defense, only 9.6% were female perpetrated killings, about **10%**. Although this percentage is much higher than the 0.5% of male perpetrates who reported killing their partners in self-defense, it surely cannot be said that **most** women kill for reasons of self-defense. Hamel points out that, even with the most liberal definition, which includes “previous physical attacks, with or without a self-defense motive,” this still doesn’t make up *most* of the killings, (more than 50%).

### **Who Struck the First Blow?**

The 1985 NFVS, as reported by women themselves, shows that 52.7% of the women reported they struck the first blow, and 42.6% reported that their husbands struck the first blow. It is true that we don’t know why these women struck the first blow, but neither do we know why 42.6% of the men struck the first blow. In an Alberta, Canadian study (1987) women reported being “three times more likely to initiate violence in a relationship” (Everson, B. & Milstone C., 1999). Jurik and Gregware also found that 42% of the women who had been murdered by their

husbands had initiated the first assault against their husbands (Jurik, 1989; Jurik & Gregware, 1989). Two studies have asked the questions of context and self-defense. One study was the largest research on domestic violence done in England, 1994. This is what researchers found:

**First Largest National Study in England, 1994:**

	Victimization Inflicted	
	Women	Men
<b>Total committing assaults:</b>	<u>11%</u>	<u>10%</u>
<u>Reason for Assault</u>		
❖ A. "Get through to..."	53%	64%
❖ B. "Something said or threatened..."	52%	53%
❖ <b>C. "Some physical action..."</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>27%</b> (Self-Defense)
❖ D. "Stop doing something..."	33%	43%
❖ E. "Make do something..."	26%	26%
❖ <b>F. "About to use physical action."</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>21%</b> (Self-Defense)
❖ G. "Influence of alcohol, etc..."	13%	35%
❖ H. "In character..."	16%	27%
❖ I. "Other"	12%	7%

(Carrado, et al., 1996)

It should first be noted that the victimization rate for men and women in England is also nearly the same, *11%* for women and *10%* for men. This study also suggests that about **80%** of assaults by wives on their husbands were for reasons **other than self-defense**. The research group identified items C and F as clear examples of self-defense.

The second study is from Canada. A social scientist, Reena Sommer, (1994) examined a longitudinal study of Winnipeg residents as part of the Winnipeg Health and Drinking Survey (1989). The survey consisted of "married, cohabiting and remarried males and females between the ages of 18 and 65 years." The data were collected at two points in time over a two year period. Both phases of the research were each done face-to-face during a "90 minute session, which involved a structured interview and a self-administered questionnaire" (Sommer, 1994, p. iv). Sommer found that, of the 452 females and 447 males interviewed, 39% of the women and 26% of the men *committed* acts of violence against their spouses at some time in their relationship, and 16% of the women and 8% of the men defined those acts as severe in nature.

In researching the reasons for the assaults, Sommer (1992) found that **90%** of the women who reported that they were **abusive did not strike their male partners in self-defense**. She shared with me that these women hit, kicked, threw something, and bit their male partners when they were furious, jealous, high on drugs or

alcohol, frustrated, in need for control or had impulse problems. She reports that 14% of the men who were attacked needed to go to the hospital. Sommer shares how her study underscores “the need to address the issues of husband battering as a ‘real’ problem and to attempt to rectify the misconception that family violence is a problem of women and children alone” (p. 1321).

Some advocates say that 75% of women assault their partners for reasons of self-defense and site the 1998, Department of Justice report entitled *Violence by Intimates*. The problem with this assertion is that it is very misleading. While most people define self-defense as physical resistance in response to being physically assaulted, the writers of this 1998 report divide the term self-defense into **two** different categories, *confrontational* self-defense and *non-confrontational* self-defense. The report states that, “Three-fourths of female victims of nonlethal violence actively defended themselves against the offender” (p. 19). First, notice that the statement is only addressing *female victims* of domestic violence. It is not addressing female perpetrators who assault their partners. Second, when one looks at the report chart, one finds that 23% of the female victims “offered no active resistance to the violence,” and only **17%** were involved in *confrontational self-defense*, including, struggling, shouting, chasing or other physical resistance against their assailants. In other words, 17% or less of the female victims were involved in some form of *physical* resistance against their attackers, which is what most people would view as self-defense. If 17% or less were involved in some form of confrontational self-defense, where do we get the statement that 75% of the female victims were involved in self-defense? The answer is by counting the *non-confrontational* forms of what is called self-defense in the report. 60% of the female victims, “tried to escape from the offender, called the police or other help or used other *non-confrontational* means of self-defense.” By adding this 60% of non-confrontational self-defense to the 17% of confrontation self-defense, the report gets to the 77% or about “three-fourths” of female victims involved in some form of defense. *This is highly misleading*. What the report actually shows is that 17% or less of the female victims were involved in some form of confrontation resistance in the form of self-defense, not 75% as advocates state or imply.

These “non-archival” studies suggest that only **10-20%** of women in the general population assaulted their male partners for clear reasons of self-defense. So why do domestic violence workers continue to suggest that the percentage is much higher? Perhaps it is because the women who are genuine *victims* of domestic violence, and do assault for reasons of self-defense, are the ones most likely to seek help at a domestic violence shelter or center, and not the women who assault their husbands and boyfriends to “make them do something,” (Carrado, 1996) or to “get through to them,” (Carrado, 1996) or “my partner wasn’t sensitive to my needs.” (Fiebert, 1997)

Based on empirical research a domestic violence worker may be more accurate by saying:

“Of those women who seek help from our center, most appear to assault their husbands for reasons of self-defense, *but* this does not include the **80-90%** of women who assault their husbands for reasons other than self-defense in the general population whom we never see.”

Why would they not see these women come to the centers, because the women who make up this 80 to 90 percent group would be classified as *perpetrators*? Female perpetrators are not likely to seek help at a domestic violence shelter, which is set up primarily to help **female victims**.

Hines and Malley-Morrison, (July 2001) noting the work of Follingstad et al, 1991, writes that “..the major reasons reported by college women for using physical force against their partners were not attempts at self-defense, but rather efforts to show anger, to retaliate for emotional hurt, to express feelings that they had difficulty communicating verbally, and to gain control over the other person.” (p. 77) All of these reasons can be found with male perpetrators.

#### **Question:**

If we allow women to use assaultive behavior against their husbands for reasons of self-defense when they are attacked or physically threatened, when can men use assaultive behavior against their wives for reasons of self-defense when they are attacked? If we do not want men to defend themselves from the attacks of their wives, then what should they do? Are we encouraging men to call the police to arrest their wives who attack them? And when the police are called are the wives arrested? Are we helping these men escape a violent home with their children? Is law enforcement sensitive to the issues of husband abuse when out on a domestic dispute call? Is the domestic violence training they receive unbiased, or does it encourage law enforcement officers to assume the male is the aggressor most of the time and therefore the males should be the ones arrested? As of late we have seen new laws that direct officers to arrest the “primary aggressor” in a domestic violence conflict. Women’s groups pushed for this legislation to be passed because they saw officers arresting *both* the man and woman when there seemed to be mutual assault. Interestingly, after the law was passed the number of females arrested actually increased. But what does it mean to only arrest the primary aggressor? If there is a “primary” aggressor then, by definition there must also be a “secondary” aggressor, or else there are simply a victim and a perpetrator. If one assumes that the male is the primary aggressor, why would one want to leave the “secondary” aggressor, the women, at home alone with the children? Why would one leave the children alone with anyone who is an “aggressor,” primary or secondary, when it has been suggested that as many as 50% of partner aggressors also abuse their children? All of these are legitimate questions that many want to avoid asking.

### **Domestic Violence Shelters:**

When shelter workers are asked if they work with men, many will say yes. But what do they really mean by this answer? They usually mean that they work with male perpetrators or male victims that happen to show up at their door. In other words, they work with men by *accident* and not by *focus*. The real question to ask these shelters or domestic violence centers is “do they have *active outreach* programs for male victims?” Are they reaching out to men in the community the way they have been reaching out to women since the mid-70s? The answer to this question is almost always, “**no**.” Some shelters will try to excuse themselves from not having outreach programs designed for male victims by responding that “if more men came forward we would have programs for them.” Yet, this surely is not the approach they took when they developed centers for female victims some years ago. They actively reached out to women and community leaders about the need to help female victims of spousal abuse. It was *because* of their outreach efforts to women that female victims began to come forward for help. Why do they now think men will come forward without similar outreach programs designed for them? The real truth is that they either do not see male victims as a social problem to be addressed or, even worse, they just do not care, are not interested, or do not have the will to reach out to male victims. They do not want to spend the money on male victims and want all of the government funding and private donations to be earmarked for women and children only. The truth is that few men will tell of their pain and shame of being a victim of spousal abuse to people who do not see their situation as a problem. When they go to these shelters, will they be treated with *suspect* or *respect*? And realistically, how many men will seek help at a *women’s shelter or clinic*? There are basically three forces at work against male victims getting the help and attention they need and deserve. They are 1) Men and Patriarchy, 2) Gender Feminism, and 3) Gender Politics. Let’s go over each one of these forces and obstacles that hinder helping the male victims of domestic violence, and for that matter also helping the female perpetrators.

### **Obstacle One: Men and Patriarchy;**

When most survey data are compared with archival data, it appears that only 8% of women who are assaulted report the abuse. It also shows that only 1% of men who are assaulted report the abuse. In other words, although only a small percentage of **both** women and men report their abuse, women report it about **eight times** more often than men when assaulted by a partner. This is also supported by the 1985 NFVS study, which found that women were 9 times more likely to report their assaults to the police and 5 times more likely to discuss the abuse with a friend or relative. (Stets & Straus, 1990, p. 155)

### NFVS 1985

Type of Response	Women	Men
Hit back	24.4%	15.0%
Cried	54.6%	5.8%
Yelled or cursed him/her	42.6%	28.7%
Ran to another room	8.6%	13.9%
Called a friend/relative	<u>11.4%</u>	<u>2.2%</u>
Called the police	<u>8.5%</u>	<u>0.9%</u>
Run out of the house	14.0%	18.0%
Other	7.3%	32.2%

(Stets & Straus, 1990, p. 155)

It stands to reason that there will be more archival data from hospitals, police stations, justice departments, district attorney offices, and domestic violence centers on women who are assaulted by men than on men who are assaulted by women, if men are 8 to 9 times less likely to report the assault to these agencies. A 1994 CBS movie about a husband who was continually assaulted by his wife was appropriately titled: “**Men Don’t Tell.**”

Feminists, especially gender feminists see patriarchy and its system in our culture as the root of all evil in the lives of women. For them patriarchy is the foundation for domestic violence. They see men as wanting power and control over women, and domestic violence as simply the result of this need in men. Claudia Dias, Director of Changing Courses near Sacramento, California, runs court-ordered anger management classes for about 300 men and 75 women offenders every week. She shared with me that only about 15% of the men assaulted or abused their female partners because they felt they had the “male privilege” to do so. Interestingly, she also told me that a good number of women slap their male partners when they behave badly. These women call it a “soap opera slap,” what might be seen as “female privilege.” We tend to tolerate female violence more than male violence because we assume the injury level is less and men can “take it better.” In the early 70s I remember the feminists saying that women will never be free until men are free from patriarchy. They said this because they saw that some aspects of patriarchy also caused men to suffer. Part of the patriarchal system, which really means *father heads the family*, has to do with the protection and provision of his wife and children. In other words, men are the ones whom society makes *responsible* for providing the shelter, food and clothing of his family and the primary protector of his wife and children. Today, feminist groups *appeal* to this part of patriarchy in male legislators to get the sympathy, funding and laws they want for the protection of women.

When a man is a victim of his wife’s physical abuse he is both shamed by the assaults of his wife and shamed by society for not “controlling” her better. We may not have male victims ride backward on a donkey wearing an outlandish outfit, as

they did in France a couple hundred years ago to shame the man for letting his wife abuse him, but our culture nevertheless shames men who tell others of their victimization by the hands of their wives or girlfriends. Today we consider these men “wimps” for letting their wives beat them or for complaining about their wives’ attacks. For many men

### “TAKING IT LIKE A MAN”

means don’t COMPLAIN and don’t show you are VULNERABLE or in PAIN!

With the prospect of being viewed as “*wimps*” and/or having the assaults by their wives *unbelieved* or *minimized* by the general public and law enforcement, it’s no wonder few men report their abuse or discuss it openly.

#### **Male Socialization:**

**Men** are to be self-sufficient. This means they do not need to be helped by others, if they are real men.

**Men** are to be strong. This means they cannot express physical and emotional pain, sadness or fear, if they are real men.

**Men** are to be the protectors in society, especially of women and children. This means they should not need to be protected by others, if they are real men.

#### **To be a male victim of domestic violence means the man:**

**Has** a need to be helped by others. This means he is not self-sufficient and is not a real man.

**Has** a need to express his physical and emotional pain, sadness and fear. This means he is not strong and is not a real man.

**Has** a need to be protected from an assaultive woman. This means he cannot protect himself or his children. He is a WIMP and is not a real man.

One of the emotions males are trained from a very early age to ignore or suppress is *fear*. Where girls and women are given permission to feel fear, boys and especially men are not. Fear is a *perception* that one is in some kind of danger or potential danger. Not all perceptions are accurate. In other words, someone can feel afraid, but not be in any real danger. On the other hand, someone can be in real danger, but not *feel* afraid. Some women’s advocates say that because a woman has a greater fear of being assaulted or injured by her male partner, she to be seen as more of a victim or potential victim. I have heard a number of stories of women requesting a “restraining order” from a judge, with her shelter advocate next to her, simply because she *feels* afraid of her ex-husband or ex-boyfriend. There may not be any actual evidence of his aggression, but she just feels afraid. On the bases of her fear alone she may still get her restraining order. The problem for fathers in this situation is that, in California and perhaps in other states, there are new laws that say if you have a restraining order against you, you cannot have physical custody of



your children until an evaluation is completed, which takes months and costs more money. Until then you may only have supervised visitation with your children. How humiliating this can be to a man who may have done nothing other than being male: guilt by gender-association. I can see some real potential abuses of restraining order by women. The truth is, there may be some women who feel afraid of their intimate partners but actually are in no real danger of assault or injury; and then there may be some men who, because of their being trained in a patriarchal system, are not afraid of their female partners when they may actually be in danger of physical harm. The point is that the serious concern and assistance for male victims of domestic violence should not be based on whether or not the man is *feeling* afraid of his partner. A number of men may be less likely than women to feel afraid, when perhaps they should be. And if they are afraid, they may be more reluctant to say before a judge or others that they are afraid of a woman. This doesn't mean men are necessarily in less danger of physical assault or injury than some women.

### **Suppression of Pain:**

When a young boy is hit by another boy on the playground he can do three things.

1. **Hit back.** (Be seen as aggressive.)
2. **Proclaim** "That didn't hurt!" (Be seen as strong.)
3. **Cry or run away.** (Be seen as a wimp.)

Young boys who do not want to be viewed as either aggressive or wimps choose action two: "**That didn't hurt.**" They are strong. They deny their pain and do not complain. So what will they do when a girl on the playground hits them? Males are trained from an early age to suppress and ignore their pain, both physical and emotional. When they suppress their pain it is considered a *sign of strength*. Men are encouraged to show others how much pain they can *endure*. Even today we see T.V. shows that show young men allowing others to assault their testicles, their reproductive system, to show that they can take the pain of the attacks. This form of entertainment is also seen as comic humor. There is nothing funny about sexual assault whether it is against a woman or a man.

### **Simply:**

**"Patriarchy doesn't want society to view or see men as victims, because to be a victim is to be vulnerable and to be vulnerable is to be weak and to be weak is to be unmanly, which is how many men don't want others to see them."**

Even those individuals who continue to insist that the percentage of male domestic violence victims is very small still recognize that there are male victims out there in the population.

“When men are the victims of domestic violence they are the hidden victims of domestic violence.” (Domestic violence counselor)

### **Obstacle Two: Gender Feminism**

**“In much the same way Patriarchy doesn’t want society to see men as victims, feminism, especially gender feminism, doesn’t want society to see women as perpetrators.”**

The heart of feminism is seeing a world where women are treated with equal respect in our society, and where a woman’s voice has equal value in addressing issues. It is true that, not long ago women couldn’t own property and couldn’t vote for public officials. Women as well as a number of men saw this unfairness and spoke up as never before, especially in Western countries. Through the efforts of many women and men of good will, women found and raised their voice, and much has changed in a relatively short time historically. Yet in more recent years there has been a troubling change. Giving women equal value to their voice is one thing, making their voice *more* valuable than the wisdom and voice of men is quite another. Today a growing number of feminists have devalued the voice of men, and the only voice some will allow is of those who agree with them.

Atkinson, Morten and Sue, 1993 developed a Minority Identity Development model. It is a five stages model that they believe minority groups experience in their attempt to understand themselves, the dominant culture, and the oppressive relationship between them and the dominant culture. Although this model was designed more for racial or ethnic identity development, it does give us a possible model to better understand the development of the feminist. If we see women as the minority group oppressed by the patriarchal culture of “white men,” this model suggests several things that help us better understand what some feminists experience.

In Stage One, which the researchers call “conformity,” the minority person has actual positive attitudes and preferences toward the dominant group. Women in this stage actually support the patriarchal dominant culture, namely, that men are the head of the family and are responsible for the protection and provision of women and children. They may like men opening doors for them and the perks of being taken care of. Their positive view of patriarchy may also be rooted in some religious or cultural belief. Not only do they accept patriarchy, they expect their men to fulfill their patriarchal duties of providing and protecting women and children.

In Stage Two, which they call “dissonance,” the minorities begin to experience some confusion and conflict over the value they give to the dominant group, and the value they want for themselves in the eyes of others and in their own

eyes. Women in this stage may experience some level of depression and anger over the conflict that, by maintaining a patriarchal culture, they may not be getting the value they need in themselves as equal members of society. They begin to question their acceptance and support of the patriarchal culture, which appears to be more and more at their expense. They begin to feel they give more than they receive from the dominant male patriarchal culture.

In Stage Three, called “resistance and immersion,” the minority persons actively reject the dominant culture, and exhibit strong positive attitudes toward themselves and the minority group. Women in this stage are either exposed to personal injustices in the male culture, or perhaps are exposed to volumes of female injustices from their professors in Women’s Studies courses at college. In these Women’s Studies they are inundated with examples of how women in the patriarchal culture are used and abused by men. Women in stage three are more likely to reject the male as bad and turn to the woman as the good mother and sister in their lives. They are fully initiated into the feminist fold. In psychology there is a defense mechanism called “splitting.” In splitting one cannot tolerate the gray in life, everything is black or white. The feminists in stage three can be engaged in splitting. It goes something like this: “Men are bad, women are good; men are liars, women tell the truth; men are perpetrators, women are almost always, if not always, victims.” I remember taking a graduate class in the early 80’s on “Sexism.” After listening to some of the women in the class I saw this splitting occur. I thought that if we had an assignment to write down the positive and negative attributes or qualities in both men and women, the women would list many positive qualities and few, if any, negative qualities under the female category, and many negative qualities and few, if any, positive ones under the male category. If there were any positive qualities listed under the male category, the women would quickly say that those qualities could also be found in women. The truth is that as human beings men and women have probably an equal number of both positive and negative qualities. Feminists in stage three find this hard to see in their worldview.

In Stage Four, which the authors call “introspection,” the minority persons become uncertain about the rigidity of their strongly held beliefs in Stage Three. They are exposed to new information or people of the dominant culture who don’t fit their Stage Three beliefs, and they struggle between their loyalty toward their minority group members and the need to break free to become their own autonomous persons. They came to believe things that Stage Three minorities would reject. Women in this stage may be exposed to “new” information that doesn’t support their Stage Three beliefs. They may read some of the following books:

- *Who Stole Feminism: How Women have Betrayed Women*,  
by Christina Hoff-Sommers

- *When She was Bad: Violent Women and the Myth of Innocence*, by Patricia Pearson
- *Ceasefire: Why Women and Men Must Join Forces to Achieve True Equality*, by Cathy Young
- *Women Can't Hear What Men Don't Say: Destroying Myths, Creating Love*, by Warren Farrell
- *Abused Men: The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence*, by Philip Cook

These books and others challenge some of the deeply-held feminist beliefs of Stage Three. Christina Hoff-Sommers does an excellent job in exposing many of the misleading, false or even made-up information given out in some Women's Study courses. Interestingly, she has a whole chapter on the topic of male victims of domestic violence. Warren Farrell, who was once an actual board member of the National Organization of Women (NOW), has written several books that present a new and important balance to what many feminists either say or are silent on.

In Stage Five, called "integrative awareness," the minority persons experience a sense of self-fulfillment about their culture and a strong desire to eliminate *all* forms of *oppression* and *falsehood*. They objectively look at their values and beliefs and feel free to choose what they want to believe. Women in this stage evolve past their "splitting" and adopt an objective and fuller view of themselves and of men. They are willing to embrace their own "shadow," their own personal negative qualities as a woman. They stop demonizing men in general and are willing to be treated as truly equal partners with men, which means they stop juvenilizing and excusing their behaviors and that of other women in order to avoid punishment when they do wrong. They refuse double standards in the treatment of men and women. They demand their voice be heard, but give equal value to the voice of men as well. They want simply to be equal members of society, nothing more, nothing less.

I would suggest that not all women need to go through all five stages. Some women, as long as the men in their lives treat them with respect and equal value, may choose to live in the patriarchal model of interpersonal relations for religious or cultural reasons. Other women may start their journey, but stay stuck in their "splitting." These women are usually identified as the more radical or "adolescent" feminists. Then there may be those women, like Christina Hoff-Sommers and Cathy Young who go on to Stage Five, perhaps not even going through Stage Three at all. What these women demand of men they also demand of themselves and other women. They want women to be held just as accountable as men in every area of life. They don't want to be treated as *juveniles* to avoid punishment or when it's convenient. We make excuses for juveniles, not adults.

In regard to male victims of domestic violence, it is primarily the feminist in Stage Three who resists the idea of the female perpetrator and the male victim. In their minds, “How can women be victims under the oppression of a patriarchal culture and then be seen as perpetrators of partner violence? Even if it is true that they assault the male partners from time to time, it still must be the man’s fault; she MUST have done it in self-defense.” After all, men are bad, women are good; men are liars, women tell the truth; men are the perpetrators in society, women are the oppressed victims. I remember going to a workshop by one of the leading experts in the field of domestic violence, Dr. Donald Dutton in Canada. He not only showed that domestic violence has more to do with personality organization or disorders, like borderline and anti-social personalities, but he also shared a study that revealed that 9% of women felt oppressed by the men in their lives. 9% is bad enough, but it isn’t 90% as some feminists would like us to believe. I would guess, that if we asked the women of some Middle-Eastern countries as to whether they felt oppressed by the men in their lives, the percentage would be greater than 9%, but not in this country. I also wonder how many men in the study would have said they felt oppressed by the women in their lives.

In the mid-70s, when more women began to speak out about their victimization at the hands of their husbands and boyfriends, feminists took this on as one of their issues for women. But how do you gain sympathy for these women and gain the necessary funding needed to help them in a “patriarchal society” from male legislators and male public leaders? You *appeal* to that part of patriarchy that is involved in the protection and provision of women in our society. This strategy worked and the money began to flow, not all at once, but it was a start. As a result of feminist efforts, thousand of female victims finally received the help they needed. The problem is that these feminist advocates presented the topic of domestic violence as a *gender-specific* event instead of a family system collapse. Remember, feminists are interested in showcasing the maltreatment of women by men, they are not particularly interested in showcasing the maltreatment of men by women. *Where attention goes, funding flows and where funding flows, programs grow.* As a result almost all, if not all of the attention regarding the topic of domestic violence has been focused on female victims.

Although I am very happy these female victims have been helped, we should have been also concerned for all the victims of domestic violence, including male victims. As a result, when one hears the neutral term “victim” of domestic violence, the mental picture is anything but neutral. Instead we are likely to have a mental picture of an injured woman, not of an injured man. Gender feminists actually view any discussion of male victims as a threat to their feminist paradigm and movement. This can be seen in well-known organizations like the **Family Violence Prevention Fund**, which produced a booklet entitled, *The Backlash Book: A Media and Political Guide for Battered Women’s Advocates*. In this booklet the authors see the simple

assertion that “women are as likely to commit violence in relationship as men” (p. 7) as a threat to their feminist movement, and as coming from the political *Far Right*. It is a common practice to minimize and devalue those who seriously discuss the need to help male victims, by placing them in a group or category that many object to, like Christian conservatives or Right Wing fanatics. This is exactly what the writer of the Backlash Book does. She wants people to believe that any discussion about the seriousness of male victimization comes from conservative Christians or from the Far Right. They write in *Backlash*, “Today, the backbone of the far right movement is an uncommon marriage between conservative Christian Churches and a range of Theo-Political Organization.” (p. 2) They also specifically target women like Christina Hoff-Sommers, Dr. Sally Satel and Cathy Young as part of this *Right Wing* movement, women I have spoken with and whose courage and integrity in telling the whole truth I respect. If most of the domestic violence shelters and centers are run by these kinds of gender feminists, it will be very difficult to get some positive movement toward helping male victims of domestic violence. Gender feminists have become a formidable obstacle in raising the real needs of the male victims. The final obstacle to male victims is gender politics.

### **Obstacle Three: Gender Politics:**

Politics can be bad, but gender politics can be brutal. I remember a domestic violence worker telling me that if men want help as victims of domestic violence then they need to raise the money themselves. She shared that the money they have raised was for female victims. Pretty cold, but perhaps the attitude of a number of feminists and domestic violence workers. When it comes to domestic violence, gender politics is strong and goes something like this:

“For every dollar we spend on helping a male victim of domestic violence, it would mean one *less* dollar we can spend on helping a female victim of domestic violence, and that is just *unacceptable!*”

As stated earlier, where attention goes funding flows, and where funding flows programs grow. The domestic violence movement has become so enmeshed in the feminist movement that one can almost say they have become one and the same. This is because feminists have defined domestic violence as simply being a women’s issue of male oppression of women, the power and control of women, which leads to violence against women. As I shared earlier, Claudia Dias said about 15% of the men she works with fall into this category of those who assault their partners out of a feeling of male privilege over women, but most do not. This is not to say that everyone in a particular domestic violence shelter shares the limited gender-feminist view that the cause of domestic violence comes from patriarchy and from men feeling they have permission to oppress women. I have heard a number of domestic violence workers share with me that they are afraid to say anything or rock the boat if they disagree with the leaders of the shelter movement or other co-

workers. One domestic violence worker told me that she agrees with my message and data, but that she would be “ostracized” by the other female workers if she spoke up. I have spoken to a few shelter workers who left the shelter they were working at simply because they were so tired of the feminist politics they found in the organization.

When a domestic violence worker tells me that, if male victims want funding they will need to get it for themselves like the feminists or women’s groups did, not only does it sadden me, but it strikes me as disingenuous. Why? Because if men and women joined together to lobby legislators for a “Violence Against *Men* Act,” or simply to acquire funds to help male victims, feminist organizations and women’s shelter workers would be the first to publicly oppose the effort. Why? Because they want **all** the available funding to be designated toward their feminist programs, which are designed specifically to help female victims. Because domestic violence has been so genderized, it will be nearly impossible for current legislation and funding designations to change. Only through education and training about male victimization and female perpetration, and the mutuality of abuse in many families, will our current image of domestic violence ever change.

When I hear a shelter or women’s advocate rapidly use the words “more” or “most” to describe the number of female victims compared to male victims I know we are deep in gender politics. What does “more” or “most” mean, 51% or 95%? And even if this year’s numbers show more female victims than males, why does that matter when it comes to the general funding of services for **all** victims of domestic violence? I am not convinced that most really want funding for **all** the victims of domestic violence in their gender feminist shelters and centers. They want it primarily, if not only, for those whom they deem to be the real victims of domestic violence, namely women. Simply, until we see domestic violence as a family-system collapse and not as gender specific issue deep in a gender feminist culture, few changes will occur in the political arena. This is sad, but true.

These three major obstacles, men and patriarchy, gender feminism, and gender politics, all work against male victims getting the kind of help, assistance and out-reach programs they need in our communities. There are men who in a patriarchal culture do **not** want society to view them as victims of domestic violence. There are women in their gender feminist culture of female victimology who do **not** want society to view women as perpetrators of domestic violence. Finally, gender politics wants to insure that **all** of the funding for domestic violence is directed toward the “real” victims of domestic violence, namely only female victims of partner violence.

### **Assaults and Injuries:**

Most of the studies on domestic violence have looked at the female victim of the male perpetrator, but fewer studies have showcased the male victim of the female perpetrator. When we look at most survey data on domestic “assaults” against men by women in the general population, the percentages are close to the same as those assaults against women by men. When we look at the small percentage of those who report they needed to see a doctor as a result of their injuries (3% for women and 0.4% for men who were assaulted), the percentage rate for men who sought medical attention is closer to 15% compared to the 85% of women who seek medical attention. Tjaden (1998) found that women were 14 times more likely to be beaten up (6.1% female compared to .5% male). Yet, when she looked at injury rates, she found that the percentage was less, 41% for female injuries compared to 19% male injuries. In other words, women were *not* seven to ten times more likely to be injured compared to male victims, but more like *twice* as likely to be injured. This is significant in itself. Even when one looks at all the subjects in the study who reported being assaulted by their partners, male or female, 23%, or nearly a *quarter* of those who were injured by their intimate partners, were men. In other words, one in four domestic assaults in this country resulted in injuries to men, based on the research. These men warrant social concern and attention even if we say that 15% to 25% of male victims were *injured*. The point should also be made that we rarely consider the *emotional* and *psychological* injury a *man* may experience when he is assaulted by his female partner, even if there is no physical injury.

### **Social Concern:**

Even when we look only at Archival data, female arrest rates for domestic violence in Los Angeles and Sacramento have risen from about 7.0% (1987) to 14% (1995). California Department of Justice arrest rates for domestic violence have doubled from 7% (1991) to 13% (1995). The NCVS rates for reported male victims has risen from 6% (1975) to 15% (1996). These figures suggest that about **15%** of “reported” domestic violence and/or “arrests” involve male victims even if we ignore most survey data that suggest that men and women are being assaulted nearly the same rate.

Let’s compare this percentage to the rise in female AIDS patients in California. In 1990 about **5.1%** of AIDS patients were women. In 1996 the number of women with AIDS rose to **10.6%** (California Department of Health Services, 1996). It is interesting that there are more reports and literature for “women with AIDS” than for “male victims of domestic violence.” The question is why?

It would be wrong to say:

“We cannot have an out reach program for female AIDS patients, because it would reduce the funding for the “real” victims of AIDS, namely gay men.”



Yet this argument is used for male victims who need equal outreach efforts and assistance. Again, I am extremely glad that women over the past thirty years are finally getting the assistance they need when they are faced with violent relationships. This paper is **not** meant to minimize the struggles many women suffer every day because they are living with violent partners, but we must look at **all** victims and perpetrators of domestic violence if we are ever going to significantly reduce violence in couples and families.

The problem with the "domestic violence movement" is that it has become a feminist political movement more than an attempt to help *all* victims of domestic violence equally and with the same concern. Although feminists have indeed helped many women, they have done so at the expense of men who are also victims of abuse. Neither have they focused on helping violent women who need assistance with their anger and abusive behavior. It reminds me of some religious group that raise money to help starving children, then uses the money not only to help the malnourished children, but to also indoctrinate the culture with their particular religious beliefs.

At times it seems that some shelters and women's centers use the topic of female victims of domestic violence to gain the political and monetary power they need to help these women, but to also influence law enforcement, the judicial system, legislators and the community at large with their gender feminist victimology and their one-sided sexist representation of domestic violence. In other words, *some*, perhaps many of these feminist workers may be using domestic violence shelters and centers as vehicles to further their gender feminist dogma and beliefs.

### **Politicians and Domestic Violence Against Women:**

Politicians support domestic violence legislation for various reasons. Some support it because they have personally experienced domestic violence in their lives or have seen it in the lives of their female family members or female friends. Some politicians may have very strong patriarchal views about their responsibility for protecting the "weaker" sex, and therefore automatically support legislation that appears to protect women. There are those politicians on the liberal side who support feminist causes because they see women as an important political base. Then there are those politicians on the conservative side, of whom many don't support abortion rights, who are looking for some *safe* woman's cause they can fully support, and domestic violence legislation to help women is just such a cause. These conservatives are not likely to give up the political capital they gain with women by only supporting domestic violence programs for women. In some ways, I believe that liberals are more influenced by gender feminism beliefs, while conservatives are more influenced by patriarchal beliefs. As I have already stated, **both** gender feminism *and* patriarchy do not tend to be sympathetic and seriously concerned

about male victims of domestic violence. They are both unlikely to state their desire to help male victims in our country. Liberals need to understand that by primarily placing men into the category of perpetrators and women into the category of victims, they juvenilize women from taking equal responsibility for their at times violent “adult” behavior. Women will never find equality in our society until they accept full responsibility for their adult behavior. Real feminists have fought hard to overcome the juvenilization of women in our society for years. These feminists do not want society to continue to treat women as children or “girls.” Liberals are not helping women find true equality as long as they make excuses for female aggressive and abusive behavior toward men and children. Conservatives, on the other hand, need to understand that, in their need to show that they are *women* friendly, they are supporting the furtherance of *sexist feminist* dogma by not insuring that funding for domestic violence legislation includes helping *all* victims of domestic violence regardless of gender.

### **Men Are People Too:**

Why is society less willing to help men than it is to help women? Maybe it's because:

Men are to be **self-sufficient**. This means they don't need to be helped by others.

Men are to be **strong**. This means they shouldn't have physical and emotional pain, sadness or fear.

Men are to be the **protectors** in society, especially of women and children. This means they shouldn't be victims or need protection from women who attack them.

### **What we tell men is “Fend for yourselves, you have all the power and control” But do they?**

Graham-Kevan and Archer (2001) found that “Controlling behaviors accounted for significant proportions in the variance of the use of physical aggression and inflicting injuries for both men and women. The implications of these findings are that, contrary to feminist and evolutionary theory, physical aggression to a partner is related to controlling behaviors in women as well as men.” (p. 2) Hamel (2002) found that the tactics found in the classic “Power and Control Wheel,” which is often applied to male perpetrators only, is also found to be used with female perpetrators as well. (p. 10 & 11) A woman can physically intimidate by smashing things and threatening to injure her partner while he's asleep. She can emotionally abuse him by putting him down, by saying he is not being a good provider, that he is not a good sex partner, by insisting on talking to him at 2:00 am when he needs to get up at 5:00am for work, by being jealous of him with other people, by threatening to get custody of the children in family court. This last one gives women a lot of control. Unless a woman is a drug addict or mentally disabled,

family court is likely to give the woman primary physical custody of her children. One man I have worked with shared how the very week his wife was *convicted* of domestic violence against him, family court gave her 85% physical custody of his children. This is not unusual. Men who have children are torn between leaving their violent wives or losing primary custody of their children. Many men stay with abusive wives in silence in order to be with their children, and in a number of cases to protect their children from the abuse they also receive from their mothers.

Women also exercise power and control through making light of their abusive behavior, lying that they didn't abuse their partners or falsely accusing their male partners of abusing them. A few years ago, on the Sally Jessie Raphael T.V. show, a woman publicly admitted that she had falsely accused her boyfriend three separate times of physically assaulting her, when it was the other way around - she assaulted him. As a result, he served a one-year sentence because he loved her and didn't want her children to see their mother arrested or go to jail. Some men, in their patriarchal protective mode, are willing to go to jail rather than to see their children witness their mothers go to jail. Women can also refuse to work while racking up huge debts. They can threaten to hurt themselves if the man says he's not going to put up with her abuse any longer and is going to leave. These are all ways *women* can exercise power and control over male partners. One might say that men can do these things too. I am sure men can and do these things as well, but that's the point. Power and control tactics are not just something men do. Women do so as well. Both use power and control over their partners, some tactics are similar, some are different, but the result can be the same - silent fear.

We tend to hold men more responsible for their abusive action than we do women. Society seems to be more likely to request more punishment and educational treatment for men, while offering more sympathy and psychological treatment for women who physically abuse their spouses. I think it is important to reiterate again, that although women may find equality under the law, they will not be seen as true equals in a society that continues to juvenilize them by *not* holding them responsible for their "adult" and violent behavior toward men and children. There is a bumper sticker that reads, "There is no excuse for domestic violence." It does not read "There is no excuse for domestic violence, *unless you are a woman.*" Excusing women for violent acts against their husbands, with or without injuries, will not help women in the long run; will not help their children who watch the violence, and will not help men who tolerate the abuse against them.

### **Summary**

Social research is not an exact science. Yet, it may help point us in the correct direction if we study all of it thoroughly. In the case of domestic violence there are several camps of thought. Those from a *gender feminist model* see everything in terms

of gender socialization and emphasize the strong socialized differences between males and females. They see all women to some degree as victims, simply because they live in a “patriarchal society” that teaches males to exercise dominion over women as a natural right. They strongly believe that because of the males’ need for “power and control,” men historically have felt they have the right or “male privilege” to physically chastise women when they do something they feel is wrong, or to subjugate them. They see that this patriarchal privilege is the primary source of domestic violence against women. And since women historically have lacked power or control in society, it is very difficult for them to see anyone but men as perpetrators of spousal abuse.

The *family system model* sees the family as a dynamic organism that affects each member. It tends to see most cases of domestic violence as a “dance of violence,” rather than as one person simply being the perpetrator and the other being cast in the role of victim. This model sees each person in the family as playing some part in the interpersonal dynamics of the family’s health or dysfunction to one degree or another. Members of a family can find themselves living a particular script, which can be very different from one family to the next. Although these scripts can change, it happens with great effort, and usually the family resists change in order to maintain homeostasis and stability. With this model each person plays an important part in the family drama for good or bad, and therefore shares some level of responsibility for that system continuing.

Another model often used to explain spousal abuse is the *learning theory model*. In this theory each person is taught from an early age how he/she should and can behave with others. In effect, behavior and attitudes are handed down from one generation to the next, primarily by the caregivers. For example, this theory recognizes that the child abuse of today contributes to the domestic violence and criminal behavior of tomorrow. Here women, as well as men, play an important role in the socialization skills their children develop. Mothers may actually play a more important role with their children than fathers, especially in single parent families headed by women. When it comes to the negative side of learning, although men are six times more likely to sexually abuse girls and boys, women are two times more likely to *physically* abuse children than men. Learning theorists are open to the concept that women as well as men can lay the foundation for male or female perpetrators when these children grow into adulthood. Therefore women as well as men can contribute to the violence against women (or men) by abusing their sons or daughters.

Another camp is the *socioeconomic model*, which looks at factors that may contribute to the level of domestic violence in our society, such as economics, education, ethnicity, teen pregnancy, or drug and alcohol abuse. The *organic model* explores how head traumas and childhood abuse actually affect or even changed

brain chemistry and structure permanently. These changes make people less capable of monitoring their aggressive behavior, more irritable, subject to more developmental problems, and maybe more prone to violence as both children and adults, including spousal abuse. The *psychological model* looks at psychiatric disorders that may contribute greatly to domestic violence, like personality disorders, especially Borderline and Anti-Social disorders and traits. New research is strongly pointing to a relationship between borderline organization in male and female perpetrators of domestic violence.

**All** of these models can contribute to the study of domestic violence, *including* the feminist model. The problem today though is that most shelters, domestic violence centers, and domestic violence training come primarily, if not exclusively, from the gender feminist theory and model, which minimizes the importance of other approaches to solve the problem of domestic violence, as well as the genuine social problem of violent women and male victims they help create. Unless these other models are equally explored and the topic of male victims of domestic violence is taken seriously, it is unlikely that domestic violence will be greatly reduced.

We all can have biases. The important thing is that we are aware of them and open to other information that may not always support our primary belief. In talking to a nationally noted feminist researcher about the topic of male victims, she was honest enough to tell me that, “at times I do struggle between that part of me which is a feminist and that part of me which is a researcher.” In other words, she struggles with research that is sound yet does not support her feminist theory about the causes or treatment of spousal abuse. Some researchers are not as honest or as brave to make such a statement.

### **So what have I learned about domestic violence against men?**

- I have learned that even *archival* data, which come from police reports, hospital records, district attorney’s offices, tell us that male victims make up **more** than 5% of the victims. Current *archival* statistics indicate that **15%** or more of the victims of domestic violence are men. I also know that archival data should **not** be used to make generalizations about the percentage differences between male and female victims of spousal abuse in the general public, because this data only record what has been reported. This is important because women are about 8 times more likely to report their victimization of domestic violence than men, thus inflating and loading archival figures toward the woman side of the equation.
- I learned that *survey* data range from 15% to 60% male victims of domestic violence. But **most** of the survey data show that men and women are assaulting each other at *nearly the same rate*, or between 35 and 50 percent male victims. Naturally, gender feminist organizations minimize this survey

data. They use the one governmental survey (NCVS), out of many other survey research studies, that shows the largest difference between male and female victims, 15% to 85% respectively. What they don't tell us is that the NCVS also shows the smallest number of female victims of domestic violence (840,000 female victims), not the 4 to 6 million female victims they present in workshops, which come from other surveys. These other surveys suggest men and women are assaulting each other at nearly the same rate. Regardless of what one believes, it appears that the *greater* the projected number of victims a particular survey suggests, the *smaller* the percentage difference between male and female victims. Another way to put this is to say that those studies which show the *greatest* percentage difference between male and female victims also show the *smallest* projected number of male and female victims of intimate partner assaults.

- I learned that most survey data suggest that 50 to 80 percent of domestic violence is *mutual* assault, although our society still appears to make men solely responsible for this violence. About 25% of the violence is from women only, and 25% of the violence is from men only. It is doubtful that victims of mutual assault either seek help from a shelter or are taken seriously because of feminist beliefs about the cause of spousal abuse. Law enforcement is not encouraged to arrest both partners in mutual assault, because it is harder to prosecute them together in court. This is why they are taught to only arrest the "primary aggressor," which they may typically perceive as being the man.
- I learned that even though the percentage of assault rates between men and women is nearly the same in many of the survey studies, women are *twice* as likely to report they are injured as men. The latest study suggests that the percentage difference is greater for the more severe injuries against women. Yet men are still injured in both minor and severe assaults. The National Institute of Justice (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998) suggests that one out of four victims of intimate partner injuries is a man. Most of the research only explores those who say they needed to go to the doctor or needed medical treatment. This line of questioning is flawed because it does not take into account that men may be less likely to report minor injuries than are women. Men are also less likely to seek medical treatment for similar injuries. Future studies need to have an indication of medical treatment for similar injuries. Future studies need to have an *injury index* with specific types of injuries that both women and men can sustain.
- I learned that, despite the fact that many in the domestic violence movement assert that, if women do assault men, most do so for reasons of self-defense. *Survey* data (limited as it is) do not support this claim. I only found three

survey studies that explored the area of reason or the context of the assault. The three studies suggest that only **10 to 20 percent** of women assault their intimate partners for clear reasons of self-defense. Perhaps this is because women who reported assaulting their partners to “get through to him” or “make him do something” are much less likely to seek help at a shelter than women who assault their partners because they were assaulted first, or thought they were about to be assaulted. Many women still believe slapping a man’s face or hitting his back, shoulder, or testicles, or throwing something hard at him for reasons other than self-defense, are not forms of domestic violence, **but they are!** Domestic violence workers might be more accurate saying that “of the women *we* work with at our shelter most women assault their partners for reasons of self-defense, but this does not count the 80% of women who assault their partners, who never seek help at our center.”

**Compassionate Touch:**

Are male victims of domestic violence at a level that requires our interest, concern, and assistance?

**YES!**

None of our citizens should be **disenfranchised** because of their sex. We may say this, but do our funding and outreach programs reflect this goal?

**They don’t.**

**Ignoring Male Victimization:**

People will present various arguments and reasons for minimizing male abuse by women. Some minimize male abuse because they are stuck in a theory or model that portrays men primarily as perpetrators and women primarily as victims in a patriarchal society that is determined to oppress women. Others minimize male abuse because they are afraid they will have to share the funding. Then there are those who minimize male abuse because it challenges the idea that women are by nature non-violent, “sugar and spice and everything nice,” and do not have a need for power and control over others. Some just can’t or won’t believe that some women are capable of falsely accusing male partners of domestic violence. They believe women always tell the truth. This has an enormous impact on the children, who then lose visitation time with their fathers. Men themselves also minimize male abuse because they do not want to be seen as victims, wimps or vulnerable to abuse by others, especially at the hands of women.

**25 years ago Dr. Suzanne Steinmetz wrote:**

**“Husband abuse is not uncommon, although many tend to ignore it, dismiss it or treat it with selective inattention... While the horrors of wife-beating are paraded before the public, and crisis lines and shelters are being established, the other side of the coin - husband-beating - is still hidden under a cloak of secrecy. But is husband battering really an unknown phenomenon, or is it simply another example of selective inattention?” (Steinmetz, 1978)**

Things haven't changed much in 25 years. When the topic of husband abuse is brought up it is typically explained away and minimized by some who say, “Yes, we know that there are male victims of domestic violence, but the percentage is very small, only about 5%, and of those women who do assault their husbands it is usually for reasons of self-defense.”

**This simply is not true!**

Although archival data may suggest a lower “reporting rate” of domestic violence against men (currently 13%, not 5% as some insist), ***most survey data*** suggest that physical abuse between men and women is nearly the same, and that about 80% of assaults by wives and husbands are for reasons ***other*** than self-defense. The message we give to our sons, grandsons, and other men is that you are not as important or as valuable as women when it comes to being victims of intimate partner violence.

**It's Time to Address This Oversight.**

When someone tries to pull the curtain aside to reveal the whole truth about domestic violence, gender feminists and others try to pull the curtain back to conceal the truth, like the Wizard of OZ, and want people to see only the image *they* are projecting. That is why the only training programs and workshops they want law enforcement and others to hear are theirs. They have had the spotlight on female victims for a number of years. They do not want someone turning on the stage lights to see who else might be on stage, like men, especially heterosexual men. They fear they will lose ground in their “movement” if they do.

**Treatment Recommendations:**

Here are just a few treatment recommendations I would make when working with men:

1. **Ask men the same questions you ask women.** Ask, “Has your wife or girlfriend ever destroyed your personal property, thrown something at you, hit or slapped you, threatened to assault your testicles, etc.?”



2. Share with men that most research data suggest men and women do assault each other at **nearly the same rate**.
3. Address the **embarrassment and shame** men especially have about discussing their victimization and not wanting others to see them as victims or wimps.
4. Recommend they read *Abused Men: The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence*, by Philip Cook, *Violent Touch*, or other works that showcase the issue of male victims of domestic violence.

### **Public Policy Recommendations:**

Here are just a few public policy recommendations I would make:

1. Increase “**gender-inclusive language**” in domestic violence literature. When people use gender-neutral language like “the victim,” most people read this as meaning “the woman.” They have an image of a female victim, not a male one. Include the message that men can be and are victims of domestic violence at levels that warrant our social concern, and that help is available for them and their children.
2. Increase “**unbiased gender research**” into the topic of domestic violence. Make sure that the data present the complete picture and not just domestic violence against women.
3. Ensure that men and women not only have equal protection under the law, but that “**funding**” is given to help male victims of domestic violence as well.
4. Have domestic violence centers that receive public funds be required to have active programs for male victims and female perpetrators of domestic violence in both their **out-reach programs, presentations, and literature**.
5. “**Talk**” about the subject. Ask questions. Contact public officials and the legislature. Write articles. Do research. Give presentations.

### **“Good Will Toward Men”:**

This is the title of a book by Jack Kammer. Men are people too. They are your fathers, your brothers, your sons and your grandsons. When men say they are having “marital problems,” ask them about physical abuse. The next time a domestic violence worker says she or he works with male victims of domestic violence, ask them to share with you about their active “out-reach program” for male victims, and how their “literature” and “posters” encourage male victims of domestic violence to seek help. Until there are active and public outreach programs and services for male victims in the community, it is doubtful males will come forward to seek help. The domestic violence movement must be fully inclusive of all victims and perpetrators of violence and abuse. Children learn the wrong lesson whether it is dad **or** mom who assaults their partner. Children will then learn that violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflict between people. This is not the lesson we want children to learn.

**Vision:**

I envision domestic violence shelters and centers that have active outreach programs and services for *all* victims regardless of gender, unlike the situation today. I envision programs that not only focus on helping the female victim and male perpetrator, but are equally concerned with helping the male victim, female perpetrator and those couples involved in *mutual* violence toward each other. Mutual abuse actually makes up most of the cases of domestic violence. This dream will only come through education and new research about the whole truth concerning domestic violence.

**Is Anyone Listening?**

Twenty-five years ago many in the women's movement invited men to be more open with their feelings. Now that men are sharing their feelings, is anyone listening? These men need your help.

**There is no excuse for domestic violence, *regardless of gender.***

**Let's finally act as if we really mean it.**

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