



Violent Touch: Breaking Through the Stereotype.

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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 females by males in society, and are not particularly interested in showcasing the maltreatment of males by females, 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 for it at the feet of men, and highlight the problem of living in a patriarchal society. They suggest that either women are only abusing male partners in self-defense, or that women abuse children only because of abuse they have first received from their male partners. Some go so far as to suggest that child abuse will end simply when women are safe. As a result of these beliefs, the only domestic violence discourse which we hear from gender feminists is the abuse that happens to females by males and not the other way around. Yet what about the fact that there are also male victims of domestic violence by women, independent of self-defense or the evils of patriarchy? Who might these men be and how many are there in the general population?

In this paper I make a distinction between the terms **domestic violence**, **domestic abuse**, and **sexual assault**. 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* 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 males or females.

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 many husbands have been given social permission to physically chastise their wives. Over the years we have been trying to send a clear message to husbands that such behavior is not only wrong but criminal. Wife abuse has been with us for hundreds 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 has 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). 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 murdered, raped and physically beaten by their partner than men. **Of course, this 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 against 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 the 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

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 exposed them to conflict on the streets and in neighborhoods in which they lived.

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, 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 told 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 comical 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:

	Aggressive Behavior	Angry Emotion
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Women	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?
Men	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 spouse 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. This suggests 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)

What Does the Research Say About Domestic Violence?

Researchers use different methods to study a phenomena. The two most 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 is 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, and is typically anonymous.
- ❖ **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.

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

The following statistical information is not meant to stop giving attention to female victims of domestic violence. 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. It will suggest that domestic violence is far from a gender-specific event, and represents a family system collapse that needs our full awareness.

Archival Data on Domestic Violence

What does 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 for male abuse. Archival data in the 70's did 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 current archival data tell us about domestic violence?

Current Archival Data

Los Angeles Police Department:

Year	# of Women	% of Women Arrested	# of Men Assaulted	% of Men Arrested
❖ 1995	1,262	<u>14.3%</u>	7,513	<u>85.7%</u>
❖ 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	<u>7.0%</u>	4,540	<u>93.0%</u>

(Bennett, 1997, p. 5)

This data indicates 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	<u>13%</u>
❖ 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 indicates 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" suggests 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 Percentage Increase		Under 18 Percentage Increase	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Arson:	3%	<u>27%</u>	15%	<u>70%</u>
Aggravated Assault:	4%	<u>37%</u>	6%	<u>39%</u>
Weapons, carrying, possessing, etc.:	2%	<u>13%</u>	11%	<u>42%</u>
Offenses against family and children:	35%	<u>62%</u>	54%	<u>77%</u>

(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 comes from specialized and clinical sources, such as police, hospital, agency records, and domestic violence centers. 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) Few advocates 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 records 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 incomplete.

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 survey data tells 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 is found in archival data. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ-154348)

The latest NCVS (1996) indicates 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 were 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 million women, not 840,000 women, who are assaulted every year by their husbands, and that the FBI reports that every 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) It is “a widely used instrument with good reliability and validity.” (Plichta, 1996, p.240)

In its first national study, National Family Violence Survey (NFVS) as expected showed a significant number of women, **12.1%**, who reported some level of physical assault against them by their husbands or girlfriends, twelve times greater than the **0.75%** of women who reported being physically abused

in the 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 into the category of “*beaten*.” This is where the **2 million** figure comes from.

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 women 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 data really 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. 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:	6 seconds	5 seconds	9 seconds
Wife on Husband:	5.5 million	6.5 million	*
Husband Assaulted Every:	6 seconds	5 seconds	*

* 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. One can only wonder why.

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) (55%)	340 (45%)	420
- 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 assaulted their female partners and 9% of women assaulted their male partners.

In a recent U.S. study 39% of the men studied 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 female against women. (Peterson, K., 1999) This all supports what most survey research has suggested, 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)

Some criticize the CTS often used in these studies, namely the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). 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, the critics often use data that comes 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 which 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 is 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 considers herself 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 <u>1,000 couples</u>	
	Number	Percentage
❖ Minor Violent Acts		
Threw something at wife	30	5%
Pushed/grabbed/shoved/slapped wife	50	5%
❖ Severe Violent Acts		
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 that related to domestic violence. Had they asked the men, it may have been discovered that a man is assaulted by his spouse every 10 seconds or even every 5 seconds. Because researchers did not ask the men about their victimization we will never know how many seconds another man becomes a victim of domestic violence in our country. This was an opportunity missed. Also notice at 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 shows that virtually none of the women actually reported having been *beaten* (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 partner (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%). 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 still 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 10 percent, but more like 40 percent of victims of domestic violence who were assaulted by their partners. **Whether male assault victims are shown to be 35%, 40%, or 50%, it still is a significant number that warrants 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		Frequency			
	by Percentage		Mean		Median	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Assaults by:						
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
Minor Assault:						
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
Severe Assault:						
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	Projected			Projected		
	1975	%	Number	1985	%	Number
❖ <u>Husband to Wife</u>						
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>
❖ <u>Wife to Husband</u>						
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)

When you ask domestic violence presenters what percentage of female victims there are compared to male victims of domestic violence, they usually will go to “Archival” data and say “87%” female and “13%” male victims, if they use current data. But when you ask them what the projected number of female victims of domestic violence there are in the general population, they go to “Survey” data and say “4 to 6 million” women are assaulted every year. This mix-and-matching of data is highly irresponsible 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 is not said 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 far less than most domestic violence presenters quote. Nor is it said that survey data indicating 4 to 6 million women are assaulted in our country every year come from research that also 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) are compared to survey data (6 million), the result suggests what domestic violent workers have been saying for years, that domestic violence is under reported for women.

❖ The data suggest that only 8% of domestic violence against women is reported.

But it also suggests 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	~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 many be collecting a greater scope of assault cases that 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
❖ <u>Minor Violence Acts</u>				
Threw something	28	28	52	43
Pushed/grabbed/shoved	107	93	83	89
Slapped	51	29	46	41
❖ <u>Severe Violence Acts</u>				
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, not 26% or 36% or even 50% of women in our country who have been victims of a “wife beater.” 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 54% greater in 1985
 - *Slap: 41% greater in 1985
 - Kicked/bit/hit with fist: 29% greater in 1975 60% greater in 1985
 - Hit, tried to hit with something: 36% greater in 1975 77% greater in 1985
- ❖ Men were more likely to use the following type of assault:**
 - Push, grab, shove: 29% greater in 1975 4% greater in 1985
 - *Slap: 11% greater in 1975
 - Beat up: 83% greater in 1975 33% greater in 1985
 - Used a gun or knife: 50% greater in 1975 Even in 1985

Although U.S. crime reports show that women are twice as likely to be murdered by their spouses, it appears from these two studies that women used knives or guns against their husbands at the same rate that husbands use them

against their wives in the 1985 NFVS. Apparently men are twice as likely to survive the attacks.

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 when it came to less severe attacks, this 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* also 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.

Cathy Young, (1997) journalist, 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 suggests that domestic injuries against women or men is **not** the highest factor for ED visits as some have suggested. Nevertheless it does show that many more women are **treated** for domestic injuries in the ED than men.

In a recent article (Sacramento Bee, 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 were quick to state how 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 partner. 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, doing a study in a hospital instead of a representative national survey of the general population means that it has less power to generalize about a phenomenon.

As mentioned earlier, hospital records (ED) or hospital surveys may not be giving 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. Yet is it 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 tend to 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 to seek medical help or report to medical staff less serious injuries than women.

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 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.”

Another point 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 “yes.” 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.

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 **both** under report 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 they are reported by women themselves.

As Reported by Women:
Percentages of Assaults on Spouse

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 0.00007% of all the cases where men may have been physically abused and then make a generalization based on this data is really a stretch in reasoning. 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. 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. Jennifer Langhinrich-Rohling et al, (1996) found that **83%** of the couples studies engaged in “**bi-directional or mutual physical aggression.**”

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
Total committing assaults:	<u>11%</u>	<u>10%</u>
<u>Reason for Assault</u>		
❖ A. "Get through to..."	53%	64%
❖ B. "Something said or threatened..."	52%	53%
❖ C. "Some physical action..."	21%	27% (Self-Defense)
❖ D. "Stop doing something..."	33%	43%
❖ E. "Make do something..."	26%	26%
❖ F. "About to use physical action."	17%	21% (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 between 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 that 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 states on the contrary, they 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)

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? It could be because feminist researchers tend to ignore or explain away the data that points to violence against women by men. Perhaps it is also that women who seek help from domestic violence shelters are not the women who assault their husbands and boyfriends to “make them do something” or to “get through to them” in the general population, but are primarily those who are first assaulted by their male partners.

Based on empirical research a domestic violence worker may be more accurate 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.”

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? 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?

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. 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 over the past twenty-five years? 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.” This surely is not the approach they took twenty-five years ago when they developed centers for female victims. 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 help male victims. They do not want to send 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 it 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*.

Men Don't Tell:

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)

The Voice of Reason:

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. A 1994 CBS movie about a husband who was continually assaulted by his wife was appropriately titled: "**Men Don't Tell.**"

Why Don't Men Tell?

"The Wimp Factor."

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. Today men are not made to ride backward on donkeys, but they are still

considered “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 men.
- ❖ Men are to be strong. This means they can not express physical and emotional pain, sadness or fear, if they are 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 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 man.
- ❖ Has a need to express his physical and emotional pain, sadness and fear. This means he is not strong and is not a 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 true man.

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 a wimp choose action two: “**That didn’t hurt.**” 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*.

The Hidden Victims of Domestic Violence:

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).

Good Will Toward Men:

Men are where women were twenty to thirty years ago when it comes to the topic of domestic violence. Most of the studies on domestic violence have looked at the female victim or the male perpetrator, but few studies have been done on male victims and female perpetrators. 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. 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 all manner of assaults she found that 39% of domestic injuries from physical assaults were on men. In other words, two in five domestic assault injuries were sustained by men. These men warrant social concern and attention even if we say that 15% to 39% of male victims were injured. We rarely consider the emotional injury a man will experience when he is hit by a female partner.

Social Concern vs. Politics:

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 what most of the survey data tell us.

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 assistance. I am extremely glad that women over the past twenty-five years are finally getting the assistance they need when they are faced with a violent relationship. This paper is not meant to minimize the struggles many women suffer every day because they are living with violent partners.

The problem with the "domestic violence movement" is that it has become a feminist political movement more than helping 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. It reminds me of some religious group that raises money to help starving children, then uses the money not only 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 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 of them may be using domestic violence shelters and centers as a vehicle to further their gender feminist dogma and beliefs.

Liberal politicians support these feminists because they see them as political supporters and conservatives who want to show that they are also concerned about women's issues. They find violence-against-women legislation a safe agenda to support. Liberals need to understand that by primarily placing men into the category of perpetrators and women into the category of victims, they juvenileize women from taking any responsibility for their violent adult behavior, which is what true feminists have fought so hard to overcome in the past thirty years. They do not want society to treat women as children or "girls." 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 the power and control”
But do they?**

Perhaps it is also because society is more likely to request punishment for men and treatment for women who physically abuse their spouses. 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 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 differences between men and women. 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 males' need for “power and control” men historically have in society 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 in some form the responsibility for that system.

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 three 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 the abuse they give to 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 economic, education, ethnicity, teen pregnancy, or drug and alcohol abuse. The *organic model* explores how head traumas and childhood abuse actually affects or even changes 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, such as personality disorders (Borderline and Anti-Social disorders and traits) and Bipolar and Psychotic disorders. 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. The problem today is that most shelters, domestic violence centers, and law enforcement training come primarily from the gender feminist 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 end.

We all 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 talk with a noted feminist researcher about the topic of male victims, she was honest enough with me to say, "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 always support her feminist theory about the causes of spousal abuse. Some researchers are not as honest or as brave to make that statement.

So what have I learned about domestic violence against men? I have learned that even archival data, which comes 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 records 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 for women.

I learned that survey data range from 15% to 60% male victims of domestic violence. Yet, *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, feminist organizations minimize this survey data while men's groups emphasize them. 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.

I learned that even though the percentage of assault rate between men and women is nearly the same in many of the survey studies, women appear to report receiving more injuries than men. The latest study suggests that the percentage difference is greater for the more severe injuries against women. Yet, men are still both injured in minor and severe assaults. The National Institute of Justice (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998) suggests that two out of five victims of intimate partner injuries are men. 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, or to seek 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 two survey studies that explored the area of reason or the context of the assault. The two studies suggest that only *10 to 20 percent* of women assaulted their intimate partner 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 is not a form of domestic violence, **but it is!** Domestic violence workers might be more accurate saying that “of the women we work with at our shelter most women assault their partner for reasons of self-defense but this does not count the 80% of women who assault their partner, 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?

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 to also help men. Then there are those who minimize male abuse because it challenges the idea that women are by nature non-violent and do not have a need for power and control over others. Men themselves also minimize male abuse because they do not want to be seen as wimps or vulnerable by others, especially by women.

20 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 line 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 20 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 usually is 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.

Why, with so much research that continues to suggest men are also victims of domestic violence at a level that warrants our social concern, is this data so often criticized, minimized or simply ignored? Here are a few of thoughts that may answer this question. I think there are three basic reasons. First, there is the feeling or strongly held belief, especially among "gender feminist" researchers and shelter leaders, that domestic violence is strictly a byproduct of our patriarchal system which allows today's men to dominate and control the behavior of "their" women.

Claudia Dias , Director of Changing Courses, runs court ordered anger management classes for about 300 men and 75 women offenders every week. She reports that only about 15% of the men assaulted or abused their female partners because they felt they had the "male privilege" to do so. Feminists for over twenty years have quite successfully used the topic of domestic violence as a tool or artillery to weaken or abolish patriarchy. They believe that most, if not all of the domestic violence would end if men gave up their patriarchal beliefs in the home and in society. Although there are some men who feel they have a right to assault their female partner simply because they are male, over the past fifty years our patriarchy system has been watered down in our American culture, perhaps more than most other countries, and yet domestic violence cases have not gone down dramatically as one would suspect. Also feminists do not address the concept of "female privilege" when women feel they have the right to slap a man's face, hit his shoulder, or throw something hard at him when she feels he is behaving badly.

Feminists may have a contribution to make in understanding "some" of the etiology of domestic violence for some men, but we need to allow other voices to be heard that can help us better understand all the reasons for domestic violence in most of our families. Feminists are reluctant to accept that women can be just as violent toward men because it undercuts their basic

feminist belief, which states that domestic violence is primarily a problem of having a patriarchal society and therefore a problem with men. They present men as violators and women as nurturers. When someone tries to pull the curtain aside to reveal the whole truth about domestic violence, feminists, like the Wizard of OZ, try to pull the curtain back to conceal the truth and want people to only see the image *they* are projecting.

The second reason male victimization data is ignored or not even studied is that men are themselves part of the problem. Few men report their victimization, and even more minimize it when it happens to them. In our culture men are taught to be emotionally and physically stronger than women. They learn to suppress their physical and emotional pain as a sign of personal strength. For many, taking it like a man means don't complain and don't ever show you are in pain or vulnerable. This socialization works against men when it comes to sharing with others their victimization. We need to educate men about their own victimization and have outreach programs that help men feel comfortable when talking about their experience. They need to call a slap, a hit, a bit, a kick against them "domestic violence." For a man to admit he is a victim of spousal abuse is a very shaming thing. They often feel like "wimps" if they tell someone and they are often afraid that if they do leave an abusive wife or girlfriend she will still be given primary physical custody of their children by the family court system. One male victim told me that in the same week his wife was *convicted* of domestic violence against him another court gave her 85% physical custody of their children.

The third reason male victimization data is ignored comes from the idea that, where attention goes, money flows and where money flows, programs grow. Many feminists who run most of the shelters and serve on the boards of most domestic violence programs and organizations want all of the money to flow into helping female victims only. Because most of the legislative funding is created with the female victim in mind there is little incentive for these shelters to develop outreach programs or services for male victims. To be blunt, most feminist shelters and domestic violence organizations do not want to share their funding to help and actively reach out to male victims as they have reached out to women. They fear that any attention that goes to male victims will be followed with funding to help these men, and this means less money for the "real victims of domestic violence" - women. So any research that raises the issue of male victims must be quickly suppressed, attacked as unimportant or labeled as faulty. They have had the spot light on female victims for a number of years. They now 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:

1. **Ask men the same questions you ask of women.** Ask, “Has your wife ever destroyed your personal property, thrown something at you, hit or slapped you, threatened to assault your genitals, etc.?”
2. Share with men that most research data suggest men and women assault each other at **nearly the same rate.**
3. Address the **embarrassment and shame** men especially have about discussing their victimization.
4. Recommend they read **Abused Men: The Hidden Side of Domestic Violence**, by Philip Cook.

Public Policy Recommendations:

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.” Include the message that men can be and are victims of domestic violence at a level that warrants 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 presents the complete picture and not just domestic violence against women.
3. Make sure that men and women not only have equal protection under the law, but that “**funding**” is given to help male victims of domestic violence.
4. Have domestic violence centers that receive public funds be required to have an “**out-reach**” program for male victims and female perpetrators of domestic violence in both their presentation 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 her or him to share with you their “out-reach program” for male victims, and how their “literature” encourages 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.

Is Anyone Listening:

Twenty 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.

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Other suggested readings and information on male victims of domestic violence:

- ABC 20/20 video: Battered by their wives. September 19, 1997, \$29.95, call 1-800-913-3434
- Abused men: The hidden side of domestic violence by Philip Cook, publisher: Praeger, 1997. ISBN: 0-275-95862-0
- When she was bad: Violent women and the myth of innocence by Patricia Pearson, publisher: Viking, 1997. ISBN: 0-670-85925-7
- Who stole feminism: How women have betrayed women by Christina Hoff Sommers, publisher: Simon and Schuster, 1996. ISBN: 0-684-80156-6
- Ceasefire: Why Women and Men Must Join Forces to Achieve True Equality. New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, Publishers. ISBN: 0-684-83442-1
- The myth of male power by Warren Farrell, publisher: New York: Berkley, 1993. ISBN: 0-425-15523-4

- Violent Touch: Breaking Through the Stereotype by David L. Fontes, Psy.D.
45 page booklet for \$12.50 per copy includes shipping and handling.