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Patriarchy and Wife Assault: The Ecological Fallacy

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A critical review is made of feminist analyses of wife assault postulating that patriarchy is a direct cause of wife assault. Data are reviewed from a variety of studies indicating that (a) lesbian battering is more frequent than heterosexual battering, (b) no direct relationship exists between power and violence within couples, and (c) no direct relationship exists between structural patriarchy and wife assault. It is concluded that patriarchy must interact with psychological variables in order to account for the great variation in power-violence data. It is suggested that some forms of psychopathology may lead to some men adopting patriarchal ideology to justify and rationalize their own pathology.

During the late 1970s a number of single-factor explanations for male assaultiveness toward women were proffered. These included sociobiology (Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982), psychiatric disorders (Faulk, 1974), and patriarchy (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Yllo, 1988). Sociobiological explanations were based on the premise that the primary motive of men is to maximize their contribution to the gene pool (Daly & Wilson, 1988). By extension, male rage over sexual threat was viewed by sociobiologists as having "survival value" (Wilson, 1975). Dutton (1988) argued that socially learned notions of anger and violence added explanatory power to the individual variation in behavioral responses to sexual threat and that the source of rage in intimate relationships was not kinship per se, but ego identity factors naturally confounded with kinship. In elaborating the ontogeny of rage behaviors, Dutton (1994) was able to account for individual variation among males in response to a common stimulus, which sociobiology could not do.

Dutton (1988) also argued that psychiatric "explanations" were not actually explanatory, since they did no more than link assaultiveness to existing diagnostic categories without etiological explication (see also Pantony & Caplan, 1991). They also frequently overlooked important contextual factors that contributed to assault causation.

Dutton (1988) argued that no single-factor explanation for wife assault sufficiently elucidated the available data and proposed instead a nested ecological theory examining interactive effects of the broader culture (macrosystem), the subculture (exosystem), the family

(microsystem), and individually learned characteristics (ontogeny). Attempts to explain individual behavior solely through aggregate social categories have been termed the *ecological fallacy* by Dooley and Catalano (1984). By this they mean that more within-category individual variation exists than the categorical view acknowledges. Below I shall examine several data sources that demonstrate, in my opinion, the ecological fallacy in feminist views of wife assault. In general, the purpose of this article is to examine several new data sources in the area of wife assault that are problematic from a feminist perspective. The argument is made that feminism needs to give greater weight to male individual difference variables and how these variables might interact with socialization.

FEMINIST VIEWS OF WOMAN ASSAULT

According to Bograd (1988), there are some defining features that are central to most feminist analyses of the phenomenon of woman assault. All feminist researchers, clinicians and activists address a primary question: "Why do men beat their wives?" This question "directs attention to the physical violence occurring in heterosexual relationships" (p. 13) and distinguishes feminists from others who ask, "What psychopathology leads to violence?" or "Why are people involved in violent interactions in families?" Since the phrasing of a question always directs attention toward something and away from something else, the causes of "beating of wives" must perforce reside in "men." As Bograd goes on to write: "Feminists seek to understand why *men in general* use physical force against their partners and what functions this serves for a society in a given historical context" (p. 13). When an ideological focus decides to question the use of violence by "men in general," it will necessarily emphasize broader social forces that differentiate men from women and will deemphasize differences among men. This orientation has manifested itself in a feminist focus on patriarchy, male concern for power (Walker, 1989), and macrosystem factors, rather than on ontogenetic factors that might differentiate one male from another.¹

Bograd describes several dimensions of analysis that are common to feminist perspectives on wife abuse. These include the explanatory utility of the constructs of gender and power and the analysis of the family as a historically situated social institution.

From the first of these analytic dimensions, wife assault is seen to be a systematic form of domination and social control of women by men. All men can potentially use violence as a powerful means of subordinating women. Men as a class benefit from how women's lives are restricted because of their fear of violence. Wife abuse reinforces women's dependence and enables all men to exert authority and control. The reality of domination at the societal level is the most crucial factor contributing to, and maintaining, wife abuse at the individual level. In other words, the maintenance of patriarchy and patriarchal institutions is the main contributor to wife assault. Wife assault is mainly "normal" violence committed, not by madmen who are unlike other men, but by men who believe that patriarchy is their right, that marriage gives them unrestricted control over their wife, and that violence is an acceptable means of establishing this control (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 57).² The claim from a feminist analytical perspective, therefore, is twofold: that society is patriarchal and that the use of violence to maintain male domination is accepted. As Dobash and Dobash (1979) put it, "Men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in Western society—aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination—and they are using physical force as a means to enforce that dominance" (p. 24).

This feminist view implicates patriarchy as the major cause of wife assault rather than an inducement that interacts with other causes. Bograd (1988) claims that "the reality of domination at the social level is the most crucial factor contributing to and maintaining wife abuse at the personal level" (p. 14). As Smith (1990) puts it, "any theoretical work that claims to be feminist probably must sooner or later seriously address the concept of patriarchy" (p. 257). Domination of women is viewed, from the feminist perspective, as a cultural prescription, and violence against women as a means to that end. This emphasis on the cultural is reflected in the feminist distrust of psychological causes of male violence (Goldner, Penn, Sheinberg, & Walker, 1990) as potentially "exonerative" of male violence and by the lack of empirical studies of putative interactive causes conducted within a feminist perspective. Indeed, much feminist analysis (Bograd, 1988) argues that an emphasis on psychopathology in explaining wife assault is misguided because wife assault results from "normal psychological and behavioral patterns of most men" (p. 17) and that "trait theories tend to excuse the abusive man through reference to alcohol abuse or poor childhood histories" (p. 17).³

The result of the feminist analysis of wife assault has been the acknowledgment of the powerful and complex role of social factors in creating the context in which violence occurs. As Walker (1989) points out, feminist analysis puts research findings back into the context from which they were deracinated by scientific abstraction. For example, as Rosewater (1987) has shown, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory scores on battered women were typically read out of context and misdiagnosed. Post hoc scores that indicated anger, anxiety, and confusion in response to battering were misinterpreted as indicating a preexisting "personality problem" such as paranoia. Similarly, Dutton and Painter (1981) and Dutton (1983) demonstrated how contextual features of battering formed paradoxical attachments that made leaving a battering relationship difficult and led to erroneous interpretations of battered women as masochistic. Further, Browne and Williams (1989) demonstrated how female-perpetrated homicide decreased when criminal justice system resources became more available to women in abusive relationships, a pattern that was distinct from male homicide.

Browne (1992) also showed conclusively that the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979) could not be used to compare male and female violence. Every assessed act on the CTS is different when performed by a man. The reasons have to do with the greater force of the action, the relative strength of perpetrator and target, the point of impact of the action, and the target's ability to resist or escape. Browne's argument shows the dangers of removing context from the measurement process and leads to a reassessment of using the CTS to compare male with female violence out of context. As the above examples demonstrate, feminist focus on the context of violence has led to some valuable reassessments of research findings.

Despite these impressive accomplishments, however, it is difficult to reconcile other key research findings with the feminist approach. Indeed, close reading of feminist theory and research on the problem of wife assault reveals what Kuhn (1965) referred to as a paradigm. Paradigms direct research but also serve to deflect critical analysis of the paradigms' own central tenets through diverting attention from contradictory data. A worldview develops (Janis, 1982), whereby attention is redirected from potential contradictory information. The predominant, almost exclusive, focus of feminist research on cultural determinants has left psychopathology unexamined and not systematically connected to cultural markers. The result has been an analysis characterized by broad statements about male privilege and male dominance in the face of clear evidence for heterogeneous male behaviors in intimate

relationships. Hence, feminist researchers draw conclusions about "men's violent reactions to challenges to their authority, honor and self-esteem" based on studies of male criminals (Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992, p. 75) or talk of the "androcentric need for power" (Walker 1989, p. 696) while simultaneously rejecting equally simplistic stereotyping of women.

DIRECT TESTS OF PATRIARCHY

Some direct empirical tests of patriarchal norms on assaultiveness have been reported in the literature. Yllo and Straus (1990) attempted a quantitative analysis of the relationship between patriarchy and wife assault by assessing the latter with the CTS, and the former with (U.S.) state-by-state economic, educational, political, and legal indicators of the structural inequality of women. A composite Status of Women Index resulted, with Alaska having the highest status (70) and Louisiana and Alabama the lowest (28). An ideological component of patriarchy was also assessed: the degree to which state residents believed that husbands should be dominant in family decision-making (patriarchal norms).

A curvilinear (U-shaped) relationship was found between structural indicators and wife assault rates, with the lowest and highest status of women states having the highest rates of severe wife assault. Structural indicators and patriarchal norms had a correlation of near zero. Patriarchal norms were related to wife assault in that states with the most male-dominant norms had double the wife assault rate of states with more egalitarian norms.

Yllo and Straus explain their data by arguing that high violence rates in states where the status of women is highest are caused by a breakdown of patriarchal norms and males resorting to violence to bolster threatened masculinity. This explanation assumes that the structural changes came initially and that family patriarchal norms lagged behind, thus generating conflict. However, no independent evidence to support this temporal relationship is presented.

Since low status states also have high rates of wife assault, the authors explain this as due to "greater force being necessary to keep women in their place and because women in these states have fewer alternatives to violent marriage" (p. 394). It is not clear why "greater force" in such states is necessary because alternatives to marriage are few.

The implication of this study is that in low status states, women are more likely to be trapped in abusive marriages, whereas in high status states, women feel freer to leave, but males are more threatened. However, trapping women in marriage through lessened opportunity should produce higher violence frequency scores within violent couples, but not necessarily higher incidence scores. That is, it accounts for why women could not leave an abusive marriage, but still does not supply a motive for male violence.

A final problem is that structural inequality and patriarchal norms were not associated in this study. In fact, the reported correlation was "near zero" (op. cit. p. 395). This result is problematic for feminist analysis because patriarchal structure is frequently implicated as a cause of assaultiveness, yet still must operate through the ideology of individual men. The "slippage" between structural patriarchy and individual male ideology is an example of the *ecological fallacy* (Dooley & Catalano, 1984) described above. Broad macrosystem features cannot strongly predict the thoughts or actions of individuals "nested" under the system. Moderating variables from the exosystem, from the microsystem, and from the individuals' own developmental history are necessary to complete the predictive picture. With the Yllo and Straus (1990) study, a safer conclusion is that societal power imbalances are

associated with more violence against women. The mechanism whereby that violence is generated is unknown.

Smith (1990) also conducted a test of patriarchy by asking 604 Toronto women to guess their male partner's response to a series of questions about "patriarchal beliefs" and then correlating these responses with socioeconomic factors and, finally, with that woman's responses to the CTS measure of wife assault. Through this method, Smith argued that he was assessing "patriarchal ideology" and that this measure, in combination with sociodemographic factors, could predict wife assault. However, the responses that these women supplied for their male partners described a very nonpatriarchal group of males, with the majority disagreeing with the patriarchal statements of the measure in all cases except one, that "sometimes it's important for a man to show his partner that he's the head of the house." One conclusion that could be drawn from these attitudinal data (as with Yllo & Straus's data) is that the patriarchal structure of North American society has a weak effect on the "patriarchal ideology" of most men. Smith does not draw this conclusion. As Smith puts it, "When all the socioeconomic risk markers and indexes of patriarchal ideology were combined in a single model assessing the extent to which these variables predicted wife beating, the combination of husband's educational attainment, patriarchal beliefs and patriarchal attitudes parsimoniously explained 20% of the variance in wife beating" (p. 268).

It seems to me that such a conclusion clearly accentuates the paradigmatic aspect of current family violence research. A predictive study using women's CTS self-reports on husband violence by Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, and Bartholomew (1994) found that a brief (16-item) assessment of the husbands' anger and identity problems also explained 20% of wife assault (and 50% of domination) reported by one sample of battered wives. In other words, some brief measures of psychological factors have as much or greater predictive weight than the attitudinal and sociodemographic assessments of "patriarchal ideology" reported by Smith (1990).

CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES

If feminist analysis is correct, we should expect greater violence directed toward women in more patriarchal cultures. However, this prediction is not supported. Sorenson and Telles (1991), for example, found that a Mexican-born Hispanic sample ($n = 705$) reported wife assault rates that were about half the rate reported by a sample ($n = 1,149$) of non-Hispanic whites, despite Hispanic cultures being generally more patriarchal than American culture (Davis, 1992).

Campbell (1992) reports that "there is not a simple linear correlation between female status and rates of wife assault" (p. 19). Female status is not a single variable. Levinson (1989) found family-related female status (economic, decision-making, and divorce restrictions) to be more predictive of wife beating than societal level variables (control of premarital sexual behavior, place of residence, property inheritance). The exception to this finding was female economic work groups, whose presence correlated negatively with wife assault incidence.

Campbell (1985, 1992) also points out that feminist notions that male sexual jealousy is an expression of a cultural norm that women are male property are not supported by cross-cultural studies of jealousy and wife assault. Except in extreme cases, jealousy varies widely between cultures and appears unrelated to variations in wife assault incidence.

ACCEPTANCE OF VIOLENCE

A survey by Stark and McEvoy (1970) found that 24% of men and 17% of women approved of a man slapping his wife "under appropriate circumstances." Hence, only a minority of men and women approved of a man slapping his wife under any circumstances. Viewed from another perspective, the survey result tells us that the majority believe slapping is never appropriate. Second, the wording of the question was ambiguous. The phrase "appropriate circumstances" loads the question; we do not know what egregious transgressions may be conjured up by respondents as necessary before a slap is appropriate. Also, the question tells us nothing about the degree of violence that is acceptable. Although 25% of men may approve of slapping a wife, fewer may approve of punching or kicking a wife and still fewer may approve of beating or battering a wife.

Also, many men who have been convicted of wife assault do not generally believe that what they did was acceptable (Dutton, 1986; Dutton & Hemphill, 1992). Instead they feel guilty, deny and minimize the violence, and try to exculpate themselves in the manner of one whose actions are unacceptable to oneself. The feminist view would lead us to expect the opposite: that no guilt and evasion would follow from violence used in the course of justifiable control and domination. As Bugenthal, Kahn, Andrews, and Head (1972) demonstrated in a survey study, violence is considered acceptable when it is in the service of an accepted social objective.

SURVEY FINDINGS

If patriarchy is the main factor contributing to wife assault, then a large percentage, if not the majority, of men raised in a patriarchal system should exhibit assaultiveness. If the number of men who are assaultive diminishes, then noncultural factors figure more prominently in assault causation. In five major surveys of incidence of wife assault implemented to date, the vast majority of men are nonassaultive for the duration of their marriage (Kennedy & Dutton, 1989; Schulman, 1979; Straus & Gelles, 1985; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Straus & Kantor, 1994).

In surveys conducted by female interviewers of female respondents using strategies to maximize disclosure, only one of eight couples reported acts from the Severe Violence subscale of the CTS occurring at any time in their marriage, and only 27.8% reported any kind of violence (including pushes and slaps) occurring at any time in their marriage (Straus et al., 1980, p. 43). Furthermore, this finding does not seem to be related to a desire on the female respondents' part to image manage through underreporting. Dutton and Hemphill (1992) found that women's reports of violence committed against them were unrelated to social desirability factors (unlike male perpetrators).

This result is hard to explain if one considers patriarchy as the main cause of wife assault. If social license determines violent behavior, we would expect a majority of men to be violent, but only a minority actually are. Also, as the violence becomes more extreme, the size of this minority group of perpetrators shrinks. The type of actions that might be called "wife beating" occur in only about 11% of marriages at any time during the marriage. A clearer picture of the incidence of violence in marriage is that serious assaults do not occur in 90% of marriages, they occur once in another 7%, and they occur repeatedly in about 3% (Kennedy & Dutton, 1989; Straus et al., 1980; Straus & Gelles, 1985). What kind of causal weight does patriarchy have if 90% of the men raised under it are nonassaultive? Do

these men all dominate their wives using nonviolent means? To answer this question we must examine the literature on dyadic family power and violence.

POWER AND VIOLENCE

Sociopolitical power is not positively related to wife assault in males. Working-class males have higher wife assault rates than middle-class males (Straus et al., 1980) and black males have higher wife assault rates than white males (Julian & McKenry, 1993).

Dyadic family power is nonlinearly related to use of violence. Coleman and Straus (1985) found that there was no main effect of power on violence. The highest rates of "minor" violence (male to female, female to male) were found in female-dominant couples, followed by male-dominant, and violence was mitigated by attitudes toward power sharing. Hence, couples who agreed to a gender-dominant arrangement were less violent than those who disagreed. In that study, a decision-making "final say" measure was made of power. By this measure, male-dominant couples made up only 9.4% of the total and female-dominant made up 7.5%. The more typical power arrangements were "divided power" (54%) and "egalitarian" (29%). The main contributor to marital conflict and violence was lack of consensus about power sharing. Where the couple agreed, both conflict and violence were low regardless of marital power arrangement. To a feminist perspective, the notion of a male-dominant marriage where both parties agree to that power-sharing arrangement is unacceptable. However, it is not a sufficient cause of violence. When we compare the survey results in the preceding section with the Coleman and Straus results above, we see that 90% of men are nonassaultive and 91% are nondominant. In other words, the large majority of men raised under patriarchal norms are both nonassaultive and nondominant. This perspective is lost when we ask why men in general beat their wives. It is these data that indicate the *ecological fallacy* of feminist approaches to wife assault: that patriarchal structure and male socialization are sufficient to produce dominance and assaultiveness.

CONTROL AND VIOLENCE

Another tenet of feminist thought is that male violence is part of a wider repertoire of control tactics men use to dominate women. In the literature on "feminist therapy" (Adams, 1988), emphasis is placed on "male control and domination." However, in one of the few studies to examine controlling behaviors and psychological abuse, Kasian and Painter (1992) found that females were more jealous, more verbally abusive, and more controlling than males in a sample of 1,625 dating undergraduates.⁴ Use of controlling behaviors and verbal abuse appears to be bi-directional in intimate relationships. If controlling behaviors are bi-directional and feminist therapy seeks to reduce control tactics in men who already feel powerless in intimate relationships, a positive therapeutic outcome is contraindicated.

Feminist definitions of power and status can be an impediment to understanding male assaultiveness because these definitions are based upon and often restricted to the sociopolitical. Feminist analysts are acutely aware of the sociopolitical powerlessness of women and have taken important steps to initiate a remedy. However, what defines powerlessness for a politicized woman and what defines it for a nonpoliticized man are not the same.

For a man, sociopolitical comparisons with women or with a woman are irrelevant. What is experienced, especially in intimate relationships, is the power advantage women appear

to have in their ability to introspect, analyze, and describe feelings and process. Transference from early relationships in which a female (mother) had apparently unlimited power still affects male assessments of power in adult relationships (Dutton & Ryan, 1992). Hence, assaultive males report feeling powerless in respect to their intimate partners (Dutton & Strachan, 1987). One is reminded of Eric Fromm's definition of sadism as the conversion of feelings of impotence to feelings of omnipotence. Although batterers may appear powerful in terms of their physical or sociopolitical resources, they are distinctly impotent in terms of their psychic and emotional resources, even to the point of depending on their female partner to maintain their sense of identity (Dutton, 1994).³ I do not suggest by this that we should excuse or exonerate batterers. However, to view men's violence simply as a defense of sociopolitical power is erroneous. Only a minority of batterers are misogynistic (Dutton & Browning, 1986), and few are violent to nonintimate women; a much larger group experiences extreme anger about intimacy. If there is a politic at work, it exists primarily in the microsystem of the dyad.

HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

The prevalence of violence in homosexual relationships, which also appear to go through abuse cycles, is hard to explain in terms of men dominating women (Bologna, Waterman, & Dawson, 1987; Island & Letellier, 1991; Lie & Gentlewarrrior, 1991; Renzetti, 1992). Bologna and colleagues (1987) surveyed 70 homosexual male and female college students about incidence of violence in the most recent relationship. Lesbian relationships were significantly more violent than gay relationships (56% vs. 25%). Lie and Gentlewarrrior (1991) surveyed 1,099 lesbians, finding that 52% had been a victim of violence by their female partner, 52% said they had used violence against their female partner, and 30% said they had used violence against a nonviolent female partner. Finally, Lie, Schilit, Bush, Montague, and Reyes (1991) documented, in a survey of 350 lesbians (who had had prior lesbian and heterosexual relationships), that reported rates of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse were all significantly higher in their prior lesbian relationships than in their prior heterosexual relationships: 56.8% had been sexually victimized by a female, 45% had experienced physical aggression, and 64.5% experienced physical/emotional aggression. Of this sample of women, 78.2% had been in a prior relationship with a man. Reports of violence victimization by men were all lower than reports of violence victimization in prior relationships with women (sexual victimization, 41.9% [vs. 56.8% with women]; physical victimization 32.4% [vs. 45%]; and emotional victimization 55.1% [vs. 64.5%]).

These are two findings that are difficult to accommodate from a feminist perspective: why violence rates are so high in lesbian relationships and why they are higher for past relationships with women than for past relationships with men. Walker (1986) has tried to explain higher rates of violence in lesbian relationships as being due to equality of size and weight, fewer normative restraints on fighting back, and tacit permission to talk about fighting back. However, Coleman and Straus (1986) found that power equalization produced less violence. The focus on fighting back overlooks the fact that a woman initiated the violence in these lesbian couples. It might also be argued that lesbians adopt the values of the dominant patriarchal culture and that a dominance-submissiveness relationship may exist in a lesbian relationship, whereby the "functional male" (i.e., the dominant member) is the abuser. The problem with this argument is that even in heterosexual relationships, as Coleman and Straus showed, a variety of power relations exist. The "functional

male" theory maps a stereotype onto lesbian relationships that has no data support. What is important about the data of Lie and her colleagues is that they assess abuse for past lesbian and heterosexual relationships reported by these women. Hence, each subject becomes, in effect, her own control, and sample selection issues (for comparisons with other groups) are minimized.

Browne (1993) cites Saakvitne and Pearlman (1993) as arguing that lesbians may internalize misogyny and homophobia, which they then project onto their female partners. Lesbian battering is consistent with another view on intimate violence: that intimacy generates dependency, jealousy, and anger, which is sometimes expressed violently (Dutton, 1988; Dutton & Browning, 1986; Dutton et al., 1994). In fact, Renzetti (1992) found the main contributors to lesbian battering in her study to be dependency and jealousy, two psychological factors related to intimacy. These two factors also show up as predictors in heterosexual wife assault studies (Dutton, 1994; Dutton & Painter, 1993). This explanation has the advantage of being parsimonious; it applies to both heterosexual and lesbian battering without needing recourse to separate models of explanation. Separate explanatory models for two types of battering have an added danger when developed from a feminist paradigm: Female violence is "explained away" using psychological notions such as projected misogyny (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1993), while male violence is refused psychological examination on the grounds of it being potentially exonerative (Goldner et al., 1990). A double standard for explanation results.

FEMALE VIOLENCE

The question of why men beat women precludes any notion of female violence, and as Browne (1992) has pointed out, gender comparisons using the CTS can be misleading. The focus of a feminist paradigm is on males as transgressors, and feminists have avoided, with good reason, victim-blaming explanations that locate in women victims the causes of violence performed by males. Given their advantages in strength and power, most males, it is believed, can avoid physical conflict with women under all but the most extenuating circumstances. Nevertheless, research shows that only minor differences exist between male and female aggression (Frodi, Macaulay, & Thome, 1977; Hyde, 1984). In an extensive review of the literature on aggression, Hyde (1984) concluded via a meta-analysis that gender accounts for only 1% of the variance in aggression in college students (and only 7% in children under 6).⁶

Walker (1989) claims that "women usually use violence as a reaction to men's violence against them" (p. 696). However, in Bland and Orn's (1986) study, 73.4% of a sample of 616 women said they were the first to use physical violence. An argument is also made that female violence is a "preemptive strike" designed to terminate an escalating abuse cycle. However, Stets and Straus (1990) compared couples where the violence pattern was male-severe/female-minor, with those where this pattern was reversed. They found the female-severe/male-minor pattern to be significantly (three to six times) more prevalent than the male-severe/female-minor pattern regardless of whether the couple was dating, cohabiting, or married.

With these data, the use of severe violence by females was not in reaction to male violence or as a preemptive strike, since the female partner in each couple reported only minor violence from her male partner despite using severe violence herself. Similarly, couples where only the female was violent were significantly more common (39.4% of dating cou-

ples, 26.9% of cohabiting couples, 28.6% of married couples) than couples where only the male was violent (10.5% of dating couples, 20.7% of cohabiting couples, 23.2% of married couples). Although men may use more multiple aggressive acts during a single incident (Browne, 1993), the data above suggest that in some couples, female violence may be serious and may not be in response to male violence.

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

Questions of psychopathology are deemphasized by feminist analysis because such questions might "maintain that violent acts and violent relationships have a psychology" and "once again let batterers off the hook" (Goldner et al., 1990, p. 345) and also because psychopathological analyses imply that only some men who are atypical generate violence against women (Bograd, 1988). Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the majority of men who are either court-referred or self-referred for wife assault do have diagnosable psychological pathology. In studies of assaultive males, about 80%-90% of both court-referred and self-referred men exhibited diagnosable psychopathology, typically personality disorders (Dutton, 1994; Dutton & Starzomski, 1994; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986, 1989; Hart, Dutton, & Newlove, 1993; Hastings & Hamberger, 1988; Saunders, 1992). Estimates of personality disorder in the general population would be more in the 15%-20% range (Kernberg, 1977; Zimmerman & Coryell, 1989). As violence becomes more severe and chronic, the likelihood of psychopathology in these men approaches 100% (Dutton, 1994; Dutton & Hart, 1992a, 1992b; Hastings & Hamberger, 1988), typically with extreme scores on borderline personality organization, narcissism, antisocial behavior, and aggressive-sadistic personality.

To say that violent batterers are psychopathological neither "lets them off the hook" nor exculpates social forces in shaping their rage. Dutton (1994) has argued that men with severe identity problems and intense dependency on women may seek out aspects of the culture to direct and justify abuse. For example, the primitive defenses of borderline personality organization in males, which involve splitting "good objects" from "bad objects" (Mahler, 1971), are reinforced by cultural judgments about female sexuality. Cultures that divide women into "madonnas and whores" provide a sanctioned reinforcement of the object split in the assaultive borderline male. Cultures that socialize men and women to expect the woman to be responsible for relationship outcome provide a rationale for the borderline personality's expectation that his intimate partner should maintain both his ego integrity and euphoric affect. Any dysphoric stalemates that occur are then viewed as her fault. Hence, attachment-derived anger is projected toward the individual woman partner. Through this view, the personality pattern contains emotional demands, which it directs and justifies through drawing on the ambient culture.

Hence, patriarchy does not elicit violence against women in any direct fashion. Rather, it may provide the values and attitudes that personality-disordered men can exploit to justify their abuse of women. This distinction is an important one: It explains why the majority of men remain nonviolent and how they differ in at least one essential and nontautological aspect from violent men.

Walker (1989) describes a "socialized androcentric need for power." However, a need for power, in itself, does not predict violence or even dominance in social relationships. Winter (1973) and McClelland (1975) have demonstrated how power motivation varies from one man to the next and how it translates into a variety of behavioral forms, includ-

ing stamp collecting and running for public office. It is only when power needs are combined with identity diffusion, so that the intimate other becomes necessary for one's identity integrity, that these needs begin to focus exclusively on that person. In a culture that isolates men emotionally and alienates them from their ability to sense and know their own feelings, dependency on a female who is perceived as a conduit to one's inner self will remain problematic.

THERAPY AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Feminist therapists criticize anger-management approaches for focusing on stress reduction, anger management, and coping skills, while not paying enough attention to gender politics (Adams, 1988). At the same time, they criticize insight therapy for focusing on identity deficits to offer labels instead of explanations and for not emphasizing male responsibility for violence and control. I have argued above that patriarchy is another label that does not explain violence. If patriarchy "causes" violence, how can we hold men individually responsible for their violence?

Feminist therapists want to focus on power and control issues and on misogynistic attitudes toward women in what they call resocialization models (Adams, 1988; Gondolf & Russell, 1986). The problem with these models is that the relationship between attitudes and violence is weak (Browning, 1983; Dutton, 1988; Neidig & Friedman, 1984). Furthermore, there is a problem in delivering these models to court-directed men who may resent female power, who exist in a subculture that does not share feminist values, and who resist attempts to decrease their use of control tactics when they already feel a sense of diminished control. Such approaches may develop backlash in clients if they do not address the felt powerlessness that drives control tactics, and seek to develop remedial negotiation skills.

My view is that anger and anxiety provide the psychological substratum for control. Males try to control the things they fear, and intimate relationships are a source of great fear (Pollack & Gilligan, 1982). Hence, a complete understanding of anger does not only reflect on outbursts of anger but also on chronic resentments and control of another. It also renders the "case" against "anger control" treatment for assaultive males artificial. It is not an issue of "anger versus control" as Gondolf and Russell (1986) put it; anger and control stem from the same origin: terror of intimacy.

When feminists ask "Why do men beat their wives?" their answer will necessarily exaggerate differences between males and females and minimize differences among males. The categories of study are framed by the question. However, what is required for a more complete analysis is to answer why some but not all men beat their wives. A complete explanation for wife assault must also distinguish men who habitually and severely assault their wives from men who do so sporadically, as response to extreme stressors, and from men (the majority) who remain nonviolent throughout their marriages. This leads necessarily to psychological explanations in order to differentiate these men.

Put in nested ecological terms (Dutton, 1988), distal macrosystem influences such as patriarchal structure seem to have little effect on rates of individual wife assault; they are poorly related both to individual male patriarchal beliefs and to violence. Exosystem factors, especially subcultural norms for assaultiveness, have a somewhat stronger effect, whereas microsystem and ontogenetic factors seem strongest of all. Powerlessness rather than power seems to be implicated in male use of intimate violence, and intimacy itself rather than gender politics seems to be the most crucial factor in such violence. If we wish

to both understand and diminish violence in society, we must resist the temptation to easily classify perpetrators in broad social terms. Our response to violence can be improved by focusing clearly on those psychopathological features that interact with culture in order to ultimately reduce the risk of violence for women.

NOTES

¹To this extent, feminist analysis of wife assault has been almost exclusively sociological and not psychological. Exceptions exist, to be sure. These would include Lenore Walker's (1984) profile of battering husbands, based on descriptions of women in shelters, and Anne Ganley's (1989) attempt to reconcile feminism and social learning theory. Also, Pantony and Caplan (1991) proposed a "delusional dominating personality disorder" as a response to what Caplan saw as sexism in the proposed DSM-III-R category "self-defeating personality disorder," and which could theoretically distinguish men who were generally abusive in intimate relationships from other men (although the authors saw this personality disorder as a response to "rigid masculine socialization"). Despite these exceptions, the focus of feminist analysis has been, as Bograd put it, on the question of "why men *in general* beat their wives." Hence, there is a necessary deemphasis on the possibility of individual differences among men.

²It could be argued that from a feminist perspective, violence will not necessarily be normal but will only occur when other forms of male control of women have failed. This premise should lead to the prediction that when men have large socially conferred power advantages, they need not be violent. This prediction is not supported by empirical examination (Campbell, 1992; Coleman & Straus, 1985). Feminism ends up arguing both that violence occurs as a "last resort" for domination (when men are otherwise powerless) and when domination is ensured by the social structure (when men are otherwise powerful). In the latter case, the violence is said to occur because there are no sanctions against it, but this "explanation" does not supply a motive for violence.

³To be fair to Bograd, she does also say that "wife abuse may be linked to psychopathology in either partner" and that feminism seeks to "connect our psychological analyses with understandings of the patriarchal social context" (op. cit. p. 17). My point, however, is that feminism has offered no "psychological analysis" because its focus has been on the question of why "men in general use physical force against their partners." Bograd has not, to my mind, seen the implications of her own question. For this reason, her statement about psychopathology reads like an afterthought.

⁴The criticisms that Browne made of the CTS do not apply in this study because reports for each gender were for verbal, not physical, abuse. Although physical "hits" are different when performed by a man against a smaller woman, there is no evidence that verbal abuse has less serious consequences as a function of gender.

⁵It is a paradox of power in dyads that each member can feel powerless vis-à-vis the other. Women, for example, report feeling disempowered by male physical strength, violence potential, and sociopolitical power (French, 1985), whereas men report being disempowered by female emotional access, verbal skills, sexuality, and self-containment as well as by intense unresolved transference issues (Dutton, 1994; Dutton & Strachan, 1987; Goldberg, 1987). No consensus has yet been reached on dyadic power, and "final say" measures such as that used by Coleman and Straus (1985) are limited in that one member may allow the other to make decisions in specific areas, generating an appearance of equality (Huston, 1983).

⁶It is curious why so little interest has developed in reconciling the consistent finding of lab and field studies of aggression that little difference exists that is attributable to gender with the larger gender difference in homicide statistics (e.g., Browne, 1993, and Browne & Williams, 1989, found that of spousal homicide victims, 61% were women and 39% were men). One possibility is that males use extreme violence more when experiencing intimacy-rage (Dutton et al., 1994), which transfers

more readily for males during intimacy dissolutions. As Browne and Williams have pointed out, female-perpetrated homicides are more likely to have been responses to prior abuse by their partner.

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