

THESIS

A DANGEROUS MESSAGE: THE MATERIAL EFFECTS OF *ENOUGH*

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY JOSEPH P. RICHARDS ENTITLED "A DANGEROUS MESSAGE: THE MATERIAL EFFECTS OF *ENOUGH*" BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

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## ABSTRACT OF **THESIS**

### A DANGEROUS MESSAGE: THE MATERIAL EFFECTS OF *ENOUGH*

Domestic violence is a cultural epidemic in U.S. society. How we define, perceive, and treat domestic violence is a product of the material rhetorics about it. Since film is a prominent mode of rhetorical discourse, I examine how the issue of domestic violence is represented in the 2002 film *Enough*. I argue that the film presents a view of domestic violence that offers space for empowerment, but serves to potentially place real women in danger. I undertake a dual-methodological approach using a textual analysis of the film and a focus group discussion with female domestic violence professionals/providers to discern the negative material effects of *Enough*. In my concluding section, drawing from feedback from the focus group participants, I offer suggestions for improving portrayals of domestic violence that may lead to ending this problem.

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## Chapter One: Portraying an Epidemic

According to the American Institute on Domestic Violence (AIDV), “85-95% of all domestic violence victims are female...5.3 million women are abused each year... [and] domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women.”<sup>1</sup> I find the phrase, “domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women” one to ponder for a moment. Domestic violence is not an anomalous occurrence that happens only in the mobile home communities of the United States, nor is it a hidden blight on the upper echelons of society. Domestic violence affects women of all backgrounds, a fact which must be on the forefront of our societal conscience. Society tells women to perform regular breast exams and receive yearly mammograms; our society tells women to take time out for themselves and relax to get away from the stresses of being a woman (i.e., entering the workforce while still fulfilling familial obligations); but women are still beaten every single day. Out of the multitude possibilities that can injure women (e.g., mugging, household accidents, on-the-job accidents, automobile accidents, and everyday bumps and bruises associated with living) domestic violence causes the *most injuries*. Society must not take the facts of violence lightly, especially considering the findings of the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence (ABACDV) who echoes



the AIDV's statistics in stating, "By the most conservative estimate, each year 1 million women suffer nonfatal violence by an intimate [and] 90 - 95% of domestic violence victims are women."<sup>2</sup> Again, the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women (NCDBW) notes, "The American Medical Association estimates that over 4 million women are victims of severe assaults by boyfriends and husbands each year. About 1 in 4 women are likely to be abused by a partner in her lifetime."<sup>3</sup> Considering the prevalence and severity of domestic violence in the United States alone, the word "epidemic" is not an overstatement of the tangible, unrelenting threat of violence women confront daily. In fact, domestic violence is weighty enough to warrant discussion in courtrooms, in newspapers, on television programs, and in films.

Films portraying domestic violence come to the public in varied forms such as made-for-television movies, documentaries, obscure shorts, and full-length motion pictures. Each type of film presents a glimpse into domestic violence and offers a particular portrayal of the domestic violence situation, victims, perpetrators, and options for surviving or escaping an abusive situation/relationship. As of now, only Francis Dolan has discussed the effects of films portraying domestic violence on real life.<sup>4</sup> Dolan focuses on the legal ramifications for women who murder their abusers, and my goal is to expand her discussion by exploring the material ramifications of film representations of domestic violence beyond the legal realm. I contend that film portrayals of domestic violence influence public perception of the issue and may even place real women in greater danger. I utilize a dual methodological approach based on a case study of the film *Enough* (2002) to explore the ways in which portrayals of domestic violence shape public perceptions and affect the material realities of women. Toward that end, I employ a

materialist rhetorical analysis of *Enough* and a focus group study with female professionals and providers in the field of domestic violence to examine the material effects of the film. To accomplish such a task, I must first discuss why I chose *Enough* as my case study.

As I alluded to earlier, a large number of films portray domestic violence. Thus, I narrowed my study by examining only films distributed initially in the United States. Even within the category of U.S.-based films, I found several made-for-television films (*Intimate Strangers* [1977], *The Burning Bed* [1984], *Shattered Dreams* [1990], *If Someone Had Known* [1995], *Personal Vendetta* [1995], and *Unforgivable* [1996]), a few documentaries (*Domestic Violence* [2001], *Domestic Violence 2* [2002], and *Terror at Home: Domestic Violence in America* [2005]), one short film (*The Victim* [1998]), and a handful of major motion pictures (*Not Without My Daughter* [1991], *Sleeping with the Enemy* [1991], *What's Love Got to Do With It?* [1993], *Casualties* [1997], *The Rainmaker* [1998], *Break Up* [1998], and *Enough* [2002]). Thus, I further pared down the options to only major motion pictures because they traditionally reach a wider audience as film companies promote these pictures on a larger scale than other forms of film such as documentaries and independent films. I then relied on three criteria to narrow the list of major motion pictures to one film. First, I would only examine films in which an abused wife confronts and kills her husband/abuser.<sup>5</sup> I also decided to scrutinize films depicting scenes of physical domestic violence. Finally, I sought to explore a film in which race (especially non-White ethnicities), class, and gender intersect in the portrayal of domestic violence. Although several of the films fit my first two criteria, the only film

with novel intersections of non-White ethnicities, class, and gender was *Enough*, starring Jennifer Lopez.

*Enough* is the story of Slim (Lopez), a server at a diner in California. She meets a man named Mitch in the diner one day and the two are quickly wed. Mitch is an architect/contractor with no shortage of cash. He promises safety for Slim, and even buys them their first house soon after they marry. The plot progresses quite rapidly in the film. After Slim and Mitch have settled into a nice home, the audience next sees the couple at the birth of their child, Gracie. The turmoil in the family begins soon after Gracie is born, however. One night Slim finds that Mitch is cheating on her with another woman. Slim confronts Mitch and refuses to back down from her position of feeling wronged. Mitch refuses to listen to Slim and instead hits her in the face, cutting her cheek. The film then follows Slim as she escapes with Gracie (aided by Slim's friends). Mitch hires men masquerading as FBI agents to pursue and murder Slim, and the movie proceeds in a cat-and-mouse fashion until Slim realizes that she must confront Mitch or be killed herself.

Slim's journey from enslaved victim of abuse to free woman takes audiences through the challenges of escaping, surviving, or ending domestic violence, and the potential consequences for certain courses of action. Thus, *Enough* has much to say about the reality of domestic violence. The goal of this thesis is to explore what exactly *Enough* says about domestic violence, and how the film affects real life. In this first chapter, I outline the foundations that guide my study of *Enough*. I begin with my rationale for the study. I then discuss the theoretical framework undergirding this project. Next, I provide an in-depth explanation of my research methods, and conclude with a preview of the following chapters.

## Rationale for Study

Released by Sony in 2002, *Enough* is the most recent major motion picture released in the United States to portray domestic violence. In addition to meeting the three criteria for text selection outlined earlier, I chose *Enough* because of my personal reaction to it.

I saw this movie first when I was working a full-time job in Athens, Georgia two years ago. As I walked out of the theatre following the movie, I had a chance to ruminate on what I had just seen. My ruminations led me to realize three major views I held of the film. First, I believed that Jennifer Lopez did an amazing job playing the part of an abused wife on the run from her husband. She portrayed her character as strong, determined, resourceful, yet frightened. She began the film as a naïve woman lost in the dream of love and happiness. She seemed honestly upset and outraged that Mitch was cheating on her, and she was utterly hurt and confused when Mitch knocked her to the ground. Throughout the film, Jennifer Lopez displayed reasonable fear and concern for her life and the life of her daughter Gracie, and exhibited the strength and resourcefulness of a woman who must be one step ahead of imminent danger.

My second view of the film was that it was hopeful and cathartically retaliatory; I was happy when Slim killed her husband in the end. The film depicts Slim's husband Mitch as devious, diabolical, and sadistically deranged. Therefore, when Mitch got what he deserved by the end of the film, I applauded. The film encourages the audience to empathize mostly, if not completely, with Slim, largely in part because she is an abused single mother.

My final view of the film was slightly in conflict with my positive reactions. I thought that the film seemed a bit contrived, even as far as films go. The action seemed falsely embellished in the way that Hollywood notoriously overemphasizes action. I wondered whether a domestic violence perpetrator would (or could) hire “thugs” to pursue his escaped wife anywhere in the country. I was curious as to whether wives who flee their abusive husbands are ever involved in car chases with hired hoodlums. I also was intrigued as to whether women who are abused can afford to hire a personal trainer, purchase expensive high-tech gadgetry one may find in the Sharper Image, and manage to sneak into her perpetrator’s home and confront him successfully (i.e., kill him).

Two years after I first saw *Enough*, I saw it again one night with a friend. Upon my second viewing of the movie, I begin to think about it on a deeper level. I was now a graduate student with new perspectives on life and films. I saw Slim knocked to the floor by her husband Mitch; as Slim hit the ground, something snapped inside of me. I was suddenly aware that the film might be acting on levels I of which I was not previously aware. I began watching the film more closely and saw many interesting things happening. I saw Slim as she progressed throughout the movie from a frightened and helpless victim, to a frightened but strong and powerful agent of her own destiny (and the destiny of her child). I watched Slim’s path from imprisonment in a hell of domestic violence to independence in a haven of her own creation. After watching this film, I began asking certain questions: As a popular culture film depicting domestic violence, does *Enough* provide an accurate depiction of domestic violence? Does the film offer empowering message for audiences, especially audiences who have close contact with

issues of domestic violence? Might the film place real women in greater danger? In this thesis, I begin answering these questions and others.

In addition to my personal reactions to the film, *Enough* is different from other major motion pictures depicting domestic violence, especially the highest-grossing film of its kind to date, 1991's *Sleeping with the Enemy*, starring Julia Roberts.<sup>6</sup> Several distinctions between the films are important. First, the major female characters in both films are noticeably different. Julia Roberts's character, Laura/Sara Burney, is shy, passive, timid, and subdued. In contrast, Slim, though initially passive, becomes a physically strong woman who works to outsmart and eventually conquer her life of domestic oppression. Laura/Sara Burney also does not seek out her husband to confront him, but he instead confronts her in her own home at the end of the film. Laura/Sara must confront her fears and eventually chooses to kill her husband. Although Slim kills her husband as well, she pursues a different approach. Slim trains and forces a physical confrontation with her husband. This confrontation takes place in his home, on his turf. Additionally, Laura/Sara Burney is a White woman, while *Enough* implicitly codes Slim as non-White. The difference in perspective between White women and women of color is important to note, and can offer insights into the unique struggles different women face when confronting domestic violence. The two major differences I have listed are important because *Enough* portrays a female character different from those previously seen in films portraying domestic violence. In chapter two I tease out these novel portrayals.

Finally, I chose *Enough* as a case study to begin understanding the real world effects of films portraying domestic violence. I believe that films do not simply exist in

the world, but they make us, as members of society, think about our lives in particular ways, and films potentially influence us to *live* our lives in particular ways.<sup>7</sup> In other words, films have material effects on the physical world. To discover the material effects of *Enough*, I proposed several research questions.

RQ1: In what ways does the film portray and establish the roles of both a female victim and a male perpetrator in domestic violence?

RQ2: What, if any, options does the film offer for escaping, surviving, or enduring domestic violence to women who are victims of domestic violence?

RQ3: How do female domestic violence providers view the film's portrayals of domestic violence?

RQ3a: Do female domestic violence providers believe *Enough* offers helpful/harmful, accurate/inaccurate, or empowering/disempowering messages to women who are victims of domestic violence?

This thesis begins to probe these questions to see how portrayals of domestic violence in this particular film function in society. Before moving to my specific methods for this project, I situate my study in the context of other research pertinent to the topic of domestic violence.

#### Treatment of Subject by Scholars

As the focus of this thesis concerns domestic violence and film representations of it, I discuss here research that addresses both subjects. Research on domestic violence was essential to my study because I needed to understand the risks and concerns associated with researching domestic violence in order to provide the most thorough and faithful analysis. Research on mass-media representations of domestic violence was

important because it pointed me toward certain themes of which to be aware when doing my own study.

### *Domestic Violence Research*

Upon reviewing the relevant research on domestic violence, I found that the articles all pointed to the importance of voice(s) in studying domestic violence. Although the range of studies examined the importance of hearing the voices of victims of domestic violence, the absence of victims' voices in community discussions of domestic violence, the distortion of victims' voices in recounting experiences of domestic violence, and the importance of co-construction of narratives between interviewers and interviewees,<sup>8</sup> the most important theme was the voice of domestic violence victims. Researchers realize the necessity, "To hear directly from the victims themselves outside the judicial setting where their experiences are often briefly or partially reported."<sup>9</sup> No one can truly understand the nature and horrifying consequences of domestic violence unless that person has experience with domestic violence. Thus, women who have first-hand experience with the brutality of domestic violence may have important insights into how to end violence against women academics, bureaucrats, and even providers, professionals, and advocates do not have. Additionally, battered women can accurately describe how well current legislations and solutions to domestic violence are actually working. Toward this end, researchers caution against "overly professionalized and bureaucratized"<sup>10</sup> accounts of domestic violence victims' stories in fatality reviews, which may lead to misrepresenting victims' accounts of violence. In particular, Shonna L. Trinch notes that some narrative styles are more acceptable and/or authoritative than others. She states that the differences in narrative styles between "accepted" narratives



and Latina domestic violence victims' narratives lead to female (particularly Latinas) victims of domestic violence having their stories misrepresented, misconstrued, and often blatantly changed during the process of recounting incidents of domestic abuse to authorities (courts, lawyers, domestic violence advocates, and police officers). Trinch further warns of the material dangers of misrepresenting the narrations of Latina women as they recount instances of violence in a professional setting (i.e., to obtain a protective order). She notes that victims' stories and bureaucratic reports are two distinct narrative genres, with reports holding more credibility and validity. If a victim's story does not match the official report, especially during a protective order hearing, the court may see the victim as not credible and perhaps even guilty of fabrication.<sup>11</sup> Thus, I would be remiss if I sought solely to analyze *Enough* without incorporating the voices of women closely affected by domestic violence. For that reason, I discuss my focus group study with female providers/professionals who work in the field of domestic violence in chapter three to complement the textual analysis of chapter two.

In addition to research done in the field of domestic violence, other scholars help make the link between real life domestic violence and representations of violence in films.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Mass-Media Representations of Domestic Violence*

Research on the ways in which domestic violence is portrayed in the media reveals three major themes: a focus on individual rather than societal responsibility for ending domestic violence; reification of stereotypes associated with domestic violence occurrences; and a limited number of options for victims to escape, survive, or end domestic violence.

## Individual Responsibility

Through analyzing news coverage and other mediated portrayals of domestic violence, researchers have found that responsibility for escaping, surviving, or ending domestic violence is mainly that of the victim. Although some news coverage points to societal responsibility, such as necessity of government services and stricter law enforcement, the stories still assume the victim is at fault if she fails to utilize any services available to her, a theme consistent since the origins of domestic violence coverage in the 1970s.<sup>13</sup> Specifically, Marian Meyers, in her examination of media framing of domestic violence, cites poignant examples of the news media's tendency to place blame on victims of domestic violence. She notes:

By perpetuating the idea that violence against women is a problem of individual pathology, the news disguises the social roots of battering while reinforcing stereotypes and myths that blame women.<sup>14</sup>

The startling fact is that media accounts and portrayals of domestic violence paint a picture of individual responsibility, while eliding important societal and psychological factors that may prevent victims from finding help. Susan Schechter describes the bind that abused women face:

The battered woman who decides to leave her violent husband confronts the fear of retaliation, as well as other major obstacles. Imagine her fleeing home with nothing but the clothes she is wearing, the money in her pocket, and her children...Add to [these] practical burdens the emotional awareness that, for a woman, a failed marriage raises...doubts about her capability and even her decency...*It is her fault that she is beaten and, in a double-barreled attack, it is her*

*fault if she feels too ashamed to ask for assistance (emphasis mine).*<sup>15</sup>

We begin to see the bind that media reports and portrayals of domestic violence place on battered women. When men abuse the women in their lives, society leaves women with only two possible views of themselves: abused women are responsible for their beatings, and abused women are at fault if they do not seek the help that society freely offers.

However, as Meyers notes, this view “sustains and reproduces male supremacy.”<sup>16</sup> We can see the further constraints battered women face when we examine media’s perpetuation of domestic violence stereotypes.

#### Reification of Stereotypes

Mass-media representations of domestic violence contribute to the continuation of certain stereotypic assumptions. The media depicts domestic violence as primarily, if not only, occurring in low-income areas, amongst people of little education.<sup>17</sup> The popular stereotype is that domestic violence does not exist in wealthy families, and is not serious enough to warrant attention in middle class families. Domestic violence is seen as a sign of lower-class ignorance. What may be more disturbing about these stereotypes are their implicit intersections with racial politics, as Meyers discusses:

White women are most likely to be covered by the news when they are the victims of male violence, especially if they are middle- or upper-class. Black victims of sexist violence, particularly if they have few financial resources, are simply not seen as newsworthy.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, two important stereotypes emerge. First, we see the media reinforcing the notion that domestic violence occurs only in low-income, minimally educated areas of the population. From this, we can conclude that domestic violence is only the problem of

“white trash,” a segment of the U.S. population shunned for low social standing and intolerable ignorance; an ignorance that middle- and upper-class U.S. Americans deny in their own lives. Second, domestic violence becomes a problem for Whites only, as media presents mainly the stories of abused White women. Therefore, solutions to ending domestic violence that elide the unique struggles and challenges of women of color and women in different social classes, are ultimately inadequate.

### Limited Options

Frances E. Dolan’s discussion of the legal definition of coverture points to the inevitability of murder in media depictions of domestic violence. In the beginning of her essay, Dolan cites several popular films including *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991), *Double Jeopardy* (1999), *Break Up* (1998), *The Rainmaker* (1998), and *Enough*. All of the films Dolan cites have something in common; each one portrays an abused or endangered wife murdering her husband. She then ties the inevitability of murder as a way to escape domestic violence portrayed in films to the early modern legal notion of coverture.<sup>19</sup> Dolan’s article points us to the possible “real world” consequences of film portrayals of domestic violence. Through Dolan’s article, we see the tragic nature of domestic violence. If society blames women for being abused, and strategies designed to help battered women are often ineffectual, women seem to be left with only the option of killing their abuser. Although, the “battered woman defense” was once tolerated in courtrooms, women who take their lives into their own hands often end up in correctional facilities.<sup>20</sup>

Research on domestic violence and mass media representations of domestic violence points out the fact that such portrayals serve to limit battered women. To understand the importance of such constraints, I turn to the notion of rhetoric as material.

### Theoretical Framework

Raymie McKerrow outlined a new way to think about the role of rhetoric and the critic in critique when he began to outline a “critical rhetoric,” which explores “rhetoric’s central role in the creation of social practices.”<sup>21</sup> McKerrow notes that we can analyze “how...symbols come to possess power—what they ‘do’ in society as contrasted to what they ‘are.’”<sup>22</sup> Critical rhetoricians seek to uncover how rhetoric is actually functioning ideologically and materially in the world, especially regarding the ways in which rhetoric “creates and sustains the social practices which control the dominated.”<sup>23</sup> Drawing largely upon Foucault, McKerrow argues that discourse and power are inextricably bound in unique ways. In fact, discourse is the material manifestation of power, which secures and/or maintains social power dynamics. One of the most important implications of discourse’s constitutive capacity is that it (especially when fused to power) has the capability to tell people *how* they should (and sometimes must) live. Discourse “addresses publics,” and is neither innocent nor ineffectual.<sup>24</sup> Because I sought to determine how *Enough*’s discourse addresses and affects perceptions of domestic violence, thinking about the material effects of rhetoric carries significance, as I demonstrate in my discussion of responses to the film in chapters two and three.

From McKerrow’s discussion of the critical rhetorician’s desire to explore the ways in which rhetoric affects society, materialist rhetorical critics outline the methods and purposes for discovering the material power of rhetoric in tangible contexts. Three

particular critics who aid an analysis of the materiality of discourse are Michael McGee, Dana Cloud, and Ronald Greene.

Michael Calvin McGee's groundbreaking essay, "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric" paved the way for thinking about the materiality of discourse, as he traced the history of rhetorical theory, and began to clearly articulate rhetoric's inextricability with and influence on material, everyday life. He begins with an indictment of the way we have historically conceptualized rhetoric:

What has been called 'rhetorical theory' through much of our tradition is not theory at all, but a set of technical, prescriptive principles which inform the practitioner while, paradoxically, remaining largely innocent of practice.<sup>25</sup>

McGee urges critics to realize that traditional rhetorical theory does not necessarily take into account how rhetoric actually functions in the daily lives of individuals and groups. He warns critics not to "lose contact with the brute reality of persuasion as a daily social phenomenon."<sup>26</sup> A materialist conception of rhetoric thus allows critics to begin theorizing and describing the various ways rhetoric functions in our daily lives. A rhetoric that is material acts on people in tangible ways, at times even constructing consciousness. McGee even describes rhetoric "as material and as omnipresent as air and water."<sup>27</sup> Yet, discourse is more than magnificently transcendent and omnipresent; it is quotidian and ordinary; it has a "brute reality." Not only does one find discourse permeating the matrix of human interactions, but also discourse *creates* and *shapes* human interaction. As McGee notes, "Ordinary discourse is a social function which permits interactivity among people. It is a medium, a bridge among human beings."<sup>28</sup> Rhetoric is both more complex and simpler than magnificent pronouncements. Rhetoric

serves to connect humans together in a tangible, material fashion, shaping our consciousness and influencing an individual's interactions with others and the world around her/him.

In the sense that McGee indicates, rhetoric is an ecological force affecting the environment in which it exists. As an ecological force then, rhetoric also helps *create* its realm of existence. McGee discusses rhetoric's ability to shape its environment when he reconceptualizes traditional notions of effect:

The whole problem of "effect" seems picayune when one realizes that what actually happens as a result of "speech" is less important than the fact that every "speech" is a miniature predictive model of the "changes" which it recommends. Every "speaker," in other words, creates a picture of the world in the suggestion that "audience" perceives reality through the terms and with the resources of "speech."<sup>29</sup>

Rhetoric is inevitably caught up in a perpetual motion of serving the environment in which it exists and creating the environment in which it exists. This rhetoric does not abide in a discursive vacuum however, but is instead a process of interactions between "speakers" and "audiences." Rhetoric helps an individual shape the world around her/himself, but rhetoric also constrains the world around an individual. Rhetoric is a material, social force moving in and out of its environment, weaving speakers and audiences together in real, tangible ways. Rhetoric has a practical function in society; it does the work of changing social institutions, challenging notions of one's subjectivity and identity, and, if I follow McGee's formulation to its logical end, rhetoric can even act on the world in physical ways; rhetoric has the power to help or harm emotionally,

mentally, perhaps spiritually, and even physically; it can effect social change as it shapes, re-shapes, and challenges consciousness individually and collectively. John Lucaites summarizes the force of rhetoric's potentiality:

When speaker, speech, audience, occasion, and change coalesce at a historically particular moment in time, they create at least the potential for a force that can no more be ignored at the point of its impact than a bullet fired from a gun or an oncoming automobile can be. It [rhetoric] has, in other words, a material presence rooted in the power of language to define and constitute social and political relationships.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time that one can view rhetoric as a powerful force, capable of both good and ill, Dana Cloud cautions against exalting rhetoric as omnipotent and free from other constraints. She asks critics to recognize "the importance of material forces (economic and physical) in relation to rhetorical action."<sup>31</sup> A critic must recognize the economic and physical constraints placed on individuals in order to avoid falsely believing that rhetoric is transcendent and works independently of other factors to affect change. An individual's discourse will not stop a bullet from penetrating my flesh; the cries of a family will not prevent a child from dying of hunger; pleas and screams will not soften the blow from an abuser's fists. To contextualize rhetoric in terms of real economic and physical conditions Cloud offers two helpful definitions of materialism. She first defines human consciousness as arising from "social relations and concrete, sensuous human activity."<sup>32</sup> From her first definition, one can see that identity exists in social contexts. For example, I may gain my sense of self from the social rhetoric surrounding me; I may present myself in a certain way and decipher my own identity



based on what others reflect back to me, how others respond to my presentation of self. In such a social context, rhetoric functions as a set of perpetual transactions of encoding and decoding. In the social realm, rhetoric shapes reality more than economic and physical factors. However, Cloud's second definition of materialism is what she deems to be the broader of the two. She states, "the mode of production, or the way in which goods are made and distributed in society, determines the social relations and forms of consciousness of any given epoch."<sup>33</sup> Here Cloud takes an obviously Marxist view of social consciousness and potential for change. She asks critics to remember that rhetoric is not the only source of change, consciousness, and power in the world, but that economic, political, and physical forces coexist with rhetoric. In a Marxist view of materialism, rhetoric exists as a force of "false consciousness" diluting the power of the masses, while economic and physical forces are the true machinations of status quo or social change. Cloud contends that rhetoric does not have the ability in and of itself to effect social change; rhetoric cannot call new realities into being if those realities are constrained by economic, political, and physical material forces.

Although McGee describes rhetoric as omnipresent, Cloud reminds us that audiences are not omnipotent. She argues:

McGee potentially overestimates the capacity of audiences to make texts of their own from the fragments that bombard them, when, indeed, the fragments of culture often come together in stable ideological patterns and preferred meanings, as during the Persian Gulf War...Further, even if we cheerfully concede that audiences can and do perform critical readings, their moments of critical

consciousness in and of themselves do nothing to challenge structures of power.<sup>34</sup> She rightly calls such a position “*the discursivity of the material rather than the materiality of discourse*” (emphasis in original).<sup>35</sup> The discursivity of the material is an idealist notion that one can change the material world by changing one’s discourse or one’s thinking about the material world. However, one cannot simply make the world become what one wants. A rudimentary example of the constraints on the discursivity of the material view exists in American school systems. If my teacher gives me a picture to color in kindergarten, I cannot color it any way I please. The picture comes to me with “preferred meanings” I must adhere to or I risk social ridicule and perhaps censure by my teacher. I cannot color a duck magenta because no one has ever seen a magenta duck in the real world. Although this example is basic, one can see it working on other social levels. Prisoners of war exist; armies bomb countries; people die of hunger; people abuse other people every day (every minute of the day in fact). Prisoners of war, bombed countries, the dead, and the abused cannot change their situations through rhetoric, because rhetoric is constrained by economic and physical factors.

Cloud’s argument is one that helps critics avoid exaggerating rhetoric’s potency, even (or especially) a material rhetoric. In a way, Cloud grounds rhetoric, placing it in its physical world of real, material constraints. She attempts to caution against the idealist desire to change the world simply through discourse, because “a politics of discourse...assumes that those who are oppressed or exploited need discursive redefinition of their identities, rather than a transformation of their material conditions as a primary task.”<sup>36</sup> One must be aware of the real situations in which people exist and think about ways to utilize rhetoric as only one piece of the puzzle. Cloud offers that,

“One way for the materialist to acknowledge human action is to conceive of rhetorical acts as strategic deployment of symbolic resources within an ideological frame.”<sup>37</sup>

Although I side with Cloud’s view of rhetoric as severely constrained by the material realities in which people exist, another materialist scholar adds further depth to materialist studies. Ronald Greene posits a way to examine further the context in which rhetoric exists. Greene notes that a critic must “focus on how rhetorical practices create the conditions of possibility for a governing apparatus to judge and program reality.”<sup>38</sup> Drawing from Althusser, Greene recognizes that a governing apparatus “exists as a complex field of practical reasoning that invents, circulates, and regulates public problems.”<sup>39</sup> Greene understands governing apparatuses as any institution such as government, schools, hospitals, and religious organizations or medium such as gossip, public dialogue, movies, and television with the ability to influence and/or control social life. However, Greene also realizes that governing apparatuses must exist for the goodwill of individuals, or individuals may reject or even revolt against governing apparatuses. Although I believe that, Greene’s essay is dangerously close to exaggerating the intrinsic democratic impulses of governing apparatuses (I do not believe Hitler’s Nazi Party was concerned with the goodwill of all individuals under its regime), he does point critics to the interlocking loci of power in society. Power develops through a complex organization of media influences, private influences such as family or friends, government influences, and religious influences to name a few. Through the combination of similar discourses, each governing apparatus works in conjunction with other governing apparatuses to create and maintain a particular societal structure. Governing apparatuses are rhetorical (e.g., public dialogue), economic (e.g., the choking grip of

corporate America), and physical (e.g., police force) in nature. Control and social consciousness exists at the intersection of these three key forces.

Greene also offers a way of conceptualizing the intertwined triumvirate of power (rhetoric, economics, and physicality) more explicitly. Greene draws upon Althusser's notion of ideology as describing "how a subject lives in relation to the conditions of existence."<sup>40</sup> In other words, rhetoric has a role to play in how an individual lives, but rhetoric exists in tandem with other forces. Thus, rhetoric may offer perceptions and options for living our lives, but the physical and economic forces of our lives constrain how, if at all, we may enact those options.

Rhetoric has material consequences, and the critic should consider the task of discovering these consequences. Critics must also consider the environmental constraints on rhetoric's capability to enact change. Drawing upon McGee, Cloud, Greene, and McKerrow, the task of a critic applying a materialist approach to discursive analysis is to explore texts as they contribute to the machinations of ideological governing apparatuses (i.e., viewing the text(s)'s role(s) in domination), especially as texts address themselves to specific publics. I believe *Enough* allows us to see how such a conceptualization of rhetoric works in the material world. *Enough* is a discourse addressing the specific publics of general, movie-going audiences, and specific women affected by domestic violence, including providers and professionals working in the field of domestic violence. The film has something to say and can have tangible consequences on its audience and environment. However, certain material, economic, political, and/or physical constraints may limit the ability of *Enough* to challenge and change our social environment. *Enough* affects material reality and material reality affects *Enough*. In the following section, I

outline my methods for examining *Enough*'s role in and interaction with the social world in which we live.

### Methodology

A rhetorical critic has a particular role and obligation when analyzing media discourses, such as films. I attempted to discern how a particular film reflects and creates a reality for a certain group of people. Therefore, my analysis required a dual methodological approach. In this section, I outline that approach while explaining my rationale for each method. I begin with a discussion of my textual analysis of the film. I then provide an outline of my second methodological approach, a feminist qualitative focus group of female providers and professionals in the field of domestic violence.

Because rhetoric is material and has consequences in everyday life, critics must be sure to analyze both what the rhetoric of a particular text is doing itself, and how that text fits into the social and physical world of which it is a part. As *Enough* is the text I have selected, I should begin by examining the film itself. Thus, the first goal of my thesis was to analyze the film using a materialist rhetorical approach to discover how it portrays domestic violence. I sought to learn what the film conveys about domestic violence, especially in regards to the means to end domestic violence, the ways domestic violence unfolds, the avenues for escaping domestic violence, and the characteristics of female victims and male perpetrators of domestic violence. However, the film resides in a particular context.

In order to contextualize my analysis, I gave consideration to major news articles published one month prior to the film to get a sense of the major themes in cultural portrayals of domestic violence. I selected articles from *The New York Times* for two

major reasons. First, I sought to contextualize my analysis of the film by surveying what major newspapers have to say about domestic violence, and discovering the broad thematic elements present in news coverage. I wanted to know how many domestic violence cases were reported, and how the media report such cases. Surveying the major newspaper coverage of domestic violence allowed me to get a sense of what culturally is taking place. My second rationale for selecting only one major newspaper relates to the first. Because I want to take a cultural pulse of domestic violence coverage, I surveyed major newspapers in the United States, i.e., the ones with the widest circulation and highest readership, and *The New York Times* was the only major paper with articles within my time frame. Additionally, focusing on this paper allowed me to narrow the overwhelming amount of newspaper articles reporting domestic violence across the country.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to analyzing the film rhetorically and placing the film in a cultural context, I realize the conclusions I obtain are merely one piece of the equation because the experiences portrayed in the film are not my own. I have never been a victim or survivor of domestic violence, nor have I ever worked in the field of domestic violence as an administrator or health professional. As a rhetorical critic, I have something to add to the conversation about the film given my academic training. As a general audience member, my reactions to the film are certainly valid and worth exploring. However, because *Enough* directly addresses the topic of domestic violence, the feedback of female domestic violence providers was important and essential to explore the film's material consequences.

The film directly deals with the experience of a female victim of domestic violence; therefore, I sought to enhance my reading of the film by gathering the reactions of people who work closely with domestic violence. As McGee notes:

We do experience television...The television show itself is not an experience, but a representation of experience...Every experience of a representation is an authentic experience...But if we believe that by virtue of having experienced a representation, we know something about the human beings depicted in that representation, from a materialist's perspective we're making an error.<sup>42</sup>

I understand that I do not have access to the experiences of domestic violence victims by virtue of seeing films depict domestic violence. I would be naïve and remiss if I tried to accurately describe the lives of those whom domestic violence directly affects by simply watching a representation of this group of people.

As such, to avoid the error McGee highlights, the second purpose of my project was to discover how the film functions in the lives of female domestic violence providers such as shelter administrators, shelter staff, counselors, or any other health professionals. With the help of my advisor, we showed the film to the participants and my advisor facilitated a focus group discussion to discern the material impacts of the film on this particular population. By analyzing their responses based on survey responses and focus group discussion, I was able to begin learning how the film is working in the everyday. John Sloop notes discourses and representations serve as one site in which "people take on their understanding of their "selves" and their worlds."<sup>43</sup> Thus, examining how the female domestic violence providers view the film helped me understand how society, and especially women, might use the film to understand the world of domestic violence.

Several principles of feminist qualitative research guided my research concerning domestic violence providers.

### *Feminist Qualitative Research*

In their book compiling feminist research and scholarship, Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook discuss four themes of feminist research: reflexivity, an action orientation, attention to the affective components of research, and use of the situation-at-hand. I relied upon the first three components as they had the most relevance to my project.

Reflexivity is the ability to look critically on the research process. As I mentioned earlier, several scholars have warned of the dangers of losing the voices of participants in studies concerning domestic violence, especially the danger of bureaucratizing domestic violence. Therefore, I needed to be ever aware of my role as researcher, and my role as interpreter, because my goal was to provide an accurate reflection of the participants' feedback in order to create a clear picture of how they view *Enough*.

Second, in discussing action orientation, Fonow and Cook contend, "The aim of feminist research is liberation...Feminist scholars must play active roles in the struggle for women's liberation."<sup>44</sup> An action orientation to research, then, attempts to integrate research into the struggle for liberation. The statistics I cited at the beginning of this chapter painted a horrifying picture of the prevalence and severity of domestic violence in America. Obviously, domestic violence is a problem that we, as a society, need to solve. I hope that my research conclusions may contribute to existing strategies, approaches, and solutions to addressing domestic violence by considering the material



impact of representations of domestic violence on individuals and groups. I return to this point most strongly in chapter four.

Finally, Fonow and Cook discuss the significance of affectivity in research as feminist research refuses:

to ignore the emotional dimension of the conduct of inquiry...This aspect...involves not only acknowledgement of the affective dimension of research, but also recognition that emotions serve as a source of insight or a signal of rupture in social reality (Cook, 1988a).<sup>45</sup>

I had to remain concerned both with the ways the research process (i.e., the showing of the film) had the potential to evoke emotions in the participants and the power of the participants' emotions as a source of insight into a social phenomenon (i.e., emotional reactions can reveal as much about the nature of a subject as funded bureaucratic research). In research concerning an issue as sensitive and emotional as domestic violence, I was concerned with not re-victimizing any participant who may have had direct experience with domestic violence in the past. I realized that the film and focus group might elicit strong feelings of anger, guilt, sadness, frustration, and others. My hope was that the participants could talk about these emotions in a way that would aid in thinking about the impact of portrayals of domestic violence.

I have based the methods and procedures for this study in feminist perspectives of qualitative research. However, an overarching theme I must also discuss concerning feminist research is the desire to present participants with an active role in the research project, i.e., the ability to share their own thoughts and feelings in their own ways. I aimed to create a focus group atmosphere of trust and comfort between the participants,

my adviser (the facilitator and Primary Investigator), and myself (the co-facilitator and co-Primary Investigator). I envisaged a focus group where each participant would share her feelings without fear of censure or denigration. The Primary Investigator (P.I.) attempted to provide equal time to all participants by calling on participants who had not spoken as much as others. Through this approach, the participants could speak on their own terms, in an effort to reflect accurately their thoughts. I go into more detail concerning the focus group in chapter three. I now outline my specific qualitative research methods.

### *Participants*

The participants were two females who are domestic violence providers (e.g., administrators, counselors, staff, and health professionals) who work and have worked directly with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. The P.I. and I contacted administrators of domestic violence shelters to solicit their participation and asked for contacts of other women interested in participating. Ultimately, the participants self-selected to participate. Due to several extenuating factors such as need for a babysitter, death in the family, and commencing a new private practice, only two of the women contacted were able to participate.

### *Context*

The research occurred in a private location on a university campus in order to provide a safe space for the participants.

### *Procedure*

The P.I. and I (hereafter “researchers”) met with the participants once throughout the project. During the focus group meeting, we began by briefly familiarizing the

participants to the project. We then showed the film to the participants. Following the film and prior to discussion we distributed our first questionnaire (Q1; see attached) to ensure that participants would record their own feelings and thoughts without the influence of others. A focus group discussion followed completion of Q1 in order that the participants would have a more in-depth conversation about their reactions to the film, and possible alternative portrayals of issues related to domestic violence that the participants might think would be more helpful in contributing to public awareness of and social action to end domestic violence. The P.I. facilitated discussion by calling upon various participants and asking follow-up questions (see attached focus group questions) in attempt to provide all participants with an opportunity to speak and to maintain time limit. After the discussion, the researchers distributed a final questionnaire (Q2; see attached) allowing participants to evaluate the research process of this study. Participants completed the questionnaires and mailed them to the researchers through self-addressed stamped envelopes the researchers provided. The entire focus group meeting lasted approximately four hours.

During the focus group discussion, the Co-P.I. transcribed comments on his laptop. The researchers also recorded the discussion with audio tape recorders to ensure the accuracy of the transcription.

#### Preview of Chapters

Chapter 2 consists of my close, textual analysis of *Enough*. In this chapter, I situate the film in the context of news article discussing domestic violence. I describe and unpack the ways I see the film portraying domestic violence. I contend that the film and the discourses surrounding it offer contradictory messages concerning ways to end

domestic violence, while offering a potential (and potentially harmful) source for empowerment.

In chapter 3, I discuss the qualitative portion of my project. I provide a detailed description of the focus group and outline the various themes arising during the focus group discussion. I conclude that the focus group participants offer a dominant reading of the film, which reflects the complicated nature of both the film and domestic violence.

Finally, Chapter 4 is my discussion section. I make conclusions about the research findings and synthesize my personal analysis of the film with the qualitative data gathered. I argue that the film offers a message that may place real women in danger. I conclude by offering suggestions for more empowering portrayals of the issue of domestic violence.

## Chapter Two: Navigating Complexities

The United States is home to constant battles between dominant groups and subordinate groups inhabiting the country. The struggle between oppressors and oppressed occurs on various battlegrounds; some battles rage on the physical plane (such as the use of high-pressure hoses to “discipline” Blacks fighting for civil rights in the 1960s), the economic plane (demonstrated by the wage gap between men and women, and the capitalistic behemoth represented in Wal-Mart and McDonald’s), the political plane (e.g., a recent decision to criminalize abortion in South Dakota and the 2004 decision by several states to ban same-sex marriages), and the ideological plane (seen any time we ascribe certain roles to women, men, Whites, Blacks, Latina/os, Native Americans, and other groups). Such battlegrounds are not as separate as my delineation may lead one to believe. Although the spheres of contestation<sup>46</sup> involve specific procedures, arguments, and citizens in each, every sphere is interconnected. The world of politics inevitably bleeds into economics (the struggle for welfare rights); physical threats may lead to the rise of certain political parties (as the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks did for George W. Bush) and their policies (e.g., illegal domestic wire-tapping and spying);

and the ways in which we view the world (our ideologies) shapes and informs each other sphere.

Rhetorical critics coming from materialist perspectives help illuminate the interconnectedness of spheres of contestation and struggle. Such critics aid an analysis of the social, material, economic, physical, political, and ideological importance and effect(s) of even seemingly insignificant social texts. Materialist rhetorical critics proffer several useful perspectives on rhetoric and its functions in society; perspectives that are useful because they allow for an expansion of the definition of rhetoric, and provide critics with new tools for engaging the dominating and subversive movements of rhetoric throughout societies.

First, materialist critics such as Michael Calvin McGee, rend rhetoric from the somewhat stale and dated arena of single, public speeches of importance, of which “important” White men were the traditional orators.<sup>47</sup> Such a conceptualization of rhetoric opens the doors for the study of such varied texts as Martin Luther King, Jr’s speeches, Homer Simpson’s soliloquies, Barbara Jordan’s Senate proclamations, Jennifer Lopez’s film career, Jerry’s Springer’s television shows, and Salt-N-Pepa’s music. In addition to analyzing such everyday discourses as powerful rhetorical artifacts, materialist critics point to the necessity of examining seemingly disparate texts and their relation to one another. For example, one might wish to determine how Dan Quayle’s speeches affect the viewership of and reception to the television show *Murphy Brown*.<sup>48</sup>

As with most new insights, the materialist perspective needed to be refined and refuted in order to yield the most productivity. Ronald Greene offered an important

revision of materiality that aids me in this study, and Dana Cloud proffered an important refutation I utilize in my analysis of *Enough*.

First, Greene extended the discussion of rhetoric's intertextual nature by drawing heavily upon Louis Althusser's notion of the governing apparatus, which "exists as a complex field of practical reasoning that invents, circulates, and regulates public problems."<sup>49</sup> A governing apparatus is any socially-constructed and socially-constructing institution such as religion, television, governmental agencies, hospitals, and films. Rhetoric is the bridge between each apparatus connecting the institutions' ideologies to each other and encoding these ideologies for the general public. A film may want to tell women that murder is an acceptable way of ending domestic violence, but newspaper reports and legal institutions may disagree. Thus, Greene reminds critics of the importance of seeing how discourses may both converge and diverge, presenting contradictory messages with real effects on audience perceptions.

Second, Dana Cloud refutes the view of rhetoric as all-powerful by attending to rhetoric's ties to physical, political, and economic factors and restraints. Grounded in a strongly Marxist tradition of exploring the means of economic production, Cloud places rhetoric in a triad with both economic and political factors. She warns against privileging rhetoric and the detriments of confusing rhetoric's omnipresence with omnipotence. Cloud offers an appropriate and effective example by way of the Persian Gulf War. Rhetoric, words, symbols, and discourse could not stop the bombs from falling upon the towns and villages of Iraq. Rhetoric can help us think about the world in novel ways and work toward positive change, but economic and political realities severely limit rhetoric's potency. For example, I may tell women whose partners abuse them that getting a

restraining order can solve the problem. However, my words will not aid a woman when law enforcement officials refuse to answer her calls for help, as in the case of Jessica Gonzales,<sup>50</sup> or when society turns a blind eye because of her ethnicity or class. I must examine how real economic and political (as well as legal and physical) realities constrain rhetoric's potential for change. Thus, Cloud strongly cautions against "the tendency to overemphasize consciousness, speech, and text as the determinants of...change."<sup>51</sup> Cloud reminds critics that the movement of social structures often continues regardless of or contrary to discourse.

Gleaning McGee's broad view of rhetoric, Greene's discussion of interconnected rhetorical structures, and tempering each with Cloud's attention to the material structures that constrain human beings, I examine the ways in which a film can be both product and producer of cultural ideologies and constrained by material structures. As critical film scholar Robert Kolker correctly notes, "[F]ilm...has had...a cumulative effect, giving the culture a way of looking at itself, articulating its ideology, reflecting and creating its physical appearance and gestures, teaching and confirming its shared myths."<sup>52</sup> Kolker's use of the word pairs, "reflecting and creating," and "teaching and confirming" pinpoint the creative and constrained characteristics of a film as a rhetorical text or force in society. Film is a creative force because it asks audiences to adopt specific perspectives, often regarding important issues. Film is a constrained force because any attempt to change an audience's view on a subject contends with physical, economic, and political realities, just as these realities constrain the creation of and messages within a film itself. While a film may offer new possibilities for imagining reality, it cannot demolish instantly (or even completely) the physical, economic, and political forces that constitute



reality. Thus, I rely most heavily upon Dana Cloud's discussion of material reality constraining rhetoric's potential to analyze the film *Enough* (2002), which deals with the important issue of domestic violence while experiencing precisely the tensions I have just been discussing. While *Enough* is a rhetorical text that creates specific views of domestic violence, it also co-exists with and within other discursive and material structures. The major query undergirding this chapter is in what ways does *Enough* operate as a discursive vehicle that influences and/or controls the ways in which the public thinks about domestic violence? In this chapter, I place *Enough* in conversation with other situational discourses and structures. I focus my contextual discussion on two major manufacturers and distributors (governing apparatuses) of rhetoric in the field of domestic violence: news articles and movie reviews. By exploring the major themes concerning domestic violence in news articles one month prior to the film's U.S. release and movie reviews of *Enough* I can begin to chart the contours of the ideological environment in which the film came into existence. Such a contextualization will allow me to put the film in discussion with other cultural products.

After contextualizing *Enough* broadly, I move to an analysis of the film itself, in which I delineate the major themes and explore each drawing upon specific scenes as examples. Throughout my analysis, I continue to place *Enough* in context by attempting to periodically situate the themes of the film in relation to real-life domestic violence research. Ultimately, I argue *Enough* challenges assumptions about the helplessness of female victims of domestic violence and potentially offers resources for empowerment to women (especially battered women) through the strength of the film's main character, but ignores the material realities many women face and may place real women in greater

danger. I believe that *Enough*, news articles prior to the film's release, and reviews of the film, work to create the message that women are helpless victims of domestic violence, doomed to a life of abuse. That abuse may come from a battering man, an incapable police force, a harsh system of laws, or a woman's own psychological distress. As I will demonstrate, *Enough* shows the specific difficulties of an abused woman who is caught in a web of class conflicts, racial negotiations, and gender constraints. *Enough* calls attention to the challenges of working-class women, women of color, women attempting to support children, and women with no support systems whose husbands beat them and the current inadequacies of domestic violence responses, while itself presenting the detrimental and even unattainable alternative of murdering the abuser.

#### Reporting Domestic Violence

One cultural institution that creates a particular image of domestic violence is newspaper reports. Several studies argue that the ways in which the news media frames issues and the issues they cover influence the society's views of the particular issue.<sup>53</sup> Considering the news media's reporting of domestic violence allows me to create an even more vivid picture of the context from which *Enough* emerges. I utilized the Lexis-Nexis database to search news articles appearing in *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* from May 24, 2001 to May 24, 2002, *Enough*'s U.S. release date, using the key words "domestic violence," "battered women," and "domestic abuse." I chose articles one year prior to *Enough*'s release to get a broad grasp of how reporting of domestic violence portrays the issue. Additionally, I wished to survey only the two major newspapers in the United States, *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* as focusing on these papers allowed me to narrow the overwhelming amount of newspaper

articles reporting domestic violence (approximately 651 from around the country one year prior to the film's release). Due to the lack of articles that fit within my search criteria appearing in *The Los Angeles Times*, I ultimately only reviewed nine articles from *The New York Times*. In the following section, I discuss the two major themes emerging from the articles. I argue that the news reports prior to *Enough*'s release demonstrate that women in violent situations have several options available to them for escaping the situation, while concluding that all of these options are ultimately insufficient, leaving abused women with no true safe haven.

The first major theme of the articles pointed to the necessity of governmental and legal institutions to aid women whose partners abuse them. Four of the nine articles discussed the importance of shelters for battered women, and the necessity of tougher laws<sup>54</sup> to punish abusers and protect abused women, a stance highly consistent with particular goals and claims of the battered women's movement, which began seeking and continue to seek more governmental resources to aid abused women.<sup>55</sup> The news articles I examined seem to show the struggle for stronger governmental protections for abused women has been successful, but may even be over. These articles specifically cite the ways in which institutional responses have changed, especially concerning law enforcement and governmental protections for abused women. For example, Somini Sengupta notes:

Over the last decade, as a result of agitation by women's groups, most states have instituted mandatory-arrest laws...In recent years, many states, like New York, have introduced language designed to identify primary physical aggressors in domestic disputes.<sup>56</sup>

Such a statement may lead a reader to believe the struggle to provide greater governmental protections for abused women is over, much as some U.S. citizens see the right for equality finished because almost everyone in the U.S. can vote. Such a view sounds like a declaration that “all is quiet on the domestic violence front”; that victory exists because of the efficacy of governmental protections and the increased numbers of shelters available to battered women. The articles soon speak to the contradictory nature of the conversation concerning domestic violence in the U.S. by attending to the failures of responses to domestic violence. The contradictory messages lead to a lingering view of the helplessness and hopelessness of abused women.

The second major theme suggested by the articles is an illustration of the failings of governmental agencies dealing with domestic violence, and, in some cases, the state-sponsored legal abuse of abused women.<sup>57</sup> The overall message is that, while new laws exist to aid battered women, the very laws and lawmakers appointed to uphold them can actually have unforeseen negative consequences. By focusing on the fallibility of legal responses to domestic violence, the articles may leave abused women in a dire situation. For example, three articles discuss Judge Jack B. Weinstein’s outrage over a New York agency’s removal of children from their mothers simply because the women were abused.<sup>58</sup> The discussion of Weinstein invites readers to feel the same outrage that the judge feels, and to realize, as he does, that governmental institutions may inevitably abuse the same women they vow to protect. Where then can women turn? The answer is nowhere, if we look at two more exemplars of the articles’ cynicism (realism?). Francis Clines notes that a judge in Kentucky held abused women in contempt of court for returning to their abusers after obtaining protective orders.<sup>59</sup> A judge who, ideally, should

be doing everything in her/his power to provide support and legal protection for battered women, instead chastises the women for being fallible! The judge from Kentucky does seem to point to the difficulties battered women face when leaving their abusers, but seems to punish the victims for such difficulties. Who can women trust? Although one would hope that women could trust the law enforcement officers who are usually the ones on the scene of domestic abuse, Somini Sengupta tells us otherwise in her description of the problems with mandatory arrest laws in New York:

Some battered-women's groups...argue that by leaving arrest decisions strictly in the hands of the police, the law renders victims even more powerless. Others say that police officers on the scene of a messy domestic dispute are often ill-trained and unable to discern who is to blame. Should a minor bruise be the basis for making an arrest, for instance? That might in fact punish an abuser, but it could also lead to the arrest of a victim who struck back in self defense.<sup>60</sup>

The articles that began by telling abused women that the U.S. has come a long way in providing necessary protections, eventually leave women in the same, if not a worsened, condition. The ultimate perspective of the articles is that women in violent situations have several options available to them, but often these options fail.<sup>61</sup> Police officers cannot help women because they are either ill prepared or apathetic. Judges cannot help women because they may be more concerned with disciplining abused women's choices and labeling certain choices "mistakes." The laws cannot help women because they may strip children away from mothers who seek merely to protect their offspring.

In sum, the articles may pre-dispose potential viewers of *Enough* to feel certain ways about domestic violence, and may affect the film's portrayal of the issue as well. If

audiences entered the film without reading news reports, they may believe that the options available to battered women are successful without fault. However, the news reporting of a hopeless state for abused women serves to undermine the effectiveness of legal and social options available to battered women. Such a view may lead women not to take advantage of protection orders or shelters for fear that the state will only fail. Slim enacts and perpetuates such a view of reality by explicitly discussing the flaws of social responses to domestic violence, and choosing instead to murder her abuser. As I argue more specifically in chapters three and four, the material ramifications of the news articles coupled with *Enough*'s portrayal of the issue may be increased danger for real women. Additionally, if reporting of domestic violence prior to the film's release offers a framework for audiences of *Enough* to think about domestic violence, reviews of the film operate on a similar level.

#### Out of Touch with Reality: Reviews of the Film

*Enough* follows the life of Slim (Jennifer Lopez), a working class woman who waits tables at a diner in California. After chivalrous Mitch (Billy Campbell) rescues Slim from the sexual bet of would-be-suitor Robbie (Noah Wyle), the audience quickly sees Mitch and Slim at their wedding reception. Mitch's lucrative architectural contractor career allows him to begin constructing a world of safety and comfort for Slim; the home of Mitch and Slim visually and materially represents the world of safety he constructs. He promises her protection and a good life in exchange for her giving him a family. After the birth of their child, Gracie, the domestic scene for Mitch and Slim becomes one of suspicion, deceit, and violence. When Slim discovers and confronts Mitch about his marital infidelity (the first to her knowledge), he slaps her and punches her to the ground.

Soon the audience has voyeuristic access to Slim's escape with Gracie to various parts of the country. However, Mitch freezes her assets and hires hitmen to pursue Slim at every turn. Slim attempts to evade Mitch, who assiduously seeks nothing less than Slim's death. Eventually Slim decides to fight back, learns Krav Maga<sup>62</sup> and confronts Mitch in a final showdown to the death.

With the tagline, "Everyone has a limit," *Enough* arrived in U.S. theatres on May 24, 2002. The film ranked fifth in the box office on opening weekend but, after 45 days in theatres, ultimately grossed \$39,177,215, barely recovering the production budget costs of \$38,000,000 (the film was also up against such blockbusters as *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* and *Spider-Man*).<sup>63</sup> Moviegoers seemed to support the film initially, but reviewers overwhelmingly agree that the film utterly fails to be a helpful, important statement concerning domestic violence. Reviews<sup>64</sup> consistently describe the film as an unrealistic portrayal of domestic violence, with Catharine Tunnacliffe derisively asserting that *Enough* "bears about as much resemblance to the experiences of most battered women as *Spider-Man* does to the experiences of most teenagers."<sup>65</sup> Tunnacliffe's resoundingly sardonic statement calls attention to *Enough*'s place as a film riddled with inaccuracies and exaggerations; these glaring faults of the film allow film critics to disregard *Enough* as an awkward, disrespectful parody of the dangerously grave realities of domestic violence. Reviewers cite three key areas where the film breaks from reality: 1) the film has an illogical plot, 2) the main character, Slim, curiously sidesteps typical options for ending, escaping, or surviving violent situations in favor of revenge, and 3) Billy Campbell's portrayal of Mitch is a shameful caricature of real-life male perpetrators.

Although films often ask audiences to suspend their disbelief and enter a world of images and possibilities and any film is, by definition, contrived, reviewers of *Enough* severely chastise the film's blatant exaggerations.<sup>66</sup> In summarizing the majority opinion, one anonymous review states that the film "may just be the most contrived and manipulative movie you'll see this season" noting further, "[T]he filmmakers have turned a domestic abuse story into a far too obvious boogeyman flick where most everything that's present and/or occurs is designed to goose the viewer."<sup>67</sup> The reviewers essentially believe that *Enough* unscrupulously and unrepentantly plays with audience emotions, despite the fact that *all* films work to manipulate emotions and shape audience opinions and attitudes in some way(s). So why do film critics strenuously and unremittingly bring to the fore *Enough*'s use of manipulation when the critics elide their own manipulation of audience opinion?<sup>68</sup>

Ironically, film critics seem to be forgetting (or purposefully overlooking) their own role in shaping film reception (essentially shaping views of views of reality), and putting forth their own versions of what does or does not constitute reality. Mark Dujsik begins to betray his own perspective of reality, albeit surreptitiously, by harshly criticizing *Enough*'s view of domestic violence:

*Enough* has the disguise of an important statement against domestic violence and for the empowerment of women...but takes those themes and places them into a contrived and completely ineffective thriller, essentially wrecking any kind of message it has to say in the first place.<sup>69</sup>

A key question to ask is what Dujsik believes qualifies a statement against domestic violence as important. He provides the answer to the inquiry later in his review:



The movie presents everything in black and white...Characters are forced to choose between one option or another, even though in reality there's always at least a third scenario. *This is a movie fantasy world...*[where] things are as simple as this or that, no matter how unfair it is to the issue at hand (emphasis mine).<sup>70</sup>

We can begin to see that Dujcik views films portraying domestic violence as “important” only if they are true to reality. He seems to want films to represent the subtleties and intricacies concerning domestic violence. *Enough* fails for reviewers, because it has no connection to multifaceted, complex real world experiences. Yet, no reviewer cites her/his credentials for making claims of *Enough*'s blatant distortion of material life. Instead, the reviewers point to their view of domestic violence. They argue that domestic violence is a multifaceted issue that films must take seriously, and deal with in true-to-life ways.

The second major theme of the reviews is the film's lack of “reasonable” options for its main character. By this, reviewers seem to take into account the real-life choices available to abused women such as shelters and protection orders, and wonder why *Enough* eschews such options.<sup>71</sup> Ian Waldron-Mantgani believes that the film works “to a conclusion of violent revenge, as the villain becomes more hateful and the screenplay isolates the heroine by cutting off such options as calling the cops or going to lawyers.”<sup>72</sup> He and other critics<sup>73</sup> consistently refer to *Enough* as another film in a long line of revenge movies, which have one-dimensional plots and one-dimensional characters. One critic, Betty Jo Tucker, mulls over the implications of *Enough*'s theme of ultimate, inevitable revenge:

Although *Enough* delivers the dramatic tension and thrills I look for in revenge

flicks, I can't help feeling some guilt about my delight at the way it ends. Is Slim defending herself or committing murder?...While not a social documentary, *Enough* illustrates the hopelessness surrounding spousal abuse situations. However, here's another movie, like *In the Bedroom*, sending a message that the end justifies the means. Even J-Lo can't make me believe that's true.<sup>74</sup>

Tucker calls attention to a revenge-themed film's ramifications on everyday circumstances, as she ponders whether battered women should kill their abusers. She points to the potentially negative effects of justifying an eye-for-an-eye mentality concerning domestic violence. Where exactly does one draw the line between self-defense and murder? The major reason murder is self-defense in *Enough* is that the male villain is so obviously horrific, the final theme worthy of criticism for reviewers of the film.

In the world of absolutes and obvious heroes and villains, film reviewers pan *Enough* for taking the male perpetrator of domestic violence and making him so exaggerated as to be laughable. Dustin Putman describes Billy Campbell's portrayal of Mitch by saying, "Billy Campbell...plays a truly despicable human being, so downright evil that his part turns into almost a caricature."<sup>75</sup> Although, Putman notes that Campbell seems to pull off the role, Jeffrey Bruner thinks otherwise: "Campbell, eager to shatter the sensitive-male image from his television show, is trapped with a caricature so horrible that it would be too generous to describe it as thinly drawn."<sup>76</sup> Again, without any reference to credentials, the film critics argue that as a caricature of the male perpetrator Mitch is unrealistic.<sup>77</sup> Film critics believe that Mitch's embodiment of evil does not truly

speak to the real problems associated with perpetrators of domestic violence, and instead the film uses him to justify more violence on Slim's part.

Overall, film critics disparage *Enough* for being unrealistic and even harmful to abused women. They concur that the film operates illogically, denies the main character access to accepted channels for ending domestic violence, and presents a male abuser who is grossly exaggerated and unbelievable. The critics are appalled that the film offers abused women no helpful options in ending, surviving, or escaping domestic violence. At the same time that critics denigrate the film's lack of realism, they elide their own ability to offer a view of the realities of domestic violence; a view substantiated with no specific evidence or credentials as the film critics do not seem to be providers or health care professionals who work closely with domestic violence victims. Thus, reviewers may shape the way audiences receive the messages *Enough* offers in important ways. More importantly perhaps, reviews of the film may point to the material dangers of accepting that legal and social responses to domestic violence are inherently flawed and incapable of helping women. Reviewers seem to want women to realize that other options exist; options that help many women out of violent situations; options that *Enough* ignores for the sake of Hollywood action.

The ideological context surrounding *Enough* is one of potential hope that is undercut by reminders of a fallible reality. Reviewers want the film's main character to take advantage of the hard-won victories of the battered women's movement (i.e., protection orders and shelters). Yet reviewers seem to be in partial conflict with news reports illuminating the failings of current legal and social responses to domestic violence. *Enough* then emerges amidst conflicting opinions about the proper responses to

domestic violence and the efficacy of such responses. Such ideological tensions point toward the ways in which the film may affect the material reality of viewers. As the film feeds into the pessimism of the news paper reports, viewers may find themselves opting to murder their abusers or at least fight back physically if ever they find themselves in a situation similar to Slim's. If *Enough* exists within ideological tensions of the concurrent efficacy and inefficacy of responses to domestic violence, one may expect the film to express such tensions and for the tensions to have material effects upon society. By utilizing the materialist rhetorical perspective, I analyze the material impacts of context upon the film and the film upon context.

#### Painting a Dangerous Picture

As I mentioned in chapter one, *Enough* takes a decidedly novel approach to portraying domestic violence compared to previous films which consider this important issue. Because the film deals with a societal issue that affects a disturbing amount of people, rhetorical critics need to attend carefully to the ways in which *Enough* constructs and deconstructs domestic violence. In beginning my analysis, I refer back to a common complaint of film reviewers: *Enough* is too unrealistic to be important and helpful. Although I initially wished to stick-up for the film and search for its potential allegorical dimensions, I must attend to the possible importance of reviewers' criticisms of *Enough's* lack of reality. A film that misses the physical and economic realities of women in violent situations may place women in greater danger. To begin discussing the material ramifications of the film I proceed as follows. First, I examine the three major themes of the film: ways in which the film depicts the male abuser and female victim, the options the films presents to its main character for surviving, ending, or escaping a violent

situation, and the intersections of and tensions between race, class, and gender. Second, I synthesize the themes and demonstrate how they may place women in greater danger.

*Gender Caricature and Challenge: The Male Abuser and Female Victim*

*Enough* has important statements to make about the characteristics of male abusers. According to the film, male abusers are stronger than women, are characterized by insatiable sexual desires, and are the makers of the rules. Slim's best friend Ginny (Juliette Lewis) encapsulates the film's dominant message about male abusers when she notes, "Men are like landmines."<sup>78</sup> From the commencement of the film, *Enough* is offering its audience specific ways for thinking about males and their roles in domestic violence. The film characterizes abusers as hyper-masculine (i.e., being a man's man), subsequently conflating a proclivity for violence with both physical and sexual aggression. Concurrently, *Enough* portrays the female victim in contrast to a male abuser. The female victim is a homemaker, sexually and morally above reproach, initially naïve, ultimately capable; caught in a web of hopelessness she learns to fend for herself by killing the male abuser who seeks her own death. *Enough* attempts to offer nothing less than a profile of male abusers and female victims of domestic violence. I deal first with the construction of the male abuser, move to the female victim, and conclude this section with implications of the respective portrayals.

The entire film is set up to ensure that the audience knows that Mitch fits the profile of a male batterer, especially that of an active, "overcontrolled wife assaulter...characterized as a 'control freak' who extends his need for extreme domination to others."<sup>79</sup> Prior to Ginny informing Slim (and the audience) that men are landmines waiting to be set off in a frenzy of physical violence Mitch begins to display

an undercurrent of aggressive behavior. The first time the audience sees Mitch, he is protecting Slim from the sexual bet of Robbie.<sup>80</sup> Mitch teaches Robbie a lesson and ensures Slim's dignity is safe by roughing up Robbie a bit, telling (warning) him never to come back to the diner where Slim works. Mitch is an easily agitated male, albeit mildly so in the beginning of the film, who is willing to assert his physical dominance in any situation threatening his control. The first scene with Mitch points toward another important message of the film, which Ginny alludes to: men (male abusers) are not blatantly violent initially, but are ticking time bombs waiting for a moment to explode. In fact, Mitch is downright charming at the beginning of the film. His chivalrous attitude obviously wins Slim's affection. Here the film seems to be tapping into the broader research concerning the cycle of domestic violence, which consists of a honeymoon phase where the couple lives happily and in peace.<sup>81</sup> Although Slim and Mitch are not yet married, the cycle of violence refers more to a certain time in which the couple is happy, seems smitten with one another, and sees no problems on the horizon. Yet, the cycle of violence tells us that the abuse will begin (or continue) eventually when some other event triggers the abuser. Mitch seems to simultaneously embody and enact the cycle of violence. His personality is rooted in wooing, dominance, physical violence, appeasement, and the perpetuation of this cycle. Each scene that follows the introduction to Mitch reveals the escalating violence of the character, causing Mitch to become intolerable, irrational, and frighteningly unstoppable.

Mitch's coercion becomes more insidious and obvious as the film progresses in an attempt to ensure the audience has nothing but disgust and even hatred for the character. Every interaction with Mitch shows him to be a vile, repulsive, irredeemable abuser. In

fact, the film invites audiences to identify solely with Slim, seeing through her eyes the ugliness of Mitch's character. When Slim seems puzzled that Mitch forces a man to sell his home, the audience should be puzzled; when Slim seems concerned that Mitch is distant while the couple and daughter Gracie play on the beach, the audience should be concerned; when Slim is initially hurt and confused to find that Mitch is having an extramarital affair, the audience should be hurt and confused; finally, when Slim is inconsolable and incredulous at Mitch's continued infidelities, the audience should be inconsolable and incredulous. When Slim realizes that Mitch cannot be saved and must be destroyed, the audience concurs. Such a message is important to the way audiences feel about real-life male abusers. If we see Mitch as the quintessential male abuser, and Mitch is a monster to be shunned and destroyed, then we may see all male abusers in a similar manner. Such a message does a great injustice to counseling programs and organizations committed to aiding recovering male batterers, and realizing the importance of men's roles in ending domestic violence.<sup>82</sup>

The film works hard to ensure that Slim fits the model of a pure hero, and excuses her from the trap of morally ambiguous revenge by showing men's violence as inextricably linked to a sexual aggression of which Slim remains innocent. From the moment Slim discovers Darcelle paging Mitch until the end of the film, the male character is an adulterous, lustful, sex-driven person. When Slim confronts Mitch concerning his extra-marital affairs, the film creates a stereotypical view of men as sexually insatiable with Mitch noting, "It's not that our sex life hasn't been good. It's been great Slim. But I'm a man. Men and women have different needs...Darcelle is willing to take care of that." In contrast, Slim remains faithful until the end. Even when

she finds that Mitch is cheating on her, she tells him that she loves him and just wants to be happy. Thus, Slim is the pure heroine audiences can cheer for in the end when she vanquishes Mitch. In order for Slim to be justified in murdering Mitch, Mitch must be evil beyond repair or doubt. His playboy lifestyle leads to an audience's potential hatred of him. Even toward the end of the film as Slim infiltrates Mitch's home, we see Mitch in bed with some unknown blonde woman. As soon as the blonde woman leaves, Mitch calls another mistress named Lucy to set up what the audience can assume to be a sexual rendezvous. To the bitter end, Mitch is a promiscuous cad.<sup>83</sup>

At the same time that *Enough* shows male abusers as hopelessly caught in a cycle of ever-increasing violence with no chance of recovery, it does reveal the realities of escalating violence that many women face. Although Mitch's first display of aggressive behavior in the coffee shop is restrained, his external persona soon begins to mirror his internal rage. He foreshadows his own plunge into physical violence when he forces a man to sell his house by telling him to, "[T]hink how miserable one determined crazy person can make you. Miserable today, tomorrow, pretty much everyday until the day you sell." Mitch's statement is a thinly veiled threat of physical and psychological terror he is willing to inflict on others to get his way. Eventually, Mitch will no longer veil his threats as his true nature erupts in a physical assault on Slim. The scene in which Mitch reveals his inner nature and fully assumes the mantle of male abuser is worth discussing in detail.

When Slim discovers Mitch is cheating on her with a woman named Darcelle, she begins to cry and bends to the ground to pick up her daughter's toys. She is shocked that Mitch could do such a thing. Mitch enters the room and she tells him why she is crying.



True to the cycle of violence (although physical violence has not occurred yet), Mitch apologizes and takes Slim in his arms. He seems genuinely apologetic and remorseful. He quickly discards the façade of concern when Slim again catches him in his infidelity (by smelling the woman's perfume on Mitch's clothes) and refuses to back down or be consoled. Mitch is a hard working man, and the last thing he wants when he returns home is grief from his wife. Mitch is the stereotypical breadwinner who controls the comings and goings of his wife. Mitch is the man who will not tolerate having his masculinity (and masculine role) challenged. When Slim defiantly states that, "The party is over" Mitch fulfills her words immediately by slapping her in the face and punching her to the ground. What seemed like a fairytale has become a cautionary tale about the inevitability of violence for men who fit the description of typical male abuser. The scene when Mitch first hits Slim serves to modify the typical "boys will be boys" attitude of U.S. culture to "violent men will be violent men." Mitch's violence erupting was just a matter of time, and a matter of the right trigger.

Such an attitude can have dangerous material consequences. First, the attitude that men will always be violent ignores the seriousness of violence in transgendered or lesbian couples, creating a silence that prevents helpful solutions to such a problem. Second, the stereotype of men as violent may lead to law enforcement arresting men when responding to calls of domestic violence simply because they are men, even though the woman may be the aggressor. Additionally, as I noted earlier, viewing men as inherently and incurable violent undercuts the real benefits of the movement for men to take responsibility for their violence and seek to end it. In other words, stereotypes perpetuate more stereotypes and make finding new, more beneficial paths even more

difficult. Beyond portraying a male abuser, *Enough* presents a certain view of a female victim of domestic violence.

Slim is a stereotypical female (and female abuse victim) in the first part of the film. *Enough* constantly codes Slim as both female and heterosexual, by first allowing her to fall in love with Mitch. We then see Slim pregnant, an explicit nod to her inextricable femininity. Upon moving into the home Mitch has purchased, Slim decorates, unpacks the kitchen utensils, and cooks the meals to serve Mitch and Gracie. Slim further enforces her femininity when she exhibits her emotions upon learning of Mitch's infidelities and after Mitch hits her. At both times she cries, calling to mind traditional stereotypes of women as uncontrollably emotional.<sup>84</sup> If Mitch is the quintessential male batterer Slim is the quintessential mother, whose first priority is always the safety of her child. The other major female character, Ginny, is also strictly feminine, as she is Slim's emotional support and even takes care of Gracie when Slim decides to confront Mitch. *Enough* shows the emotional and psychological struggles that female victims of abuse face by always keeping Slim's emotions on the surface. Such a message initially implies that, while mentally cunning, female abuse victims are ultimately weak and must look to men (and patriarchal power structures) for help. Slim does so repeatedly when she flees to her former boyfriend Joe's (Dan Futterman) apartment, reaches out to her estranged father Jupiter (Fred Ward), visits attorney James Toller (Bill Cobbs), and learns Krav Maga from a male trainer (Bruce A. Young). However, just when *Enough* seems to ultimately imply that women are helpless victims, inferior to the physical strength of men, the film takes an interesting turn. Again, the depiction of the stereotypical woman may prevent women from taking action for

themselves. Although, the film contradicts the portrayal of women as helpless in its second half, I believe that the contradiction serves to place women in real danger rather than offer an unquestionable source of empowerment.

While *Enough* points out the implied physical superiority of the male body and the female body is as powerful as the male body. Here, Slim forces a one-on-one confrontation with Mitch in his marina home. When Mitch sees Slim bedecked in an all-black tank top, stretch pants, army boots, and hand tape, he is genuinely shocked at her bravado, and queries, "You wanna fight me? Man to man?" She corrects him by stating, "Woman, Mitch." He notes the correction: "Yeah that's what I mean, man against woman. You sure that's fair?" Mitch seems baffled that Slim with her female physique would seriously want to challenge Mitch's seemingly indestructible male body in a physical confrontation. But Slim shows her resolve by asking, "Fair to whom?" She seems determined to prove that she can injure him in the same way he has injured her in the past. She slaps him around a bit and he eventually engages her in physical combat. Due to her intense Krav Maga training, she begins to pummel Mitch. At one point she even taunts him, asking, "I'm confused Mitch, aren't you a man? Huh? Can't you hit me again even once?" By the end of this final showdown, the audience can see that the female body is capable of defeating the abusive male body as Slim literally beats Mitch unrecognizable and eventually kills him. At this point in the film, the battle between Slim and Mitch becomes one of all abused women against all abusive men. *Enough* presents the view that abused women can confront and kill abusive men, by eschewing the rhetoric of women as weak. However, the film also threatens to undercut its own message

when Slim evens the odds with high-tech gadgetry (to find and discard Mitch's guns and to block his cell phone), rings on her fingers, and steel-toed boots. All of the added components to Slim's body may lead viewers to believe that female body must become masculine in order to defeat the male body. The film seems to think that women can physically challenge their abusers, but not as females; they must become more masculine and enhance their feminine frames.

As the trailer for the film suggested before *Enough*'s release, Slim needed to physically confront and kill Mitch in order to end the abuse once and for all. Such a portrayal, while possibly empowering, contains important implications by eschewing other options available to abused women. Does the film expect women who are mentally and emotionally abused and subsequently depressed to fight back physically? Perhaps women who see the film will want to fight back. But what happens when empowerment turns to danger as they find themselves either in prison or dead because they took Slim as their role model? *Enough* poses important questions abused women may ask: Where do I turn? How do I escape a situation that has become violent? Yet, the film resoundingly presents only one option I believe is questionable at best: murder of the abuser.

#### *Dial 'M' For Options*

Feminists and other activists have struggled for nearly 40 years to bring the issue of domestic violence to light in U.S. politics, calling attention to the epidemic nature of violence against women.<sup>85</sup> Since the beginnings of the battered woman's movement in the early 1970s, the number of options available to women trapped in abusive situations has increased, from remaining hopeless in the situation to obtaining legal protection orders and entering women's shelters. Yet, *Enough* systematically demonstrates the

failings of protection orders, shelters, and even community/family assistance, as none of these options are sufficient for Slim and Gracie to escape Mitch. In so doing, the film undercuts its potential messages of empowerment by conveying murder as the only viable option for battered women.

### *Protection Orders*

One concrete victory stemming directly from the battered women's movement has been the option for abused women to obtain a protection order against their abuser.<sup>86</sup> To understand how a protection order works, and how (and why) Slim rejects this option, I juxtapose Slim's views with the "legal" definition of a protection order. Slim seems to realize the failing of protection orders when she incredulously asks, "What's that? A little piece of paper that says he [the abuser] can't come around? And when he comes around, what does she do, throw it at him?" Slim's lack of faith in a piece of paper alludes to the fact that women who have obtained protection orders have often been subject to further abuse. How does Slim's statement fit within the legal definition and realities of protection orders? Shonna L. Trinch describes a protection order as, "A court injunction that is issued by a judge to keep an abusive family member away from a complaining party for a specified period of time. The issuance of an order is a preventive measure intended to protect survivors from further abuse."<sup>87</sup> Such a definition may lead to the view that protection orders are timely, easy to obtain, and highly secure. Such a view does not correctly attend to the real time-consuming nature and flaws of protection orders that the film regrettably does not depict. According to the Seattle-King County Domestic Violence Protection Order Site, "It will take a few weeks to get a full

Protection Order. You [the abused] may have to spend several hours in court on at least two different days.”<sup>88</sup>

I do not seek to denigrate the validity of protection orders as both a victory for the battered women’s movement and an important option for abused women, but we must remember that protection orders take time to obtain. A woman must appear before several people, including an advocate who records the petition for an order, and the judge who makes the final decision. In addition to being time consuming, protection orders are also not always effective. A report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women detailed some reasons protection orders may not always be effective as, “Laws are not taken seriously or are selectively applied;...inadequate provisions are made for enforcement; or the resources allocated for implementation are insufficient.”<sup>89</sup> Law enforcement officers may not be able to distinguish the victim from the perpetrator, and they may choose not to respond at all (as in the case of Jessica Gonzales). Even when police officers do get involved in instances of domestic violence, this may not be enough to aid a victim. For example, the District of Columbia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (DCCADV) states that, “More than 17% of domestic homicide victims had a protection order against the perpetrator at the time of the killing...[and] in one study, nearly half of the victims who obtained a protection order were re-abused within two years.”<sup>90</sup> The film tells an audience that protection orders cannot stop a violent situation, much as Dana Cloud reminds rhetorical critics that discourse will not end physical or economic inequalities. Although, reviewers of the film decried its inaccuracies, *Enough* points out a flaw with protection orders: they may fail to live up to their name and protect victims of violence.<sup>91</sup> Slim leaves the police station with the desk sergeant calling to her.

Knowing that she is no longer safe in her own home, because the legal (material) avenues are apathetic toward abusers at best, she conceives a plot to escape. Upon escaping the domestic space, Slim soon rejects the next important option for abused women wrought by the battered women's movement, a growing number of women's shelters.

### *Shelters*

Shelters for battered women began appearing on a larger scale in the United States in the 1970s, and offered a safe haven and community to women with nowhere else to go. Despite the undeniable benefits of shelters, Susan Schechter identifies the struggles women face upon entering safe homes. Women may be frightened and nervous around strangers, may feel displaced without a sense of home, may be concerned with the lack of language diversity and translators, and may be prone to ethnic and racial bickering.<sup>92</sup> Women also may go through stages of grief and depression while in a shelter. Although women can find a strong sense of community and support in shelters, their own nightmares (and the nightmares of others) may haunt them. *Enough* demonstrates the psychological concerns with entering a shelter, and rejects them as a viable option for abused women.

Shelters are often last-minute destinations of respite and refuge, which is exactly what Slim and Gracie need during the brief moment in the film when shelters are even considered. When Slim and Gracie first leave Mitch's home, they quickly find that he has cancelled her credit cards and frozen all of her assets. Slim is afloat in a sea of few resources, and finally books a motel room using her friend Ginny's credit card. During a quick phone conversation, Ginny mentions the idea of a shelter. Slim is instantly averse noting, "No, ok. No shelters, alright. [Gracie] hasn't been tainted by anything so far and,

I want to keep it that way.” Slim has preconceived notions of shelters as places of psychological turmoil and inner struggle. She worries that shelter life will taint Gracie, affecting her mental and emotional development in the future. Slim’s concern is valid because, during the beginnings of the shelter movement, children in shelters lived “with multiple forms of stress, had pressing needs and felt intense guilt, confusion, and fear. Fleeing from violence seeing their mothers brutalized, they also have left familiar ways of operating.”<sup>93</sup> Instead of subjecting Gracie to the difficulties of shelter life, Slim chooses to remain on the run hoping for the best.

Researchers of domestic violence portrayals in the media argue that media portrayals stereotypically present domestic violence as occurring only among lower-class Whites.<sup>94</sup> *Enough* seems to be aware of such a stereotype, and works to challenge and reify the assumptions of typical media portrayals of domestic violence by constructing Slim as a cultural hybrid fluctuating between various social worlds which seem to be at odds with one another. In their discussion of Latina bodies Isabel Molina Guzman and Angharad N. Valdivia offer a useful description of hybridity allowing me to begin exploring how Slim fulfills this role:

The contemporary experience of Latinas, which also holds true of other populations shaped by colonialism, globalization, and transnationalism, is informed by the complex dynamics of hybridity as a cultural practice and expression... Thus, Latina/o identity, as a hybrid form within U.S. culture, remaps dominant hierarchies of identity and challenges popular notions of place and nation. Due to their mixed cultural and ethnic heritage, Hayek, Kahlo, and Lopez as hybrid women often problematize and work against the discursive field of popular ethnic



and racial categories.<sup>95</sup>

In other words, mediated Latina bodies occupy a role that is neither Black nor White, but something in between that can speak to both, while maintaining strong ties to Latina/o communities as well. By viewing Slim as a hybrid character oscillating back and forth between the dominant world of White culture (represented by Mitch, Robbie, Joe, Ginny, Gracie, and Mr. and Mrs. Hiller) and a world of marginalized ethnicities (represented by Teddy, Phil, Phil's friends, Mr. Toller, and Slim's Krav Maga trainer), I can begin to articulate the contradictory ethnic and class messages of the film, and explore the implications of Slim's constant shifting, coding and re-coding. Slim's potentially classist view of a shelter is one that may prevent real women from seeking the important aid that shelters give to abused women of all classes. Although Slim rejects the shelter, potentially prompting real women to do the same in similar situations, she does attempt to find safety in a third option: the support of her community.

### *Community*

Research on responses to domestic violence has pointed to the fact that society places the onus on the victim to both leave and get help.<sup>96</sup> *Enough* confirms the message of individual responsibility by showing how a community can fail to protect and abused woman from her abuser. Such a focus on the individual ignores the systems of oppression that prevent societal changes, i.e., eliminating domestic violence. The privileging of individual responsibility continues to reinforce a "bootstrap" mentality pervasive in U.S. culture in which people must pull themselves up (and out in the case of domestic violence) based on their own resources. Such a discourse ignores the fact that battered

women have few resources on their own, especially working class women. Schechter describes such material considerations ignored by the film:

The battered woman who decides to leave her violent husband confronts...major obstacles. Imagine her fleeing home with nothing but the clothes she is wearing, the money in her pocket, and her children. Returning for furniture or cherished objects is impossible, for now. If she is lucky, there will be housing provided tonight and for the next several weeks...As a single mother with children, she will have trouble finding an apartment.<sup>97</sup>

Although *Enough* seems to recognize the material implications of domestic violence, it serves to undermine the efficacy of community in aiding battered women. I believe that one interesting reason Slim fails to find safety in her community is due to the film coding her as a cultural hybrid, and then placing her dual communities in opposition to one another.

*Enough* offers several visual and plot cues to code Slim as existing simultaneously in ethnic and White worlds. The film especially calls attention to Slim's hybridity through the juxtaposition of her adopted family, which consists of Teddy (Ruben Madera), Phil (Christopher Maher), and Phil's friends and her new family, the Hillers. Such juxtaposition serves to call attention to domestic violence stereotypes through Slim's fluid character, while ultimately demonstrating the inevitable clash of her two worlds of residence, resulting in her murder of Mitch and the oppressive White culture he represents. She must choose whether she will stay with her adopted family or play by the rules of her new family.

The film codes Slim's adopted family as ethnic in both visual and dialogic cues. First, the audience catches glimpses of Teddy the kitchen helper in the opening sequence of the film, which consists of various shots of the bustling diner where Slim works. The shots of the diner whiz by, creating a sense of chaos, and in the midst of the chaos the film offers clues to Teddy's ethnicity in one almost imperceptible moment. As he carries a tray of dishes off screen, he yells to the diner's owner, Phil, "Por favor." Through two little words, the film implies that Teddy's ethnicity is Chicano or Latino. The film also codes Slim's adopted father, Phil when Mitch refers to Phil as a "rughead," a derogatory term implying that Phil is an immigrant from the Middle East. Finally, the film further connects Slim to a non-White ethnicity when she and Gracie go to stay with "friends of friends of Phil" in Michigan. Phil's friends are visually coded as ethnic, as some of the men sport thick beards and wear a traditional head cap associated with Muslim culture known as a *kufi*, and the woman serving food wears a bindi on her forehead, the holy dot worn by young Hindu girls and women. The film uses Slim's closest community to associate her as a part of an ethnic community. When she is at the diner with Phil and Teddy, or living with Phil's friends, she is at her safest moments in the entire film. Her ethnic community and adopted family represent a place of safety and comfort for Slim. Her link to such a comfortable, safe community is more obvious when placed in direct opposition to Slim's existence in a world of White patriarchy.

Placed alongside her new family the major White characters in the film, Mitch, Robbie, Mrs. Hiller, Ginny, and even Joe, Slim becomes obviously non-White. Valdivia demonstrates that such films use such a juxtaposition to make a character clearly ethnic, as in the case of Rosie Perez: "When juxtaposed to white working-class women, Rosie's

style sets her apart as different. However, the juxtaposition is all the more salient when she plays opposite and upper-middle-class white woman.”<sup>98</sup> The three characters in the film with the most power and financial security are not surprisingly White. When we view Slim against such a White backdrop, her class background and ethnicity become more prominent. Mitch, Mrs. Hiller, and Joe look visibly White and are all financially independent. In fact, Slim looks to each one of the three at some point in the film for assistance, and in each instance, we can clearly see wealth of the three. Mitch seems to be an architectural contractor who can buy any house he wants for Slim; Mrs. Hiller lives in a highly foliated mansion accessorized with a fancy car; and Joe lives in a one-bedroom apartment in Seattle where he can afford to keep Haagen-Daaz in the freezer. Such White-coded extravagance serves not only to place Slim’s body as a hybrid of two opposing ethnic worlds, but also classes her in particular ways, creating another tension in the film.

Although domestic violence occurs across class lines (as evidenced in the media coverage of the alleged murder of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman by former football star O.J. Simpson), media portrayals tend to depict gendered violence as primarily a concern for lower class households.<sup>99</sup> *Enough* seems to express such a tension through the coding of Slim as working class and Mrs. Hiller as upper class, and by juxtaposing the two.

The film constantly codes Slim as a working class woman, struggling with working class issues, especially the struggle to make ends meet financially, and the decision to quit her job and go back to school. The initial scene with Slim shows her as a waitress in a happening, but homey diner. She exudes the charm of a romanticized

working class, and is even seen picking up a toy for a child. Slim is friendly and hardworking, even alluding to her own lack of money by asking Ginny how she will pay for law school. Throughout the film, we realize that Slim does not have any money of her own apart from what she makes at the diner. The film even shows her distorting her face in disgust when she receives what is presumably a too-small tip, demonstrating her reliance upon the money she makes at the restaurant.

In the same ways that the film demonstrates Slim's ethnicity by contrasting her with White characters, *Enough* calls attention to her working class status by placing her in a distinctly upper class world, and in juxtaposition to Mrs. Hiller. Mitch's parents pay for an elaborate wedding, and Mitch purchases a nice house for himself and Slim. Mitch's parents look like stereotypical wealthy white people, bedecked in tuxedo, sparkling dress, and pearls. At one point, we even see the house of Mitch's parents; a mansion multiple stories high surrounded by a lush garden with a shiny red convertible parked out front. The signs clearly point to Slim as struggling working class, and Mitch and family as wealthy upper class. Although Mitch's abuse of Slim and his reference to her paying the price for the life she lives is the first sign that she does not belong in an upper class (and White) world, Slim should be able to find a bond with Mrs. Hiller and gain her sympathy. Yet, when Slim discusses her abuse with Mitch's mom, the film creates a world of seemingly insurmountable class tensions.

After Mitch hits Slim, the audience learns of her plans to take Gracie to visit Mitch's mother, Mrs. Hiller the next day. Slim decides against taking Gracie, assumedly in order to discuss Mitch's violence with his mother. The working class woman, Slim driving an upper class Mercedes SUV, pulls in to the upper class woman's, Mrs. Hiller,

driveway. We quickly learn that Slim's presence is as unwelcome and disturbing in the driveway as an old jalopy. Approaching Slim's car, Mrs. Hiller quickly notices the bruise on Slim's face. Mrs. Hiller's face flashes concern as she embraces Slim and verbalizes her sympathies. However, one of Mrs. Hiller's lines is particularly striking as it encapsulates the tensions of class with which *Enough* struggles. After embracing Slim, Mrs. Hiller asks, "What did you do? What did you say to him?" Although the scene ends nearly immediately after this line (following a look of bewilderment on Slim's face), Mrs. Hiller has articulated something extremely important. Her empathic tone of voice implies that she understands all too well that men are ticking time bombs. The film seems to suggest that Mrs. Hiller's own husband has beaten her in the past, yet the etiquette of high society does not permit her to express such realities. If Mrs. Hiller is truly sympathetic to Slim based on common experiences, then *Enough* calls into question the stereotypical assumption of domestic violence occurring exclusively in the working class, alluding to research concerning the underreporting of violence in upper class society, potentially due to the fact that the wealthy seem to be fueled by the need to keep up appearances (as indicated by the elegant house, extravagant wedding, and prestigious automobile in the drive of the Hiller mansion).

At the same time that one may read the interchange between Slim and Mrs. Hiller as challenging stereotypical assumptions, Mrs. Hiller's reaction also points to a potential division between women of upper and lower classes. The division becomes obvious if we view Mrs. Hiller's reaction to Slim's disclosure of abuse as an example of victim-blaming (based on Slim's facial expression during this scene, we may assume that she viewed Mrs. Hiller's comments as victim-blaming). Mrs. Hiller places the onus for the

abusive relationship on Slim, wondering what Slim did to trigger Mitch's naturally violent response. Throughout the film Mitch refers to himself as "just a man." Mrs. Hiller seems to believe that as just a man (and especially a rich White man), Mitch is prone to violence, and such violence is not a big deal. Perhaps Mrs. Hiller has paid the price for the life she lives, and, along with Mitch, expects Slim to do the same.

I have been arguing that Slim is a hybrid character who moves amongst two important communities: the non-White, lower class community and the White, upper class community. Although Slim's hybridity has the potential for bridging two distinct communities, she must ultimately choose one or the other, as Mitch reminds her that she must play by the rules or pay the price for living in his community of fear and violence. Just as Slim's entrance into Mitch's world eventually erupts in violence as he begins to abuse her, her exit from his world is also marked by violence, as she must murder Mitch. Yet, the film ultimately blunts the potential for challenging violence against women by whitening Slim.

The most important way in which the film whitens Slim is through her marriage to Mitch. Their marriage ceremony, at the home of Mitch's parents, is essentially a "white wedding," complete with tuxedos, top hats, champagne, and the soft elevator music of Burt Bacharach's "This Guy's in Love with You." All the guests are bedecked in blatantly upper class clothing and jewelry, enjoying upper-class revelry. Just as traditional marriages and weddings can be viewed as erasing a woman's identity as she is initiated into the family name of her husband, Mitch and Slim's wedding begins to inextricably join Slim to Mitch's family. At one point in the film when Slim is first on the run from Mitch, a bank clerk refers to her as Mrs. Hiller, echoing the only name the film

gives to Mitch's mother. The film also uses surname to deny Slim's ethnicity. The fact that we Slim is called "Slim" assumes a sort of neutral ethnicity, with no way of identifying the heritage of her last name. Additionally, the name Slim chooses upon relocating to Michigan, Erin Ann Schleeter, seems to be a name of Caucasian descent. Second, although Slim is coded ethnically and Mitch is White, their daughter Gracie is visibly White, with no indication that she is the offspring of an ethnic couple. As soon as Slim begins to talk back, Mitch quickly puts her in her place, reminding her that she must learn to live "by the rules" (a phrase he uses) of the White, upper-class world.

In the film, Slim first travels to Seattle to stay with former boyfriend, Joe. Slim and Gracie initially seem safe, but the feelings of solace quickly dissipate as three men pretending to be FBI agents enter Joe's apartment. The three men Mitch hires ransack the apartment in search of Slim and Gracie, while Joe stands around, helpless to stop the hired hitmen. Even once Slim's estranged father finally gives her money for a house, Mitch finds her. Slim realizes throughout the film that Mitch will find her wherever she is, and no one can help her. The film presents society with the message that domestic violence is both an individual problem, and one in which various classes and ethnicities (and even the genders) can never work together to end. The film, then, places communities in polar opposite categories that leave women in violent situations also embroiled firmly within racial and class tensions. Violence against women will never cease without a community response that cuts across all socially-constructed lines. The film, however, needs such tensions between communities to exist, because the societal impotence confirms Slim's realization that murder is her only option.



After fleeing Mitch yet again near the end of the film, Slim decides to visit a lawyer to determine her options. The scene is pivotal in two senses. First, Slim's visit to lawyer Jim Toller is the turning point in the film. After Toller explains that Slim has no options, she pursues her final quest of killing Mitch. Second, the scene offers the most explicit statement of *Enough*'s overall attitude toward society's response to domestic violence, when Toller informs Slim, "It's too late. There isn't anybody who can help you." Although Toller is simply a plot device to signal the turning point of the film, and the beginning of the revenge plot that the audience wanted to see from the moment they bought their ticket, his statement also has some grounding in domestic violence literature. Scholars have done several studies to determine the psychological state of women in perpetually abusive relationships, and tend to concur that abuse causes a woman to feel a sense of learned helplessness.<sup>100</sup> When a partner constantly subjects a woman to abuse, she may "become passive, lose [her] motivation to respond, and come to believe that [she] cannot take action that would allow [her] to escape...[W]hatever [she] do[es], violence will result."<sup>101</sup> Women in violent relationships may tell themselves exactly what Jim Toller tells Slim: no one can help them. *Enough* informs women that once their options have been exhausted; once they find that nothing has worked and the abuse continues; once they learn that protection orders, shelters, and a safe community are either ineffective or unthinkable, they have no alternative but to destroy the very person who seeks to destroy them. An important question to interject at this point is, "Can or should *Enough* advocate murder?" The film seems to be aware of the moral quandary of touting such an option, but does a few things to justify Slim's road to revenge.

First, as I have noted earlier, the film explicitly creates Slim as Mitch's moral opposite in every way. Slim was sexually faithful, forgave Mitch when he first cheated on her, and altruistically puts Gracie's needs above her own. Second, the film uses Ginny to give Slim her moral mantra. When Slim is having doubts about her decision, Ginny tells her, "You have a divine animal right to protect your own life and the life of your offspring." Ginny assures Slim that the desire to kill Mitch is natural as *Enough* equates murdering an abuser with natural instinct, once again placing Slim on moral high ground. The protection of offspring as justification for murder returns in one final moment, to affirm sufficiently that Slim had no other option. Finally, once Slim knocks Mitch to the ground in their final confrontation she refuses to kill him. Even in the moment the film has taken great pains in justifying, Slim still cannot kill Mitch. Due to her hesitation, Mitch attacks her again and the fight ensues. She begins beating Mitch senseless to flashbacks of him attacking her. For every flashback of his past blows to her, she hits him. The final flashback is of Mitch pushing Gracie to the ground in Michigan. Slim (again, altruistically) delivers the final blow to Mitch, enraged by the memory of his attack on their child.

As I have been arguing, *Enough* encourages its audience to see the battle between Slim and Mitch as one between good and evil with Slim the stereotypical female victim of domestic violence, who realizes her only option for survival is to kill Mitch, the stereotypical male abuser. The film seems to work extremely hard at securing audience identification with Slim and audience detestation of Mitch. Such identification and simultaneous detestment are interesting when considering the ways the film codes Slim and Mitch as not only gendered characters, but classed and raced individuals. In my final

section, I expound upon the film's potential for empowerment and simultaneous potential for placing women in physical danger.

### Dangerous Empowerment

As I have mentioned previously, films are both product and producer of ideologies as they articulate the hopes, fears, and complexities of a society. Films are products of a capitalist economic environment seeking to increase profits. Thus, films must speak to diverse audiences and present common experiences.<sup>102</sup> Films also present audiences with ways in which to view or interpret reality. Films offer certain views of topics that may both reinforce and challenge traditional beliefs.<sup>103</sup>

*Enough* is a complicated text dealing with the complex issue of domestic violence. The film offers a depiction of male abusers that calls attention to violent behavior, while contending that all abusers are irredeemable. Such a view of abusers is detrimental to any attempt to end fully domestic violence, which must keep in mind the role of men and women. While the film seems to ultimately reify the superiority of the male body over the female body, *Enough* offers a space of physical empowerment when Slim successfully challenges Mitch to physical combat. Such an empowering message may be undercut by the fact that the film and Slim eschew options available to battered women, such as shelters and protection orders, in favor of murder. At the same time, the film does raise important issues about the effectiveness of shelters and protection orders, calling attention to their inability to always aid battered women successfully. *Enough* calls attention to ethnic and class tensions embedded within domestic violence, both challenging and reifying stereotypes by simultaneously coding Slim as a hybrid and whitened character. Yet, for all of the film's questioning of legal and social responses to

domestic violence, I agree with film critics that *Enough* offers a Hollywood message of revenge that has dangerous consequences. Materialist critics urge an examination of the real effects of a text upon society. In this chapter, I have argued that *Enough* presents a view of domestic violence that takes into consideration the roles of both male perpetrators and female victims, explores the importance and limits of the options for escaping violence available to battered women, and interrogates the intersection of class and ethnicity, offering moments of empowerment undercut by the pessimistic view that murder is the only option available to battered women. *Enough* alludes to the struggles of working class women and women of color, and superficially highlights the failure of legal protections to truly safeguard women, and power inherent within gendered bodies (i.e., the assumption that male body is inherently more powerful than the female body), and leaves women isolated from community in a world where they must kill or be killed. To add to the description of the film I have offered in this chapter, I turn to examining the ways in which female professionals and providers in the field of domestic violence view the film. Such a view should provide important insights into the materials effects of *Enough*'s portrayal of domestic violence.

### Chapter Three: Charting the Effects

As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, *Enough* has much to say concerning the issue of domestic violence. The film seems to invite audiences to view male perpetrators as a homogenous and ultimately irredeemable group; the film seems to claim that the female body can challenge the male body, but only by becoming masculine itself; the film seems to argue that the many options available to battered women (i.e., protection orders, shelters, and community involvement) are ineffective and only murder of the abuser can permanently end the cycle of violence; and the film presents Slim as a cultural hybrid which challenges certain hegemonic assumptions while reifying others. Coming from a materialist rhetorical perspective, I believe that *Enough* does have real effects on the ways in which society views and responds to domestic violence. To begin exploring the possible material ramifications of the film, I utilize the audience analysis method of focus group discussion.

Throughout my textual analysis of the film, I described the various ways in which *Enough* depicts domestic violence and the potential consequences of such portrayals in an attempt to discover and analyze its material effects. My rhetorical and critical training allow me to examine the messages and portrayals of domestic violence in the film. My

positionality as a White, heterosexual male enables me to attend to certain aspects of the film. Due to my identity, I pay attention to the ways in which the film depicts the male character, and can see the ways the film potentially whitens Slim. Although my critical voice is important in understanding some of the intricacies and potential effects of the film, my position as a White, middle-class, heterosexual male who has never experienced or worked in the field of domestic violence does not allow me to account for the way the film may affect other viewers with different positionalities. Thus, the second, equally vital component of my research includes incorporating the voices of various audience members of backgrounds that differ from my own. More specifically, I include the input of two female professionals who work in the field of domestic violence. In this chapter, I first situate my study within audience research scholarship. Next, I outline the participants, methods, and feminist qualitative assumptions of the focus group research. I then discuss the key themes emerging from the group discussion, providing specific, illustrative examples where relevant. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of the focus group research by returning to the materialist perspective.

### *Audience Analysis*

Audience analysis should not replace textual analysis, but should serve as a complementary approach allowing a researcher to situate the study within a particular historical, political, ideological, and socio-economical context. In conducting the focus group and subsequent analysis of the results, I relied upon the insights of several audience analysis scholars who point to some important considerations and challenges of such an approach. Two major concepts emerge from studies concerned with audience analysis or audience reception: reading and relevancy.

Three ways audiences may read texts include collusive readings, oppositional readings, and negotiated readings.<sup>104</sup> Audiences may collude with the dominant reading of a text, which is consistent with dominant ideologies within and around the text. In the case of collusion, audiences are essentially submitting to the messages preferred by dominant culture. Such a reading highlights the need for materialist rhetorical critics to acknowledge and attend to the ways in which material conditions restrain the power of rhetoric.<sup>105</sup> For example, an audience member may view Slim as a Whiteness character because the dominant White society may seek to dampen the potential cultural subversion of a non-White ethnicity fighting back against a White male. The collusive reading allows the researcher to examine the forces of dominant power at play during a particular time period to constrain the meaning(s) of a text.

In contrast to a collusive reading, audiences may resist the text by offering an oppositional reading, which challenges the dominant ideologies surrounding and throughout a text. An oppositional reading allows the researcher to trace the progressive and subversive potential of rhetoric. In other words, oppositional readings attest to the power of rhetoric and audiences to challenge, transgress, and possibly transcend the dominant powers of a given context.<sup>106</sup>

Finally, audiences may also construct a negotiated meaning, in which “an individual is neither in whole and full conformity nor in opposition to the inscribed ideologies...[and] negotiates a media encounter by conforming in some ways...but rejecting in other ways.”<sup>107</sup> The negotiated reading allows a critic to examine meaning as it fluctuates between dominant powers and (sometimes) subversive audiences.<sup>108</sup> Negotiated meanings attest to the interconnected nature of power and meaning-making in

a given society. Due to audience analysis' assumption that a text may contain varied meanings for different groups in different contexts, such an approach complements a researcher's textual analysis by providing a more in-depth examination of the ways in which a text may be functioning in the everyday lives of individuals and specific groups. Audience analysis blended with textual criticism also aids materialist critics who seek to discover and chart the real-life effects of a text on a population or populations. By combining the materialist perspective with both textual and audience analysis, a critic may work toward the democratic project of creating empowering messages that challenge dominant structures and assist marginalized and oppressed groups toward gaining freedom and equity.<sup>109</sup> For my project, then, utilizing participant responses allowed me to complement my own analysis of the film, and further explore *Enough*'s effect(s) in the everyday lives of specific individuals. As I will discuss later, the focus group participants seemed to yield a collusive reading of the film.

The second major concept found in audience analysis literature is relevancy,<sup>110</sup> which assumes that "viewers select meanings relevant to their social allegiances."<sup>111</sup> In other words, an audience member comes to a text with a history of various social, economic, physical, and ideological influences. Thus, a viewer's positionality within society may affect what s/he views as the relevant moments in a text, ultimately shaping the reading the viewer proffers. As Cooper notes, "The concept of relevancy explains *why* texts may be read as dominant, negotiated, or oppositional" (emphasis in original).<sup>112</sup> I must realize that the experiences the participants in my research have had with domestic violence and media depictions of domestic violence influence the themes they find relevant for discussion, and how they view the themes. As Dana Cloud urges materialist



critics, audience reception research must include the interlocking nature of media texts, audiences, social, economic, political, and physical facets of meaning-making (and meaning-constraining).<sup>113</sup>

In conjunction with the notions of reading and relevancy, two important challenges occur when a critic utilizes audience responses. First, the researcher must always be cognizant of her/his role in interpreting audience responses. In her study of female reactions to and uses of romance novels, Janice Radway notes that one of the considerations of “ethnographies of reading,” is the fact that the responses of participants (their interpretations of texts) are interpreted by the researcher.<sup>114</sup> Such a fact is important to remember in order to acknowledge that all audience analysis studies are interpretations of interpretations. The researcher (re)presents the information s/he gathers in a specific light, for specific purposes. Thus, studies utilizing audience analysis may benefit by explicitly stating the assumptions and biases of the researcher.<sup>115</sup> In doing audience analysis, as well as feminist qualitative research, the researcher must also be sure to remain faithful to the responses of the participants in an attempt to allow the participants to speak for themselves and portray their own meanings, while remaining cognizant of the power of the researcher to validate or invalidate particular responses.<sup>116</sup>

The second major challenge to research utilizing audience response is the inclusion of diversity.<sup>117</sup> The researcher must be cognizant of who is participating in research. Because one major goal of audience analysis research is to include the voices of particular people or groups of people in a certain historical period, scholars must remember the history of marginalization, in which certain groups have been excluded from research. For my project then, I was acutely aware of the need to include the voices

of women whom the research may have previously neglected. As a White male attempting to perform feminist qualitative research, I must attend to the types of women I seek to include in this research. Speaking specifically of inclusive feminist research Angharad Valdivia states, “Yes, feminism should concern itself with questions of identity and identification, but always within a framework that allows for a variety of women to partake of such discussions and findings.”<sup>118</sup> She calls “for a theory that is more informed by issues of race, ethnicity, and class.”<sup>119</sup> Valdivia does not deny that a researcher may have difficulties soliciting the participation of certain groups of people whether due to lack of access to participants’ locales, lack of credibility due to researcher positionality and cultural identity, or lack of resources to ensure safety and comfort for participants. Yet, Valdivia urges researchers not to use difficulties in obtaining participant responses from certain groups as an excuse to deny the inclusion of diversity in studies. Although Valdivia raises important points concerning audience participation in research, I confronted several challenges in seeking participants for my study.

### Challenges

Audience analysis research allows a critic to complement her/his textual analysis with the valuable insights of audience members. In examining participant feedback, researchers must remain true to the voices of the individual participants while attending to the inclusion of diverse voices. Keeping the benefits and challenges of audience analysis research in mind, I realized the necessity of undertaking a focus group study of women with knowledge of the intricacies, difficulties, and issues related to domestic violence. I am aware of the need to hear specifically from women who are or have been victims of domestic violence. However, attending to the feminist qualitative research

component of affectivity, due the sensitive nature of domestic violence, I was unable to determine exactly how battered women view the film, and how it affects their lives directly. The Human Research Committee (HRC)<sup>120</sup> voiced three concerns: 1) My lack of training in the area of domestic violence, 2) The fact that victims of domestic violence have undergone deep emotional, physical, and mental trauma and that researchers (especially researchers without extensive prior training) should not subject victims to potentially traumatic research, and 3) The concern for the physical safety and anonymity of domestic violence victims.

I have neither firsthand knowledge of domestic violence nor the appropriate training that would allow me to relate to female victims of domestic violence and effectively handle any issues that may arise. The potential to revictimize victims of domestic violence is a serious issue, and I did not wish to bring additional trauma to women who are experiencing or have experienced such violence. In other words, the benefits of a focus group with victims of domestic violence could not outweigh or counter the serious, potential harmful effects of such a study. In order to heed Valdivia's call to include diversity while attempting to ensure the safety and comfort of individuals, I sought to examine the input of female health professionals and providers who work in the field of domestic violence. The participants have worked in this area for several years and have experiences working with both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence in individual and group settings. Such a group has experience dealing with domestic violence issues and is less likely to be traumatized by viewing *Enough* and engaging in a discussion concerning the film. Thus, to begin testing both my reading of the film and the assumptions of material rhetoric,<sup>121</sup> I coordinated a focus group with female providers

and professionals who work in the field of domestic violence in order to begin examining the potential material effects of *Enough*'s portrayal of domestic violence on this specific audience.<sup>122</sup>

In obtaining the responses of women working in the field of domestic violence, I sought to understand whether the film is an example of a progressive text concerning domestic violence which proffers new, empowering insights about the issue, or, if not, how our society can begin shaping more positive, empowering, and educational portrayals of the issue. Ultimately, the participants in the focus group claimed that while *Enough* is an empowering film for victims of domestic violence as it presents a realistic depiction of violent situations and the male perpetrator's mental state, the film could present false and potentially detrimental views of domestic violence to a general public lacking experience with the issue. The respondents also wish to see more messages of self-empowerment that successfully depict the interconnected nature of emotional and physical abuse. In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the major components of and themes emerging from the focus group, and conclude with the implications of the participants' responses.

### The Focus Group

After receiving human research approval, the primary investigator (my advisor, hereafter P.I.) and I (hereafter co-P.I.) created and sent advertisements for the focus group to various shelters and counseling programs, and contacted approximately ten women who showed interest in participating in the project.<sup>123</sup> Due to scheduling conflicts, two self-selected female providers/professionals attended the focus group, which was held in a safe, secure location within a counseling center located on a university campus.

The location was intentional to ensure the safety and comfort of the participants involved, and to facilitate a physical space where the participants would feel comfortable and capable sharing their reactions to the film. The women have worked as providers/professionals in different capacities and for various lengths of time. Both work at a local treatment center designed to work with both victims and perpetrators. Such a distinction is important to note, because women who work in shelters often work exclusively with the victims of domestic violence and often do not work in counseling perpetrators as well. Thus, the experiences of the focus group participants in this project are unique and important. Eliciting the feedback of this particular group of individuals is based on the “action orientation” of feminist qualitative research. An action orientation seeks to promote and conduct research playing an active role “in the struggle for women’s liberation.”<sup>124</sup> Research consisting of the responses of women who work closely with victims of domestic violence may assist academics, ordinary citizens, and policy makers in creating new and more effective methods of both educating the public about domestic violence and ultimately ending this epidemic.

After addressing the challenges prior to the focus groups, the P.I. and I (hereafter “researchers”) met with the participants during one four-hour meeting to elicit their feedback concerning *Enough*. We began by briefly refamiliarizing the participants to the project, having them select a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes (they chose Friendly Fred and Magic), and showing the film. Prior to discussion of the film, we distributed our first questionnaire (Q1; see attached) to gather participants’ initial feelings and thoughts, to guard against the influence of other members of the group, and to obtain written feedback to supplement the oral discussion of the film. Following the completion

of Q1, the P.I. facilitated an in-depth conversation about participant reactions to the film. During the facilitation, the P.I. attempted to ensure that both participants contributed to the conversation by calling on individuals who had not talked as much, and initiating other topics of discussion (i.e., following up on interesting statements the participants made). After the discussion, the researchers distributed a final questionnaire (Q2; see attached) allowing participants to evaluate the research process of this study. While the P.I. facilitated discussion, the co-P.I. contemporaneously took notes on a laptop. The researchers also recorded the conversation with audio tape recorders and the co-P.I. transcribed the conversation based on contemporaneous notes and audio recording to ensure accuracy.

#### An Initial Look: Responses to *Enough*

My approach to the qualitative portion of this thesis was to simply transcribe participant responses to focus group questions after viewing the film, compare those responses with the written responses of the participants, and search for striking or interesting comments. I attempted to not taint the participants' responses by also attempting to accurately represent any contradictions I saw in the feedback. After reviewing both the transcription of the focus group discussion and the participants written feedback to Q1, I discovered that the responses focused mainly on whether the film was realistic or unrealistic. In their discussion of the film's realism, the participants focused on two key areas: the depiction of the male perpetrator, and the portrayal of the options available to Slim (and other women) and her dismissal or use of these options.

“I Make the Rules”: The Male Perpetrator in *Enough*

Drawing upon their experiences working with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, both participants seemed to find the film’s portrayal of the male perpetrator a relevant theme. Overall, both participants agreed that Mitch was a realistic depiction of a male perpetrator based upon their backgrounds. The fact that the participants generally described Mitch as realistic directly contradicts complaints hurled at the film by movie reviewers.<sup>125</sup> For example, Dustin Putman notes, “Billy Campbell...plays a truly despicable human being, so downright evil that his part turns into almost a caricature.”<sup>126</sup> Jeffrey Bruner mirrors Putnam saying, “Campbell, eager to shatter the sensitive-male image from his television show, is trapped with a caricature so horrible that it would be too generous to describe it as thinly drawn.”<sup>127</sup> The statements of Putnam and Bruner are representative of the overall opinion of film critics that Mitch is an unrealistic caricature of a male perpetrator. As I noted in chapter two, no film reviewer provides credentials for proffering their views of the realities of domestic violence. Thus, the fact that the views of the focus group participants do not corroborate with those of film critics may demonstrate that *Enough* does represent domestic violence in a realistic way, while simultaneously falling into the Hollywood trap of over-dramatizing issues.

Because the participants thought the film offered a realistic portrayal of a male perpetrator, examining their responses are important. As specific examples of their assertion participants pointed to Mitch’s psychological state, his assumption of power and control, and his displays of violent behavior. In responding to the question, “In what ways do you perceive the film as offering an accurate portrayal of domestic violence?” Magic wrote:

First, was his aggressive personality and always thinking men are better than women and are the rulers of women. There was verbal, emotional, mental and physical abuse. And the way it was presented was real. The stalking and persistence of the man making everything back to normal under his control.

In the discussion, Friendly Fred corroborated Magic's opinion, noting:

There was quite a bit of realistic, I thought, just in his [Mitch's] thinking... Things he said, like, um, if I can't have you no one can have you. That was something I hear all the time, that's very, very common, and, um, that thinking that, its not like oh well, ok, you don't want to be with me, its not even an option in their [perpetrators'] mind.

What both participants echoed was that Mitch's internal and external states of violent thinking and behavior are faithful to the thinking and behavior of violent males in abusive relationships. Going a bit further, the participants also noted that such violence is often inextricable from stereotypical definitions of masculinity and male privilege. The participants agreed that Mitch's violent behavior was probably a learned behavior that men are powerful, smart, and in control. Magic noted, "It becomes a learned behavior, where these are the roles we play. You know, men as strong and a supporter and he's the one that's got all the brains sort of." Mitch, then, seems to be the product of a reality that expects men to be stronger and smarter than women (a fact of which Mitch often reminds Slim). The implication of this view, when coupled with violent behavior, is that male privilege may place women who are victims of violence in a situation of (feminine) helplessness and male perpetrators in a situation of inherent (masculine) power and domination. Friendly Fred further explored the connection between male privilege and



power by stating, “There is still that whoever is making the most money makes the rules. I mean, I see that all the time. That’s where the power is and the other person feels very unable to stand up for themselves on a lot of levels.”

The respondents agreed that male privilege and power might trap women in violent relationships by taking away their resources and replacing them with a misleading fantasy. The participants believed that Slim saw Mitch as a source of comfort and safety initially because he protected her in the diner, said she would be safe with him, and was wealthy (in contrast to Slim whom Friendly Fred described as “probably pretty poor”). Magic and Friendly Fred both thought that Slim was impressed by Mitch, swept off her feet, and seemed to look forward to a life of a man providing for her every need, but Mitch ultimately used his power and privilege as an excuse to subject Slim to verbal, mental, emotional, and physical violence. Friendly Fred noted the transition from safety to imprisonment:

Well, and that, and, and certainly you know, she was a waitress, she was, you know, probably pretty poor, and he comes in and sweeps her off her feet and kind of sets it up so that she is isolated certainly and he provides this lavish house, and look what I’m giving to you and you should be grateful. And, you get to put up with my sleeping around and all that, this is, what did he say? This is the price you pay for this great life, I mean, what is that about?

In her response, Friendly Fred mentions the fact that *Enough* seems to hint at the difficulties women of lower economic status face in surviving, escaping, or ending domestic violence. The options available to Slim’s character, and how she addresses each option was another relevant theme for the participants.

### “What is That, a Piece of Paper?”: Slim’s Options

In the film, Slim finds four potential options for escaping her violent situation: protection orders, shelters or safehouses, help from family and friends, and murder. First, she goes to the police station to ask about a restraining order. Her ultimate response is that she believes the protection order and the police are incapable of fully helping her. She believes that if Mitch goes to jail he will just bail himself out and become more enraged, and if he comes after her a measly piece of paper (the protection order) will not stop him from hurting her again or eventually killing her.

Both participants agreed that Slim’s reaction to the protection order was similar to the reaction of women in violent situations. Magic wrote, “You can fight back legally, but the money and the power usually wins...I am glad that the video showed what does happen and what is real. It showed how the legal system at times doesn’t really protect the victim.” Friendly Fred noted, “In my experience there are times the system has little to no power to protect them [the victims]. ie restraining orders do not stop violence.” The respondents also noted that sometimes perpetrators become cunning enough to use the legal system against the victims. When a police officer arrives at the scene of domestic violence, s/he may assume that the one who is screaming is the perpetrator when the calmer person may in fact be the perpetrator:

**Magic:** So, but, the legal system is not gonna help all of the time. That’s the sad part, because I have women that will say, I will never call the police again. I’ll handle it myself, because if I call the police and I get arrested, and now they have one charge so, you know, they, they’ll say, hey, you already got arrested for

domestic violence, so you're the aggressor, you know.

**Friendly Fred:** And, yeah, and every time the police come out they look it [a prior domestic violence arrest] up, and all of a sudden they're questioning, well, what's going on? What did you do to him? Um, and then certainly their partners will use the system against them... When police show up their [the perpetrators] the ones that's just so cool and calm and collected, they are so conning, um, they're cons. I mean, they're con artists... Um, and she's the one that is hysterical, screaming, probably cussing out the police, because she's, she finally feels safe enough to start screaming and be kind of angry about what just happened, and then they think that she, she's the one that goes to jail.

Magic and Friendly Fred's comments offer important insights into the potential inadequacies of the legal options available to abused women. They describe law enforcement as sometimes lacking the training necessary for effectively intervening in a violent situation. The participants note that law enforcement officials may not have the mediation training needed to distinguish between victim and perpetrator, often because of cultural equations between hysterics and screaming (non-rational behavior) with that of an out of control perpetrator, and calmness (rational behavior) with that of a passive victim.

Additionally, Magic and Friendly Fred's responses concerning the legal options available to victims of domestic violence point to the difficulties inherent within the dichotomy of victim and perpetrator. Before beginning the discussion, I asked the participants how they prefer to label women who have been abused. My hope was to establish a common vocabulary for the discussion and to allow women who work closely

with the issue a chance to participate in the discussion of the power of labeling abused women. Magic highlighted the fact that in reality, one never knows who is the victim and who is the perpetrator, and often, a person may be a victim during one circumstance, and a perpetrator in different instance. Such a discussion of labeling is important in thinking about the ways in which we as a society conceptualize domestic violence and who holds responsibility for both perpetuating and ending this devastating social ill. One party responsible for responding to domestic violence situations are law enforcement officials, a topic that arose both within the film and the focus group. The focus group discussion points to one potential reason law enforcement officers are ill-equipped to effectively intervene in domestic violence situations.

The responses of the participants point to a tension within legal options available to victims of domestic violence. Although the participants believe that Slim's response to a protection order mirror the responses of real life women, they mention the importance of utilizing the legal options available. The participants believed that the legal options available to victims of domestic violence can be helpful in preventing further violence, and should be utilized for what they are worth. Friendly Fred explicitly stated the reasons she advises women to utilize the available legal options: "I mean we talk to the clients about, if, if there's violence you need to report it. It's kind of, and it's not, it's like leaving a paper trail. The paper trail is the most important piece than he's going to go to jail this weekend and you'll be protected forever." The participant responses called attention to a tension within legal responses to domestic violence that the film echoed. Participants agreed that Slim's incredulity toward the effectiveness of a protection order was valid. As Magic mentioned, "I think that, the, the questions she was asking

though...because I've met people who say, yea, I was waving the paper, see this, this restraining order, and they still attacked me. You know, so what does a paper do for me?"

However, participants were also concerned that the film did not seem to explore adequately the options, such as the legal system, in place to protect women from violence. Friendly Fred noted concerning Slim's response to the protection order:

I, I think it was, I mean to me, having worked with it, it makes me laugh cause I'm like, yeah, she's absolutely right, but unfortunately for the public to see that, to not really understand what that means, or how that may or may not protect them, um, if someone's coming after you, it won't stop a bullet or it won't stop a knife, and they can get you anyway, but it is certainly one of the things our system has in place to hold the other person accountable for, you know, you're breaking this, you need to, uh, you need to get out, so, yeah, it was a very quick interaction, and they could have spent more time at least describing what that was or what that would mean.

Thus, the participants seem to have mixed feelings concerning *Enough's* portrayal of protection orders and law enforcement. Although the film demonstrates the inadequacies of protection orders, it fails to address the usefulness of such an option.

The second major option available to women in violent situations that Slim ultimately rejects is a shelter or safehouse. Slim tells her friend Ginny that she refuses to go to a shelter because she does not want her daughter Gracie tainted. The participants had mixed feelings about Slim's attitude toward safehouses, noting that although safehouses cannot always guarantee a woman's safety they can be avenues of assistance for victims of domestic violence. Friendly Friend noted:

Um, and you know, unfortunately it didn't open up all the avenues that some

people have as far as safehouses and what that would mean. You know, it'd be nice if it was more of a public service announcement...I mean, we've been doing this a while and we know sometimes the system will not...but it can protect people. A lot of people it makes it worse, it doesn't make it better, including safehouses. If someone's intent on finding somebody, they will find them. So, but those are the extreme, that's a small part of the population, even the domestic violence population...And then we talk about the safehouse, um, I could see where people wouldn't want to have to expose their kids, you know, she's thinking the child has not really seen much of this, which is real common thinking, oh, the child was always asleep when we were screaming and yelling and breaking things, and the fact that that little girl slept through him throwing her [Slim] around, you know, so there's, um, people want to believe their kids aren't affected.

Friendly Fred was calling into question Slim's belief that avoiding a safehouse would prevent Gracie from being tainted, by noting that Gracie may be more affected than Slim realizes. Magic continued the discussion by suggesting a different approach to the safehouse:

I'd like to see like, um, the safehouse, but in a different way where you can take the person away from wherever it happened, take them away from there, put them in another place, and work with them there so there, they don't have any connection because some of them, like the mother-in-law might say, well you know, you should try and work it out, you know. He really misses you, you should come back and I bet the kids miss him, that kind of stuff so the person gets clearheaded, and is seeing all these options, you know, of what can happen, really.

If such a safehouse existed for Slim, where she could completely leave the situation in which she was stuck, perhaps she would have felt differently about accepting or rejecting that option.

One option Slim does choose, but finds ineffective, is the option of going to her friends and family for assistance. Her friends Phil, Ginny, and Teddy help Slim and Gracie initially escape from Mitch, but he knows where they all live, and will harm them if they continue to help her. Mitch even sends hitmen to threaten Slim's former boyfriend Joe when she flees to Seattle. Magic and Friendly Fred commented on Slim's reliance upon friends and family:

**P.I.:** What about the, um, any thoughts on the support that she receives from her girlfriend, uh, her kind of, um, makeshift family, that she had with the father and the other friend who go in the van? Any thoughts on that particular scene and what it conveys?

**Magic:** Well, I thought she was lucky to have someone like I said. A lot of people don't have that, you know. Your friends work and they say, I can't leave work now, I just started this job, you know.

**Friendly Fred:** Or they're afraid for their own safety.

**Magic:** Yeah.

**Friendly Fred:** Don't want to get involved at all and they, all of them were willing to go the extra mile, whereas most of our clients, their partner will tell them, um, if you go stay with so and so I'll go after them, I mean, so, and they do not want to put people they love in danger, and they certainly do make harassing phone calls, and you know, if you keep her over there, you know, they're going off on

someone, so as soon as, uh, individual try to protect that person, yeah they, their violence isn't just toward that person. They will go after kind of whoever, um.

**Magic:** They involve them.

The participants referred to the scenes in which Mitch called and threatened to harm both Joe and Jupiter, Slim's father, if either one protected or helped Slim in anyway. The participants noted that the dangers Slim and her friends and family faced due to Mitch's persistence rang true with their own real-life experiences with perpetrators:

**Friendly Fred:** You know, but it's just even, anybody who's willing to help them in anyway, they will threaten them, you know, there's always that possibility that as a professional they will try to track you down so.

**Magic:** And in my own personal, I was threatened by my ex [word unintelligible] I stayed in that marriage for 18 years, um, and he [tape stops] Would threaten my family. It was like, the less they know the better for them.

Slim's refusal to put her friends and family in danger seemed congruous with the experiences of the participants.

After realizing that protection orders, safehouses, and the support of family and friends would not keep her safe, Slim turns to the only option she feels she has left: murder. The participants seemed more concerned about Slim's decision to murder her husband than with the portrayals of the other options. Friendly Fred wrote, "While domestic violence is common in part of the population this shows the more extreme side. No one wants to think murder is the only way out... This is not a typical situation. In real life he would have killed her... It scares me that women may fight back and kill in situations where they could escape." Expounding further, Magic noted, "I would hope it



[the movie] wouldn't encourage them to kill or plan to kill their spouses." Both participants acknowledged that Slim's case was extreme and, although some women may find that murder is their only option, such a representation in film could be detrimental to actual women. The participants note that the option of murder may place real women in greater physical danger because the women do not have the privileges of intensive personal training and high-tech gadgets that are available to Slim. Additionally, in reality the women who attack or attempt to kill their abuser will likely end up dead themselves. To illustrate the participants' concerns with the potential dangers of the film's portrayal to real women, I provide a lengthy section from the focus group discussion:

**Magic:** The fighting part [*laughter*]. I really thought that, um, I don't know if a lot of the people really get into that type, of, you know, really get themselves in shape to really, you know, hit him back. You know, um.

**Friendly Fred:** That's the part that was really unrealistic to me.

**Magic:** And that's sad, because some of them, you know, if you're overweight, or you know, old, or, I don't know, you don't have any self-esteem on, you're on, you're gonna just like oh hey, or, if you have depression from just being isolated and being in that situation you don't want to fight so that's a part where I thought she did a good job in training, but I thought if many people would do that, you know.

**P.I.:** So, in your minds, is the, at the point that she begins training with the physical trainer, uh, and then what follows after that as she enters the ex's house, or still husband's, um, is that the point that the film kind of loses touch with its realistic depiction?

**Friendly Fred:** I think so, because like [Magic] was saying, how many people would actually go through the process to train, and, it's also unrealistic in, if that had been reality he probably would have killed her. I mean, she may have gone and done some major damage to him, but the reality of that in my mind was, she probably would have ended up possibly dead.

The participants believed that many women might be either unwilling or incapable of fighting back and/or murdering their abusers. The film's depiction of Slim's decision to murder her husband was one that participants did not feel was the best solution, although they acknowledged that some women in extreme cases may need to take such drastic measures.

The consensus of both participants concerning the film was that *Enough's* depictions of domestic violence are both satisfactory and troubling. They believed that the film did a good job portraying the internal mindset and external controlling behaviors of the male perpetrator, which are based in and connected to male privilege and learned social roles. The participants think that the portrayal of the options available to women in violent situations was accurate and concerning simultaneously. They believed that the film accurately depicted the concern of some women with the effectiveness of options available to abused women, and highlighted some of the flaws of such options. The participants were also concerned that Slim ultimately murders her husband, fearing that such an action might influence women who truly have other options to fear that murder is their only way to end the abuse. Yet, even when Slim murders her husband, the participants saw room for empowerment in the final moments of the film:

**Friendly Fred:** Um, but I do think it kind of gets that glimpse of wouldn't it be

cool if I could have that kind of power over him, because they feel powerless...

**Magic:** What I liked is that it sort of, like, gave me the sense that, you know, don't give up on yourself, don't just say ok.

**Friendly Fred:** Don't put up with it.

**Magic:** Yeah. And then there's hope, I think, that you can do something.

Overall, the participants seemed to believe *Enough* was a helpful and empowering depiction of the realities of domestic violence, while they acknowledged moments in the film that are concerning and potentially detrimental. In the final sections of this chapter, I offer an overview of participant responses and intersections with my textual analysis, as well as address limitations of my focus group analysis.

#### Corresponding Responses

In chapter two, I concluded that *Enough* is a film that mirrors the tensions inherent within the issue of domestic violence. The film offers moments of empowerment undercut by a message of hopelessness. The participants in the focus group came to similar conclusions and pointed to the film's tensions as arising within the realm of realistic or unrealistic depiction of domestic violence. The participants noted that *Enough* accurately represents the mental state and privileged or stereotypical thinking of a male perpetrator of domestic violence; they discussed Slim's reaction to protection orders as mirroring the responses some victims of domestic violence have concerning legal intervention; they mentioned that some victims of domestic violence may be fearful of "tainting" their children in a shelter. Yet, participants also discussed the inaccurate portrayals in the film. Participants mentioned many victims of domestic violence may not have the opportunity or ability to undergo physical training in an attempt to fight back;

if a victim were to fight back she is highly likely to be killed rather than kill her abuser; the film overemphasizes the failings of protection orders without an appropriate discussion of the benefits the legal system offers to victims of domestic violence.

Although I had hoped to find a clear-cut answer to a question I posed in chapter one, the responses of the focus group participants helped me realize that *Enough* and the issue of domestic violence offer no easy answers. In chapter one, a research question was, “Do female domestic violence providers believe *Enough* offers helpful/harmful, accurate/inaccurate, or empowering/disempowering messages to women who are victims of domestic violence?” Overall, the participants believe the film offers the potential to be both helpful and harmful, is accurate and inaccurate, and may be empowering and disempowering. Although the participants may seem to be offering a negotiated meaning of the film, I believe they offer the dominant reading of the film. The film offers moments of potential empowerment, and may send the message that women can get out of violent situations or do something for themselves. However, the messages of fighting back and the instant dismissal of protection orders may put real women in physical danger if they attempt to fight their abuser and do not use the legal system to their advantage as much as possible. Thus, the film sends a contradictory message and an audience receiving a contradictory message from the film makes sense.

As I noted in chapter two, the film seems to present a contradictory view of domestic violence. My analysis, then, closely corresponds to participant responses to the film. However, in keeping with the feminist qualitative research goal of reflexivity, I must examine the ways in which my positionality may potentially affect the outcomes of my research, and the research process. I realize that my biases as a researcher may affect

the ways in which I interpret the film and subsequent focus group. For example, because I completed my analysis prior to the focus group, I may have been looking for participant statements that would speak directly to relevant themes in my view of the film. I obviously do not include the focus group transcript in entirety for reasons of confidentiality and space. That said, I have attempted to remain as true as possible to both the words and intentions of the focus group participants. I use their passages at length in order to let them speak for themselves. I do realize that other audiences may present different opinions of the film, and different researchers may portray those opinions in various ways.

#### Missing Pieces and Forward Thinking

Any research concerning domestic violence is apt to encounter a number of problems, challenges, and limitations. Throughout the process of analyzing *Enough*, I realized that my analysis was simultaneously thorough and limited. In this section, I describe the specific challenges I experienced, limitations of my study, and offer suggestions for possible future research.

In the initial stages of the project, I was quickly aware that my position as a White, heterosexual male from a middle-class background who has never had experience with domestic violence would lead to certain difficulties in carrying out the research. First, I was intensely fearful of potential participants viewing me as disrespectful, ignorant, or exploitive. Thus, with each conversation with the wonderfully gracious directors and staff at various shelters and treatment programs I made an explicit effort to demonstrate to each woman my sincere appreciation and humility in working with them. I made as much effort as possible for potential participants to tell me what they would

like or need in order to participate. Additionally, my advisor was present during each initial phone call to directors and administrators lending institutional credibility to the conversations. Although I thought that women providers and professionals would be hesitant to help with this project, I found that the exact opposite was true. These women were more than willing to do anything they could to help, and expressed so to me many times. Regardless of the lack of apprehension of providers to work with me, I did realize that I had to be extremely mindful with my questions, with collecting data, and with conducting the research. Looking back on the process, I see a few limitations of the focus group component of my research.

First, due to my lack of background in domestic violence issues and the sensitive nature of the issue I was unable to work with victims or survivors of domestic violence. Without the voices of this particular population, one cannot get a complete picture of the effects of *Enough*. In other words, providers offer firsthand experience from their own lives, yet only secondhand anecdotal experience for victims regarding the film. Thus, one limitation of the focus group is the lack of direct input of victims of domestic violence. I would encourage researchers to seek such input, as the voices of this group will ultimately help complete the picture of the material consequences of media portrayals of domestic violence, but to do so only when ethical and safe for the participants.

Considerations for safe and appropriate conditions require the researcher to have had sufficient experience working in the fields of counseling and/or domestic violence. Additionally, the research must occur at a safe, undisclosed location and the participants must either be completely anonymous or adequately unidentifiable (e.g., through use of pseudonyms) in order to maintain the physical and emotional safety of the women.

Finally, the researchers must provide or offer options for participants to receive counseling for any negative effects that might arise due to the research process, including allowing for the participants to cease participation at any time they feel uncomfortable. Terms such as “safe,” “appropriate,” “sufficient,” and “uncomfortable” are purposefully vague because the researcher must constantly be attentive to the specific needs of the specific people involved in the particular study. For example, having victims of domestic violence watch a film that depicts domestic violence may trigger more intense responses than discussions about the topic.

The second major limitation was the number of women who actually participated in the focus group. Women who provide assistance and services in the field of domestic violence are perpetually busy and have little free time to participate in research projects. As mentioned earlier, everyone I spoke with expressed interest in participating, but due to scheduling conflicts, only two women actually attended the focus group. Reasons for scheduling conflicts included prior meetings, a burgeoning private practice coupled with a commute, lack of necessary childcare at the time of meeting, and a death in the family. While the small number of participants provided a wealth of information and insight, increasing the number may have added more depth and breadth of comments and viewpoints, perhaps supporting or contradicting those obtained. Future studies may consider the time constraints of this population, and design the research accordingly, including simply mailing surveys or conducting brief phone interviews, or providing email questionnaires.

Another limitation of the focus group concerned diversity. Due to considerations of confidentiality, I collected and included no demographic, identifying information from

and for the participants. Subsequently, my analysis of the focus group does not account for discrepant views grounded in race, ethnicity, class, ability, sexuality, religion, or other master statuses. Future studies need to examine the intersecting viewpoints of women from different backgrounds to begin analyzing how those backgrounds may affect views of *Enough* or other media depictions of domestic violence. Additionally, as one participant implied during the focus group and explicitly mentioned after the group discussion, the inclusion of a male perspective may have added a different component to the group discussion. For example, some males may have deemed Mitch's abuse of Slim as warranted because Slim was talking back to him. Such a perspective can further add to the overall portrait of *Enough's* effects, which may also be true about the viewpoints of women who work at domestic violence shelters because they work directly and almost exclusively with the victims of domestic violence, while the participants of my study work with both victims and perpetrators. Therefore, further research should seek the feedback of these groups.

Ethically, I found myself in a dilemma during this research. How does one do academic scholarship in a field rife with intense emotions and issues of privacy and safety? Although scholars often debate the superiority of textual analysis over audience analysis or vice-versa<sup>128</sup>, I realize that the issue of domestic violence warrants a highly integrated approach. We must use our critical lenses as scholars to delve deep into popular depictions of domestic violence, while maintaining the importance and validity of audience perspectives of the issue. Despite the limitations of the focus group, I hope that my contributions inspire others to continue this and similar lines of research, research that has been going on long before this current project.



In my final chapter, I bring the textual analysis and focus group together to offer a broad picture of *Enough*'s material effects on domestic violence. I also offer a way to begin creating different film depictions of domestic violence that may get away from the contradictory current portrayals distributed by Hollywood.

## Chapter Four: Looking Forward

Although *Enough* may leave audiences with a sense of empowerment as Slim kills Mitch, it does challenge us to remember that the struggle is not yet over. More research must be done in order to work on creating empowering and educational messages concerning domestic violence, and to eventually end this social ill. As I look back over this project, I think of the women, men, and children who work toward ending violence every day and hope that this analysis will aid their struggle in some way. I hope that we never forget that millions of people are affected by domestic violence, and that even those with no direct contact or experience with the issue are just as responsible for ending this problem as anyone else. I hope that we begin to see portrayals of domestic violence that attend to the complexity of the issue in a real and productive way. Will any Hollywood message ever be perfect? I believe such a question is misguided at best, and irrelevant at worst, since almost no message is perfect regardless of the source. A different question that I seek to answer in this chapter is: How can we accurately create and effectively distribute portrayals of domestic violence issues to work toward better understanding of the issue and eventual elimination of the problem? While this question may seem idealistic, I believe that the same hand that strikes out in anger can become the

hand that reaches out for help and support. We must continue to recognize the human potential for positive change while continuing to offer the support of protection orders, shelters, and counseling programs for victims and perpetrators alike (especially since one may be both victim and perpetrator at different moments in time).

Realizing that communication scholars have yet to examine thoroughly portrayals of domestic violence in popular cinema, I set out to analyze such texts and their potential effects on the ways in which we, in the United States, view domestic violence. Through specific criteria outlined in chapter one of this thesis, I narrowed my analysis to *Enough* (2002), the most recent major motion picture to depict domestic violence. Spurred by statistics characterizing domestic violence as an epidemic<sup>129</sup> and by an initial insight that *Enough* offers interesting ways to think about the issue, I hoped to answer three major questions about the film: How the film portrays a male perpetrator and female victim, how the film represents the options available to women for leaving violent situations, and how female domestic violence providers described the film. Following a textual analysis of the film and a focus group discussion with female domestic providers, I began to see how the film might operate to reflect and affect the material realities of domestic violence.

Thus, I proffer that *Enough* offers moments of helplessness and hope through its depiction of the male perpetrator and female victim, options for ending violence, and intersections of race, class, and gender identities. In this final chapter, I review the major findings of my research, explore the material ramifications of these findings, and call for further research.

## Review of Findings

Domestic violence is a serious issue garnering discussion in film,<sup>130</sup> newspapers,<sup>131</sup> scholarly journals and books,<sup>132</sup> and even film reviews.<sup>133</sup> Additionally, discourse concerning the issue experiences difficulties and contradictions, which boil down to two areas. First, people are unsure of the terms of domestic violence. Debate has ensued over the language used to describe the parties involved in the issue. Should women whose husbands abuse them be called battered or victims of violence? Some argue that the term “battered women” eliminates both the agency of victims and the responsibility of those who do batter.<sup>134</sup> Some even struggle with the binary distinction between victim and perpetrator, which assumes that a person must be either one or the other. Additionally, the term “battered women” historically assumes a married woman and overlooks the prevalence of violence against men and violence within same-sex couples.<sup>135</sup>

The second major area of contradiction concerns the method(s) for ending violence. Since the beginnings of the battered women’s movement in the 1970s, options for ending domestic violence have included the rise of safehouses or shelters, the creation of legal protection orders, and the rare option of community/family assistance (occasionally, church groups would get together to help women, but such efforts were usually local and largely unorganized<sup>136</sup>). The debate concerning the options for ending violence revolves around the pitfalls of each approach. A woman may be afraid that a shelter will not truly protect her, or may even negatively affect her child or children on a psychological level. Some women may not be able to get to a shelter. A protection order may not be able to stop a perpetrator from physically harming someone. In some cases,

the police may not even heed a protection order, leaving the victim to her own devices. Community or family members may either be unaware of the existence of a problem or unwilling to become involved due to concern for their personal safety.

Within the contradiction in dealing with and discussing domestic violence, *Enough* inserts itself, reflecting the complexities involved in the issue. As discussed in chapter two, the film offers its own views on the topics of the victim and perpetrator binary and the options available for ending domestic violence. First, the film generally colludes with dominant stereotypes of male perpetrators and female victims. *Enough* constructs the male perpetrator as one who is controlling, physically aggressive, and sexually insatiable and unfaithful. In contrast, the film characterizes the female victim as pure, blameless, in need of safety and security, highly emotional, and dependent upon men (read: patriarchal structures) for her needs. However, the film also offers a challenge to the stereotypical portrait of females as weak and passive. Throughout the film, Slim remains mentally cunning, continually finding ways to evade Mitch until he finally catches up to her. The film also offers the female victim as potentially just as physically powerful as the male perpetrator. Slim undergoes intensive training and physically confronts Mitch in hand-to-hand combat eventually killing him. Yet, even as the film presents Slim as physically dominant in the end, she must masculinize her weak, feminine body to defeat Mitch by hiring a male trainer, utilizing technology to discard Mitch's guns and cell phone, and dressing in combat boots and wearing large rings on each finger.

In addition to the depiction of the perpetrator and victim binary, *Enough* offers contradictory messages concerning options for ending domestic violence. Although

safehouses and protection orders are important contributions of the battered women's movement, the film decries the options as ineffective at best and an outright mockery at worst. Slim realizes the deficiencies of protection orders by calling attention to the fact that they are simply pieces of paper powerless to stop an attacker. Slim also denies the positive contributions of safehouses by refusing to subject her daughter Gracie to such a place. The film also depicts community involvement as incapable of ending violence as Mitch tracks Slim no matter who helps her or where she goes.

Directly connected to the options available to Slim, is the film's portrayal of the intersection of ethnicity and domestic violence. As noted in chapter two, the film implicitly codes Slim as non-White. Thus, when Slim refuses to get a protection order, the film may speak to the historically tense relationship between law enforcement and people of color, again even potentially referring to the case of Jessica Gonzalez. Although the film offers moments of empowerment, the powerful realities of economic and physical constraints temper *Enough's* ability to change completely the world in which people live.

The film's depiction of the options available to victims of domestic violence as inherently flawed and ineffective contradicts the real-life positive effects of safehouses, protection orders, and community or family involvement. Such a view could be a call to action for more widespread and effective legal and social responses to domestic violence. However, I believe the film elides the material reality in which real women victims of domestic violence exist, leaving these women in a hopeless state, and may even place them in greater danger.

## A Dangerous Message

At the end of *Enough* Slim murders Mitch to save herself and her daughter from his violence. One cannot take such a message of murder as the only way out of violence lightly for the potential impact it might have both on society's view of domestic violence and on real victims of domestic violence. Up to this point, I relied upon the theoretical assumptions of materialist rhetorical critics, Michael McGee, Dana Cloud, and Ronald Greene to understand the material effects of *Enough*. In this section, I explicitly delineate my take on the material effects of the film by relying heavily upon Dana Cloud's conception of materiality.

Although McGee argues that rhetoric is a powerful tool that is capable of effecting substantial changes in society, Cloud's reminder that physical, political, and economic (read: material) forces constrain the power of rhetoric to change society is highly germane to understanding the material potential of *Enough*. Grounding my study in such an assumption, I argue that *Enough*'s portrayal of murder as the only way to end violence may place real women in danger by both superficially deriding the important legal and social options available to victims of domestic violence, and offering instead a way out that may lead to detrimental and potentially deadly consequences.

In chapter three, I discussed the ways in which two female domestic violence providers viewed the film and its possible effects on society. One respondent noted that several women she knew wanted to take self-defense classes after *Enough* came out. Such a statement may point to one direct way in which the film affected the material reality of real women. Extrapolating a bit, one might say the film tied into the cultural belief that women truly need self-defense classes to protect themselves from the possible

threat of an attack in order to be both willing and prepared to fight back. My findings in chapter two correspond to the comments of the focus group participants. In chapter two, I noted that the film serves to challenge the superiority of the male body by portraying Slim as strong, cunning, and ultimately capable of killing Mitch. Thus, combining the insights from the textual analysis and focus group study, *Enough* seems to offer up an important space for empowerment to women and/or women who have been victims of domestic violence. Women may see the film and believe that they too can escape or end the violent situation, something that another respondent noted. However, I believe the film's message of empowerment is the very message that may place real women in greater physical danger. The film offers empowerment through the slick, action and revenge oriented Hollywood portrayal of physical dominance, rather than exploring the importance of protection orders, shelters, and community. By inviting audiences to identify solely with Slim and to harbor the most extreme animosity for Mitch, the film sets audiences up to get a rush of joy, excitement, or even relief when Slim murders her abusive husband. The film's focus on "appropriate" revenge (i.e., the tagline, "Self-defense is not murder") places the onus for ending domestic violence on individual, highly skilled, and technologically savvy physical violence. The film, then, does a great disservice to the protections society set in place to help victims of violence.

Both focus group respondents who participated in this study mentioned that the film accurately depicted some of the failings of protection orders. Such a depiction can help spur conversations about more effective ways to protect women from violence and work toward completely eliminating the problem. Prior to the film, I was unaware of the feelings some women have toward protection orders and their ineffectiveness. Yet,



Slim's character recognizes and calls attention to the deficiencies of protection orders that brings to mind the real-life story of Jessica Gonzalez, whose estranged husband kidnapped and murdered her children after police refused to uphold a protection order she had against her husband.<sup>137</sup> However, the film does not mention the women for whom protection orders work, and, as the focus group participants noted, *Enough* only depicts an extreme case of domestic violence. By offering a critique of the legal and social system without adequately and accurately exploring the positive contributions of such systems, the film invites women to take extreme measures in situations that may not be as extreme as the one between Slim and Mitch.

Film critics decried Slim's quick dismissal of the protection order, overwhelmingly panning the film for lack of realism, yet, as noted in chapter two, no critic spoke to her/his credibility to discuss the realities of domestic violence. However, embedded within film critics' opposition to *Enough*'s portrayal of domestic violence is the concern for the potential danger real women may face due to the film's portrayal of domestic violence. Cloud urges materialist critics to realize that rhetoric is socially situated and can only challenge social structures to a certain degree.<sup>138</sup> Economic factors may prevent some women from leaving violent situations, especially if the abuser is financially supporting the victim, something the focus group respondents noted. Additionally, Slim had "easy" access to avenues of wealth throughout the film that many women do not have. When Mitch cancelled Slim's credit cards, Ginny paid for a motel room for Slim and Gracie. Phil bought Slim and Gracie a plane ticket to Seattle. The affluent Joe houses Slim and Gracie. Eventually, even wealthy Jupiter pays for Slim's physical training. When Slim turns her back on a shelter and decides to fight back on her

own, it is only because she has the monetary resources to do so. *Enough* easily ignores the fact that women usually do not pay to stay in shelters (a financially viable option) and cannot pay for private Krav Maga lessons with a personal trainer (a financially unviable option).

Because of racial tensions that still exist in the U.S., law enforcement may deny women of color equal treatment under the law, not to mention the fact that the film places itself firmly within a field of heterosexual violence, ignoring the violence that may occur in same-sex relationships. Additionally, the focus group respondents expressed concern for the film's use of murder as a viable option, noting that in reality the man or perpetrator would most likely kill the woman if she tried to fight back, or women may be so emotionally despondent and racked with feelings of hopelessness that they would be incapable of fighting back. *Enough* ignores all of the extenuating circumstances that keep real women oppressed in abusive relationships.

Where then does this leave the film? Is *Enough* doomed to be a contradictory text that empowers some people and outrages others? In chapter two, I briefly alluded to the possibility that the film works on an allegorical level as a way to address the concern of film critics that *Enough* was unrealistic. However, upon further reflection, I believe that taking the film as an allegory belies its material ramifications. The film does seem to offer moments of empowerment for women to believe that they can in fact do something. However, the film's call for murder as the only way out does a great disservice to the important legal and social options available to women in violent relationships. Thus, *Enough's* ultimate message of triumph and hope ignores the importance of stronger and more effective societal responses to domestic violence. The film ultimately places the

woman alone, with sole responsibility to end the violent behavior of her abuser and protect herself as she realizes family, friends, the legal system, and even the abuser will be no help to her in the end.

Although film critics did not detail the complexities of domestic violence they felt were lacking in *Enough*, the focus group participants began to outline those specific issues leading to a more complete view of the film. I believe *Enough* points to the need for further work and effort to end domestic violence, but forget to include real, societal ways to accomplish such goals. In the following section, I utilize the responses of focus group participants to offer possible suggestions for more positive future media portrayals of domestic violence.

#### Where Does This Leave Us?

The fact that major motion pictures depict domestic violence seems to be a step in the right direction, as films are vehicles that bring issues to the attention of a potentially vast audience. When films portray domestic violence, the issue cannot be a silent problem any longer. However, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, such films are not without fault. Films can fall into the trap of taking the issue of domestic violence and making an action-revenge film in order simply to make money. Society can improve portrayals of domestic violence by focusing on various types of abuse, remaining true to material realities, and accurately portraying the legal and social options available to victims of violence. I believe that offering responses from my focus group participants at length here will allow me to further articulate ways to improve media depictions of domestic violence.

**Primary Investigator:** The final question that we have, uh, is, whether you

think mass media depictions of domestic violence should be changed in any particular kinds of ways?

**Friendly Fred:** I would like to see a lot more maybe movies or different things that really go over, um, the emotional abuse, because that's one area, that, um, is I see as even the most damaging other than lethal, a lethal situation. But, um, just how to really be able to do a movie and do it well where they talked about psychological abuse and trauma...I can't really think of any movie where that was kind of the focus, um, because we see all kinds of abuse...

**Magic:** And I think kind of like reality movies, you know, like this. I thought that was pretty good, I mean, 'cause you're teach, showing them something, where they, maybe it will click and they'll go, oh, you know, something like that is happening to me, or you know, little red flags...What I'm thinking is, for someone that's gone through some type of abuse it probably clicked more. I've been through abuse and maybe, you know, that's a lot of the stuff that I was like, checking out you know. Things were happening. That's when I said, that's so real.

Thus, one essential ingredient necessary for a positive and accurate portrayal of domestic violence is to depict the various types of abuse. The participants noted that abuse occurs on more than just a physical level, yet emotional and mental abuse are rarely, if ever depicted in films portraying domestic violence. I believe one challenge to such a depiction is the visual medium of film does not lend itself readily to depict internal states of being. However, films have been keying audiences into the internal mindset of characters for some time.<sup>139</sup> I do believe one can look to *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991) for an example of possibilities for exploring mental and emotional violence. The male

perpetrator in the film, Martin Burney (Patrick Bergin) is a controlling man who dominates every area of the identity of his wife, Sara Burney (Julia Roberts). I believe looking to such a film, and potentially *Break-Up* (1998), can offer some framework for combining a portrayal of physical and emotional or mental domestic violence.

Additionally, films portraying domestic violence need to offer messages of empowerment while remaining “true” to the material realities of certain women. For example, *Enough* depicts the struggles of a working class woman who has more access to large amounts of money than real working class women. By focusing on only one type of woman, essentially a rich woman, the film may place working women in a state of further desperation if they feel that they cannot afford the options that Slim utilizes. I hesitate to offer the extreme circumstance, but a victim of domestic violence who begins to feel even more desperate after watching an unrealistic portrayal of the issue may decide to take risky and drastic measures to escape the situation. She may injure herself, or seek to injure her abuser and end up incarcerated or dead. Additionally, films must consider the intersections of social and identity positions. Perhaps being a working class, teenage gay man in an abusive relationship presents different challenges than being an upper class heterosexual woman in an abusive relationship; perhaps the situations are similar. Therefore, films must attend critically to issues of race, class, gender, ability, age, and sexual orientation. Although cynics may say that Hollywood will only work to portray dominant social groups (i.e., White, upper-class, middle-aged, heterosexual couples), the oppressive power of capitalism may backfire as audiences demand more socially representative images. Without audiences, movies and production companies will not

make money. Without positive, accurate portrayals of domestic violence, audiences must not support Hollywood's revenue-seeking depictions of such a serious issue.

Finally, films should demonstrate the ways in which protection orders and shelters can help victims of domestic violence. I can envision a film where the woman must flee to a shelter to escape a violent situation. The story then could focus on the empowerment and safety she receives while at the shelter, while also portraying the difficulties of shelter life. Perhaps a film could portray the stories of various women who have had various experiences with protection orders, both positive and negative. If a film character chooses not to utilize protection orders, shelters, or community help, audiences should be clear as to why the character made the choice. We should be aware of the character's identities that would affect the choices she/he makes.

I am not a filmmaker. However, I do believe, along with the focus group participants, that filmmakers must seriously consider new ways of portraying domestic violence that work to empower victims of domestic violence, while accurately portraying the complexities of the issue. I hope this thesis has offered a space to continue critically examining media depictions of domestic violence, in order to work toward on day eliminating this social ill.

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## Endnotes

1. Domestic violence in the workplace statistics, *American Institute on Domestic Violence*, <http://www.aidv-usa.com/Statistics.htm>.

2. American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence, *American Bar Association*, <http://www.abanet.org/domviol/stats.html>.

3. Domestic Violence Statistics, *National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women*, [http://www.actabuse.com/dvstats\\_2.html#1](http://www.actabuse.com/dvstats_2.html#1).

4. Francis E. Dolan, "Battered Women, Petty Traitors, and the Legacy of Coverture," *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 249-277.

5. I fully realize that domestic violence affects more people than those who are heterosexual, married couples. I utilized the criteria of wife murdering husband because Hollywood has not produced a major motion picture depicting domestic violence in homosexual or queer relationships.

6. I singled *Sleeping with the Enemy* out as the major comparison for *Enough* because *Sleeping with the Enemy* grossed more than any of the other major motion pictures depicting domestic violence (\$101,599,005 in the United States), and was the only major motion picture depicting domestic violence that ever attained the number one ranking in at the box office (*The Numbers: Box Office Data, Movie Stars, Idle Speculation*, [www.the-numbers.com](http://www.the-numbers.com)). For these reasons, I believe *Sleeping with the Enemy* reached a wider audience than the other major motion pictures portraying domestic violence.

7. Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995); Robert Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn. Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, Altman*, 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2000).

8. Jill Manthorpe, "Commentary on Flinck A, Paavilaninen E & Astedt-Kurki P (2005) Survival of intimate partner violence as experienced by women. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 14, 383-393," *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 14, 9 (2005): 1162-1163; Neil Websdale, "A Conversation Between a Researcher and a Battered Woman About Domestic Violence Fatality Review," *Violence Against Women* 11, 9 (2005): 1186-1200; Shonna L. Trinch, *Latinas' Narratives of Domestic Abuse: Discrepant versions of violence* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2003); Guy Enosh and Eli Buchbinder, "The Interactive Construction of Narrative Styles in Sensitive Interviews: The Case of Domestic Violence Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 11, 4 (2005): 588-617; Sharyne Shiu-Thornton, Kirsten Senturia, and Marianne Sullivan, "'Like a Bird in a Cage,' Vietnamese Women Survivors Talk About Domestic Violence," *Journal of*

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*Interpersonal Violence* 20, 8 (2005): 959-976; Cris M. Sullivan and Leslie A. Hagen, "Survivors' Opinions About Mandatory Reporting of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault by Medical Professionals," *Affilia* 20, 3 (2005): 346-361.

9. Jill Manthorpe, "Commentary," 1162-1163.

10. Neil Websdale, "Conversation," 1186-1200.

11. Trinch, *Latinas' Narratives of Domestic Abuse*; Shonna L. Trinch, "Managing Euphemism and Transcending Taboos: Negotiating the Meaning of Sexual Assault in Latinas' Narratives of Domestic Violence," *Text* 21, no. 4 (2001): 567-610.

12. I include here only the research relevant to my study. The only other discussions of film portrayals of domestic violence focus on traditional reviews of documentaries (Saul Austerlitz, "Domestic Violence," *Cineaste* 27, 3 (2002): 64; Stuart Klawans, "A Crowbar to the Face," *Nation* 274, 8 (2002): 36-37) and/or "educational videos," (Carol Hanson Sibley, "Coping with Family Crisis: Domestic Violence, Separation, Divorce," *School Library Journal* (1987): 64) which do not contribute to an analysis of the effects of film portrayals of domestic violence.

13. Kimberly A. Maxwell, John Huxford, Catherine Borum, and Robert Hornik, "Covering Domestic Violence: How the O.J. Simpson Case Shaped Reporting of Domestic Violence in the News Media," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (2000): 258-272; Carolyn Michelle and C. Kay Weaver, "Discursive Manoeuvres and Hegemonic Recuperations in New Zealand Documentary Representations of Domestic Violence," *Feminist Media Studies* 3, no. 3 (2003): 283-299.

14. Marian Meyers, *News Coverage of Violence Against Women: Engendering Blame* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc., 1997): 50.

15. Susan Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1982): 19.

16. Meyers, *News Coverage*, 50. See also, Errol Louis, "Disorder in the court," *The Daily News*, June 28, 2005, Editorial, 29. Louis tells the story of a recent Supreme Court case, *Castle Rock v. Gonzalez*, which shows that laws even protect (perhaps even advocates!) failed enforcement. Jessica Gonzalez won a restraining order against her husband, Simon Gonzalez. Although Simon Gonzalez was to stay 100 yards away from the family home, he had limited rights to see the three children of the couple. However, after the restraining order was issued, Simon Gonzalez took the three girls away without permission. Jessica Gonzalez repeatedly called the police, but they refused to help her and even told her to "call back if the kids weren't home by 10 p.m." Although Jessica Gonzalez repeatedly called the police and even appeared at the station in person, the



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police did nothing. Finally, Simon Gonzalez showed up at the police station and opened fire. The police returned fire, killing Simon Gonzalez. The police then searched Simon Gonzalez's truck and found the couple's three daughters, all murdered by Simon. Although the restraining order directed police to "use every reasonable means to enforce [it]," the police still did nothing. Jessica Gonzalez sued the police and the case eventually went to the Supreme Court who ruled "that the police possessed discretion over how, when[,] and whether to enforce the [restraining] order." Not only does the law fail to protect women, but also ineptitude is even sanctioned by the Supreme Court!

17. Maxwell, Huxford, Borum, and Hornik, "Covering Domestic Violence"; Michelle and Weaver, "Discursive Manoeuvres"; Mia Consalvo, "Hegemony, Domestic Violence, and Cops," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 26, no. 2 (1998): 62-70.

18. Meyers, *News Coverage*, 119.

19. Coverture is a legal term defined as a woman's relinquishing of her rights and personhood to her husband. A wife was legally "covered" by her husband.

20. Schechter, *Women and Male Violence*, 15; Anna Motz, *The Psychology of Female Violence: Crimes Against the Body* (Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis, Inc., 2001); Amy Lou Busch, *Finding Their Voices: Listening to Battered Women Who've Killed* (Commack: Kroshka Books, 1999); Robbin S. Ogle and Susan Jacobs, *Self-Defense and Battered Women Who Kill: A New Framework* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2002).

21. Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis" in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Carl R. Burgchardt (Pennsylvania: Strata Publishing, 2000), 127.

22. McKerrow, "Critical rhetoric," 139.

23. Ibid, 127.

24. Ibid, 136.

25. Michael Calvin McGee, "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric," in *Explorations in Rhetoric: Studies in Honor of Douglas Ehninger*, edited by Raymie E. McKerrow (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1982): 24.

26. McGee, "Materialist's conception," 25.

27. Ibid, 26.

28. Ibid, 27.

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29. Ibid, 43.
30. John Lucaites, *Rhetoric in Postmodern America: Conversations with Michael Calvin McGee*, ed. Carol Corbin (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998), 12.
31. Dana Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 144.
32. Cloud, "Materiality," 144.
33. Cloud, "Materiality," 144.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid, 153.
36. Ibid, 157.
37. Ibid, 158.
38. Ronald Walter Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15 (1998): 21-41.
39. Greene, "Another Materialist," 22.
40. Ibid, 26.
41. A Lexis-Nexis search of articles pertaining to "domestic violence" from April 25, 2002 to May 24, 2002 (the official U.S. release date of *Enough*) returned 651 results.
42. McGee, *Rhetoric in Postmodern America*, 56. 57. Although McGee speaks specifically of television here, other studies point to the real effects of films on audiences (see Francis E. Dolan, "Battered Women, Petty Traitors, and the Legacy of Coverture," *Feminist Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 249-277).
43. John Sloop, *Disciplining Gender: Rhetorics of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004): 19.
44. Fonow and Cook, *Beyond Methodology*, 6.
45. Ibid, 9.
46. See Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995).

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47. Michael Calvin McGee, "A Materialist's Conception of Rhetoric," in *Explorations in Rhetoric: Studies in Honor of Douglas Ehninger* edited by Raymie E. McKerrow (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1982): 27.
48. Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).
49. Ronald Walter Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15 (1998): 22.
50. *Castle Rock v. Gonzalez*.
51. Dana Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 145.
52. Robert Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, Altman*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2000), ix.
53. See Samuel Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Stephen D. Reese, "Prologue—Framing Public Life: A Briding Model for Media Research," in *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, ed. Stephen D. Reese, Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., and August E. Grant (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001); Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fracture Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43 (1993): 51-59; Dietram A. Scheufele, "Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing Revised: Another Look at Cognitive Effects of Political Communication," *Mass Communication & Society* 3 (2&3) (2000): 297-316.
54. Kelly Crow, "Neighborhood Report: New York Up Close; Listening Hard to Softer Cries for Help," *The New York Times*, December 30, 2001, sec. 14; Tamar Lewin, "Shelters Have Empty Beds; Abused Women Stay Home," *The New York Times*, October 21, 2001, sec 1A; Somini Sengupta, "Domestic Violence Law Set to be Renewed," *The New York Times*, June 11, 2001, sec. B; Unknown Author, "Teams to Focus on Repeat Domestic Abuse," *The New York Times*, May 10, 2002, sec. B.
55. Susan Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1982).
56. Sengupta, "Renewed."
57. William Glaberson, "Judge Rebukes City Officials for Removing Children From Homes of Battered Women," *The New York Times*, March 5, 2002, sec. B; Francis X. Clines, "Judge's Domestic Violence Ruling Creates an Outcry in Kentucky," *The New York Times*, January 8, 2002, sec. A; Andy Newman, "Children Removal Curbed for

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Battered Women.” *The New York Times*, December 22, 2001, sec. D; Somini Sengupta, “Judge Assails City Agency on Abuse Cases,” *The New York Times*, August 18, 2001, sec. B.

58. Glaberson, “Judge Rebukes”; Newman, “Children Removal”; Sengupta, “Judge Assails.”

59. Clines, “Outcry.”

60. Sengupta, “Renewed.”

61. See Errol Louis, “Disorder in the court,” *The Daily News*, June 28, 2005, Editorial, 29. Louis reports the story of Jessica Gonzalez whose two children were murdered by their estranged father after police refused to act on Ms. Gonzalez’s protective order against Simon Gonzalez.

62. Krav Maga Association of America, Inc., “Krav Maga,” *Krav Maga Association of America, Inc.*, <http://www.kravmaga.com> (accessed 21 March 2006). Krav Maga is the “official self defense system of the Israeli Defense Forces.” The overall training process occurs over a period beyond nine months for those who train “two to three times a week,” according to the website.

63. The Numbers, “Box office data,” *The Numbers: Box Office Data, Movie Stars, Idle Speculation*, [www.the-numbers.com](http://www.the-numbers.com) (accessed 21 March 2006).

64. Catharine Tunnacliffe, “Enough with the psychos,” *Reel.com*, [www.eye.net/contributors/catharine\\_tunnacliffe](http://www.eye.net/contributors/catharine_tunnacliffe) (accessed 21 March 2006); Phil Villarreal, “That’s More Than ‘Enough,’” *Arizona Daily Star*, May 24, 2002; Screenit.com, review of *Enough* (2002), *Screenit.com*, May 24, 2002, <http://www.screenit.com/ourtake/2002/enough.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Mark Dujsik, review of *Enough* (2002), <http://mark-reviews-movies.tripod.com/reviews/E/enough.htm> (accessed 21 March 2006); Holly McClure, “Thrilling Enough Sends a Mixed Moral Message,” *Crosswalk.com*, <http://www.crosswalk.com/fun/movies/1140252.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Robin Clifford, review of *Enough* (2002), *Reeling Reviews*, <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/click/movie-1114051/reviews.php?critic=columns&sortby=default&page=15&rid=315286> (accessed 21 March 2006); EricDSnider, review of *Enough* (2002), *EricDSnider.com*, May 25, 2002; Berge Garabedian, review of *Enough* (2002), *Joblo.com*, May 11, 2002, [http://www.joblo.com/reviews.php?mode=joblo\\_movies&id=800](http://www.joblo.com/reviews.php?mode=joblo_movies&id=800) (accessed 21 March 2006); Laura Clifford, review of *Enough* (2002), *Reeling Reviews*, [117](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/click/movie-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

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1114051/reviews.php?critic=columns&sortby=default&page=15&rid=315221 (accessed 21 March 2006);

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[http://www.paloaltoonline.com/movies/cgi/moviescreener\\_long.cgi?id=560](http://www.paloaltoonline.com/movies/cgi/moviescreener_long.cgi?id=560) (accessed 21 March 2006).

65. Tunnacliffe. Due to the sheer volume of movie reviews surrounding the film, I will discuss only a few of the most representative reviews for each theme I outline. All other relevant reviews will be in endnotes.

66. Tunnacliffe; Villarreal; Screenit.com; Dujsik; McClure; Clifford; EricDSnider; Garabedian; Chen; Shelby; Betty Jo Tucker, "J-Lo Strikes Back," *Reel Talk*, <http://www.reeltalkreviews.com/info/bio.asp?id=2> (accessed 21 March 2006); Tony Toscano, review of *Enough* (2002), *Rotten Tomatoes*; Mike Szymanski, review of *Enough* (2002), *Zap2It.com*; EricDSnider; Dennis Schwartz, "Believability wasn't one of the film's virtues," *Ozus' World Movie Reviews*, May 31, 2002, <http://www.rovers.net/~ozus/enough.htm> (accessed 21 March 2006); Dustin Putman, review of *Enough* (2002), *The Movie Boy*, May 12, 2002, <http://www.themovieboy.com/directlinks/02enough.htm> (accessed 21 March 2006); Charles Taylor, "Jennifer Lopez kicks butt in a sleazy, paranoid revenge fantasy pretending to be an 'issue' drama," *Salon.com*, May 24, 2002, <http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/review/2002/05/24/enough/index.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Maitland McDonagh, "Love is a Battlefield,"; Paul Malcolm, review of *Enough* (2002), *LA Weekly*, [http://www.laweekly.com/film/film\\_results.php?showid=1986](http://www.laweekly.com/film/film_results.php?showid=1986) (accessed 21 March 2006); Donald Munro, "Maybe too Much," *The Fresno Bee*, May 24, 2002, <http://www.fresnobee.com/lifestyle/movies/story/2866996p-3678794c.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Mike, McGranaghan, review of *Enough* (2002), [http://www.geocities.com/gamut\\_mag/enough.htm](http://www.geocities.com/gamut_mag/enough.htm) (accessed 21 March 2006); McClure; Filmsnobs.com, "J to THA L-O Has Finally Had... Well, You Know What She's Had," *Filmsnobs.com*, <http://www.filmsnobs.com/www/shimes/enough.htm> (accessed 21 March 2006); Chris Hewitt, "'Enough' is Stupid and Artless," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 24, 2002, <http://ae.twincities.com/entertainment/ui/twincities/movie.html?id=62790&reviewId=8896> (accessed 21 March 2006); Chen; Todd Gilchrist, "Jennifer Lopez Stars as an Abused Wife Who Takes Charge of Her Life in a Film That Plays out the Revenge Fantasies of Women Through Post-Feminist Cinema," *Filmstew.com*, May 30, 2002, <http://www.filmstew.com/Content/Article.asp?ContentID=3402&Pg=2> (accessed 21 March 2006); Ian Waldron-Mantgani, "Enough," *Cinema Releases*, November 29, 2002; Jeffrey Bruner, review of *Enough* (2002), <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/click/movie-1114051/reviews.php?critic=columns&sortby=default&page=16&rid=318546> (accessed 21 March 2006); Erik Childress, review of *Enough* (2002), *EFilmcritic.com*, May 28,

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2002, <http://efilmcritic.com/review.php> (accessed 21 March 2006); Taylor; Screenit.com; David Elliott, "Is This J.Lo's Warm-Up for 'Celebrity Boxing'?" *Union-Tribune*, May 23, 2002, <http://entertainment.signonsandiego.com/profile?fid=22&id=248345> (accessed 21 March 2006); David Grove, review of *Enough* (2002), *Filmthreat.com*, May 23, 2002, <http://www.filmthreat.com/index.php?section=reviews&Id=2894> (accessed 21 March 2006).

67. Screenit.com.

68. Villarreal; Screenit.com; Dujsik; McClure; Clifford; EricDSnider; Garabedian; Clifford; Chen; Shelby.

69. Dujsik.

70. Ibid.

71. Betty Jo Tucker, "J-Lo Strikes Back," *Reel Talk*, <http://www.reeltalkreviews.com/info/bio.asp?id=2> (accessed 21 March 2006); Tony Toscano, review of *Enough* (2002), *Rotten Tomatoes*; Mike Szymanski, review of *Enough* (2002), *Zap2It.com*; EricDSnider; Dennis Schwartz, "Believability wasn't one of the film's virtues," *Ozus' World Movie Reviews*, May 31, 2002, <http://www.rovers.net/~ozus/enough.htm> (accessed 21 March 2006); Putman; Taylor; Paul Malcolm, review of *Enough* (2002), *LA Weekly*, [http://www.laweekly.com/film/film\\_results.php?showid=1986](http://www.laweekly.com/film/film_results.php?showid=1986) (accessed 21 March 2006); Donald Munro, "Maybe too Much," *The Fresno Bee*, May 24, 2002, <http://www.fresnobee.com/lifestyle/movies/story/2866996p-3678794c.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Mike, McGranaghan, review of *Enough* (2002), [http://www.geocities.com/gamut\\_mag/enough.htm](http://www.geocities.com/gamut_mag/enough.htm) (accessed 21 March 2006); McClure; Filmsnobs.com; Chris Hewitt, "'Enough' is Stupid and Artless," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 24, 2002, <http://ae.twincities.com/entertainment/ui/twincities/movie.html?id=62790&reviewId=8896> (accessed 21 March 2006); Chen; Gilchrist.

72. Ian Waldron-Mantgani, "Enough," *Cinema Releases*, November 29, 2002.

73. Tucker; Toscano; Szymanski; EricDSnider; Schwartz; Putman; Taylor; McDonagh; Malcolm; Munro; Mike; McClure; Filmsnobs.com; Hewitt; Chen; Gilchrist.

74. Tucker.

75. Putman.

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76. Jeffrey Bruner, review of *Enough* (2002), <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/click/movie-1114051/reviews.php?critic=columns&sortby=default&page=16&rid=318546> (accessed 21 March 2006).

77. Szymanski; Childress; Taylor; Screenit.com; David Elliott, "Is This J.Lo's Warm-Up for 'Celebrity Boxing'?" *Union-Tribune*, May 23, 2002, <http://entertainment.signonsandiego.com/profile?fid=22&id=248345> (accessed 21 March 2006); Grove; Bruner; Gilchrist; Putman.

78. *Enough*, DVD, directed by Michael Apted (Culver City, California: Columbia Pictures, 2002).

79. See Donald G. Dutton, *The Batterer: A Psychological Profile*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1995), 25. Dutton argues, "All batterers are not alike" (22), although batterers may share similarities.

80. Audiences learn later in the film that Mitch and Robbie are actually in cahoots, and have pulled the phony chivalry scam on an undisclosed number of women.

81. See Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman*. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1979); Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman Syndrome*. 2nd edition. (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 2000). Lenore specifically uses the terms "tension building," "acute battering incident," and "loving-contrition" to describe the three phases of the cycle of violence.

82. See Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar, *Education Groups for Men Who Batter: The Duluth Model*. (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, Inc., 1993). Pence and Paymar offer an overview of various programs throughout the United States designed to work with men who batter to end violence against women.

83. Mitch has more than Slim as a moral foil. Throughout the film, Joe (Dan Futterman), Slim's college boyfriend, serves as the exact opposite of Mitch. Joe is kind, considerate, self-deprecating (he constantly alludes to his penchant for sexual foibles), and is gentle.

84. Patricia Corrigan, "Friends Indeed: Area Women Talk About Their Close Friendships and Why Such Emotional Relationships Might Be One Reason Females Outlive Males," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 13, 2005, E1; Lucy Kellaway, "Women Bosses Can be as Horrid as Little Girls," *Business Day*, September 27, 2005, p. 4; Women's Health Law Weekly, "Eating Disorders: Emotional Eating Haunts Millions of Americans, According to Eating Disorders Facility," *Women's Health Law Weekly*, February 19, 2006, p. 45; Renee Piane, "Q&A: Confused Girlfriend, Bad Girl

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Syndrome,” *AskMen.com*, [http://www.askmen.com/dating/heidi\\_60/83\\_dating\\_girl.html](http://www.askmen.com/dating/heidi_60/83_dating_girl.html), accessed 9 February, 2006.

85. See Schechter for a detailed chronology of the battered women’s movement, detailing both successes and challenges.

86. Schechter.

87. Shonna L. Trinch, *Latinas’ Narratives of Domestic Abuse: Discrepant versions of violence* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2003): 4.

88. Seattle-King County Domestic Violence Protection Order Site, *Domestic Violence Protection Order*, <http://www.protectionorder.org>.

89. “Outlawing Violence: Laws and Legal Reform,” in *Not a Minute More: Ending Violence Against Women* (New York: United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2003):

90. The District of Columbia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, “Domestic Violence Statistics,” *District of Columbia Coalition Against Domestic Violence*, [www.dccadv.org](http://www.dccadv.org). The website lists several more studies indicating that even when police were called to enforce protection orders, few arrests were made.

91. A fact revealed to be too true in the case of Jessica Gonzalez in *Castle Rock v. Gonzalez*.

92. Schechter, 59-61.

93. *Ibid*, 88.

94. Meyers, *Engendering Blame*; Consalvo, “Cops”; Maxwell, Huxford, Borum, and Hornik, “Covering Domestic Violence”; Michelle and Weaver, “Discursive Manoeuvres.”

95. Isabel Molina Guzman and Angharad N. Valdivia, “Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture,” *The Communication Review* 7: 214.

96. Marian Meyers, *News Coverage of Violence Against Women: Engendering Blame* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc., 1997); Mia Consalvo, “Hegemony, Domestic Violence, and Cops,” *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 26, no. 2 (1998); Kimberly A. Maxwell, John Huxford, Catherine Borum, and Robert Hornik, “Covering Domestic Violence: How the O.J. Simpson Case Shaped Reporting of Domestic Violence in the News Media,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 77, no. 2 (2000); Carolyn Michelle and C. Kay Weaver, “Discursive Manoeuvres and Hegemonic



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97. Schechter, 19.

98. Angharad N. Valdivia, *A Latina in the Land of Hollywood and Other Essays on Media Culture* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000): 97.

99. Meyers, *Engendering Blame*; Consalvo, “Cops”; Maxwell, Huxford, Borum, and Hornik, “Covering Domestic Violence”; Michelle and Weaver, “Discursive Manoeuvres.”

100. Browne, 1987; Walker, 1984; Seligman, 1975; Anna Motz, *The Psychology of Female Violence: Crimes Against the Body* (Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis, Inc., 2001); Amy Lou Busch, *Finding Their Voices: Listening to Battered Women Who've Killed* (Commack: Kroshka Books, 1999); Robbin S. Ogle and Susan Jacobs, *Self-Defense and Battered Women Who Kill: A New Framework* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2002).

101. Motz, *Crimes*, 220-221.

102. See Kellner; Kolker.

103. Ibid.

104. David Morley, *The “Nationwide” Audience: Structure and Decoding* (London: British Film Institute, 1980); Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in *Culture, Media, Language*, eds. Stuart Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, and P. Willis (London: Methuen, 1980); Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature, with a new introduction by the author*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Robin R. Means Coleman, “Introduction,” in *Say it Loud!: African-American Audiences, Media, and Identity*, ed. Robin R. Means Coleman (New York: Routledge, 2002).

105. Dana Cloud, “The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric,” *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 141-162.

106. See Michael Calvin McGee, “A Materialist’s Conception of Rhetoric,” in *Explorations in Rhetoric: Studies in Honor of Douglas Ehninger*, edited by Raymie E. McKerrow (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1982): 23-48

107. Coleman, 2002, 15.

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108. See Douglas J. Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995). Kellner realizes that meaning is almost always the result of negotiation between dominant ideologies and power structures and audiences.

109. See Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis" in *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. Carl R. Burghardt (Pennsylvania: Strata Publishing, 2000).

110. Jane D. Browne and Laurie Schulze, "The Effects of Race, Gender, and Fandom on Audience Interpretations of Madonna's Music," *Journal of Communication* 40 (2) (1990): 88-102; Jodi R. Cohen, "The 'Relevance' of Cultural Identity in Audiences' Interpretations of Mass Media," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8 (2) (1991):442-454; Brenda Cooper, "'The White-Black Fault Line': Relevancy of Race and Racism in Spectators' Experiences of Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*," *Howard Journal of Communication* 9 (1998): 205-228; Brenda Cooper, "The Relevancy of Gender Identity in Spectators' Interpretations of *Thelma & Louise*," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 16 (1999): 20-41; Rebecca Ann Lind, "Diverse Interpretations: The 'Relevance' of Race in the Construction of Meaning In, and the Evaluation of, a Television News Story," *The Howard Journal of Communication* 7 (1996): 53-74; Naomi R. Rockler, "Race, Whiteness, 'Lightness,' and Relevance: African American and European American Interpretations of *Jump Start* and *The Boondocks*," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (4) (2002): 398-418.

111. Cohen, 442.

112. Cooper, 1998, 208.

113. Cloud, 14.

114. Radway, 5.

115. Radway

116. The import of remaining true to participant voices and responses is also a major theme of studies integrating the feedback of victims of domestic violence. See Jill Manthorpe, "Commentary on Flinck A, Paavilaninen E & Astedt-Kurki P (2005) Survival of intimate partner violence as experienced by women. *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 14, 383-393," *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 14, 9 (2005): 1162-1163; Neil Websdale, "A Conversation Between a Researcher and a Battered Woman About Domestic Violence Fatality Review," *Violence Against Women* 11, 9 (2005): 1186-1200; Shonna L. Trinch, *Latinas' Narratives of Domestic Abuse: Discrepant versions of violence* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2003); Guy Enosh and Eli Buchbinder, "The Interactive Construction of Narrative Styles in Sensitive Interviews:

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117. Angharad N. Valdivia, *A Latina in the Land of Hollywood and Other Essays on Media Culture* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000); Trinch, *Latinas’ Narratives of Domestic Abuse*; Trinch, “Managing Euphemism”; Shiu-Thornton, Senturia, and Sullivan, “‘Like a Bird in a Cage,’”; *Black Family Violence: Current Research and Theory*, ed. Robert L. Hampton (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1991).

118. Valdivia, 150.

119. Valdivia, 162.

120. The Human Research Committee approves all research that utilizes the feedback of human participants.

121. See McGee; Cloud; Ronald Walter Greene, “Another Materialist Rhetoric,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15 (1998): 21-41. The major assumptions of a materialist perspective are that rhetoric is an ecological force, both acting on and being acted upon by the world in which it exists. Thus, rhetoric both creates and reflects the ideologies of a given historical society. Additionally, economic, physical, and social forces constrain rhetoric’s potential for change. One area where rhetoric both shapes and reflects ideologies is in film. See also Robert Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, Altman*. 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2000).

122. McGee; Cloud; Greene.

123. For purposes of confidentiality, I purposefully neglect including the city, state, or region where the professionals work or the organizations for which they work.

124. Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook, *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*, eds. Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991): 6.

125. Catharine Tunnacliffe, “Enough with the psychos,” *Reel.com*, [www.eye.net/contributors/catharine\\_tunnacliffe](http://www.eye.net/contributors/catharine_tunnacliffe) (accessed 21 March 2006); Phil Villarreal, “That’s More Than ‘Enough,’” *Arizona Daily Star*, May 24, 2002;

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Screenit.com, review of *Enough* (2002), *Screenit.com*, May 24, 2002, <http://www.screenit.com/ourtake/2002/enough.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Mark Dujsik, review of *Enough* (2002), <http://mark-reviews-movies.tripod.com/reviews/E/enough.htm> (accessed 21 March 2006); Holly McClure, "Thrilling Enough Sends a Mixed Moral Message," *Crosswalk.com*, <http://www.crosswalk.com/fun/movies/1140252.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Robin Clifford, review of *Enough* (2002), *Reeling Reviews*, <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/click/movie-1114051/reviews.php?critic=columns&sortby=default&page=15&rid=315286> (accessed 21 March 2006); EricDSnider, review of *Enough* (2002), *EricDSnider.com*, May 25, 2002; Berge Garabedian, review of *Enough* (2002), *Joblo.com*, May 11, 2002, [http://www.joblo.com/reviews.php?mode=joblo\\_movies&id=800](http://www.joblo.com/reviews.php?mode=joblo_movies&id=800) (accessed 21 March 2006); Laura Clifford, review of *Enough* (2002), *Reeling Reviews*, <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/click/movie-1114051/reviews.php?critic=columns&sortby=default&page=15&rid=315221> (accessed 21 March 2006); Jeffrey Chen, "Conveniently Cheap Revenge Flick," *Windowtothemovies.com*, May 22, 2002, <http://windowtothemovies.com/LV-enough.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Jim Shelby, review of *Enough* (2002), [http://www.paloaltoonline.com/movies/cgi/moviescreener\\_long.cgi?id=560](http://www.paloaltoonline.com/movies/cgi/moviescreener_long.cgi?id=560) (accessed 21 March 2006); Betty Jo Tucker, "J-Lo Strikes Back," *Reel Talk*, <http://www.reeltalkreviews.com/info/bio.asp?id=2> (accessed 21 March 2006); Tony Toscano, review of *Enough* (2002), *Rotten Tomatoes*; Mike Szymanski, review of *Enough* (2002), *Zap2It.com*; Dennis Schwartz, "Believability wasn't one of the film's virtues," *Ozus' World Movie Reviews*, May 31, 2002, <http://www.rovers.net/~ozus/enough.htm> (accessed 21 March 2006); Dustin Putman, review of *Enough* (2002), *The Movie Boy*, May 12, 2002, <http://www.themovieboy.com/directlinks/02enough.htm> (accessed 21 March 2006); Charles Taylor, "Jennifer Lopez kicks butt in a sleazy, paranoid revenge fantasy pretending to be an 'issue' drama," *Salon.com*, May 24, 2002, <http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/review/2002/05/24/enough/index.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Maitland McDonagh, "Love is a Battlefield,"; Paul Malcolm, review of *Enough* (2002), *LA Weekly*, [http://www.laweekly.com/film/film\\_results.php?showid=1986](http://www.laweekly.com/film/film_results.php?showid=1986) (accessed 21 March 2006); Donald Munro, "Maybe too Much," *The Fresno Bee*, May 24, 2002, <http://www.fresnobee.com/lifestyle/movies/story/2866996p-3678794c.html> (accessed 21 March 2006); Mike, McGranaghan, review of *Enough* (2002), [http://www.geocities.com/gamut\\_mag/enough.htm](http://www.geocities.com/gamut_mag/enough.htm) (accessed 21 March 2006); Filmsnobs.com, "J to THA L-O Has Finally Had...Well, You Know What She's Had," *Filmsnobs.com*, <http://www.filmsnobs.com/www/shimes/enough.htm> (accessed 21 March 2006); Chris Hewitt, "'Enough' is Stupid and Artless," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 24, 2002, <http://ae.twincities.com/entertainment/ui/twincities/movie.html?id=62790&reviewId=889>

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126. Putman.

127. Bruner.

128. For a concise history of the debate, see Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

129. Domestic violence in the workplace statistics, *American Institute on Domestic Violence*, <http://www.aidv-usa.com/Statistics.htm>; American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence, *American Bar Association*, <http://www.abanet.org/domviol/stats.html>; Domestic Violence Statistics, *National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women*, [http://www.actabuse.com/dvstats\\_2.html#1](http://www.actabuse.com/dvstats_2.html#1).

130. Domestic violence has been depicted in made-for-television movies (*Intimate Strangers* [1977], *The Burning Bed* [1984], *Shattered Dreams* [1990], *If Someone Had Known* [1995], *Personal Vendetta* [1995], and *Unforgivable* [1996]), documentaries (*Domestic Violence* [2001], *Domestic Violence 2* [2002], and *Terror at Home: Domestic Violence in America* [2005]), one short film (*The Victim* [1998]), and a handful of major motion pictures (*Not Without My Daughter* [1991], *Sleeping with the Enemy* [1991], *What's Love Got to Do With It?* [1993], *Casualties* [1997], *The Rainmaker* [1998], *Break Up* [1998], and *Enough* [2002]).

131. Kelly Crow, "Neighborhood Report: New York Up Close; Listening Hard to Softer Cries for Help," *The New York Times*, December 30, 2001, sec. 14; Tamar Lewin, "Shelters Have Empty Beds; Abused Women Stay Home," *The New York Times*, October 21, 2001, sec 1A; Somini Sengupta, "Domestic Violence Law Set to be Renewed," *The*

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135. See Susan Schechter, *Women and Male Violence: The Visions and Struggles of the Battered Women's Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1982). Although Schechter's book was published in the early 1980s, she begins addressing the ever-growing discomfort with a battered women's movement that is "biased by dominant white, middle class research and writing" (234), include a focus on heterosexual couples to the exclusion of abuse in homosexual relationships.

136. Schechter.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Questions for Female Professionals' Perceptions of

*Enough*

Introductory clarification: In order for us to all be using the same language, how do you prefer to refer to victims of domestic violence?

(Q1) What do you think the film was trying to say about domestic violence?

What do you think about the Jennifer Lopez playing the lead character in the film?

Prompt: Does her status as a movie star lend credibility to her portrayal of an abused woman? Does her movie star status hinder her performance? How does her performance compare to other actresses in similar roles, such as Julia Roberts in *Sleeping with the Enemy* (1991) and Bridget Fonda in *Break Up* (1998)? Does her ethnic background affect how you viewed her portrayal of an abused woman? If so, how?

What, if anything, do you think the film was saying about the connection between ethnicity and domestic violence?

Prompt: Do you think the ethnicity-related messages are accurate? Do you think the film was effective or ineffective in portraying ethnicity-related issues? Why?

What, if anything, did you think the film was saying about the connection between social class and domestic violence?

Prompt: Do you think the class-related messages are accurate? Do you think the film was effective or ineffective in portraying class-related issues? Why?

How does the film convey or present the male perpetrator?

Prompt: Was the portrayal accurate or inaccurate? Why?

(Q4a&b) Does the film offer options for escaping, leaving, and/or surviving domestic violence to women who are in similar situations? Prompt: What options does the film offer?

(Q4b) Are the options the film offers realistic?

Prompt: Are the options more available to women of certain classes, ethnicities, races, sexualities, and abilities? As a professional, what options do you recommend to women who are victims of violence? Why? What do you think about the film's views on options such as protection orders, shelters, family assistance, and murder of the abuser?

(Q7) Do you believe the film's portrayal of domestic violence is helpful? Why or why not?

Prompt: Does the film allow them a space for emotional recovery? Does the film aid victims psychologically in dealing with the trauma they have experienced? Does the

film allow victims of domestic violence to feel empowered and in control of their own lives?) for victims of domestic violence?

Do you believe the film's portrayal of domestic violence places actual women in greater danger?

Prompt: If so, how? Does the fact that Jennifer Lopez's character ultimately murders her abuser suggest that murder is the only way out of abuse? If so, are there any actual consequences of such a view? What are they?

Do you think mass media depictions of domestic violence should be changed?

Prompt: If so, how? If not, why not? What are helpful, empowering ways to depict issues related to domestic violence? Can you think of examples you have seen that would illustrate a progressive, helpful, or empowering depiction of issues related to domestic violence?

Appendix B: Initial Focus Group Questionnaire (Q1)

Please take some time to fill out the questionnaire as honestly as possible. Your responses are important because they will assist me in raising and addressing key issues concerning media depictions of domestic violence. My hope is that this research will contribute to the work and research that has been and continues to be done by a large group of people working to end the epidemic of domestic violence.

1. What do you think the film was trying to say about domestic violence?

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2a. Based on the film’s portrayal of domestic violence with what, if anything, were you satisfied? And, 2b. Why were you satisfied with the way the film portrayed domestic violence?

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3a. Based on the film’s portrayal of domestic violence with what, if anything, were you dissatisfied? And, 3b. Why were you dissatisfied with the way the film portrayed domestic violence?

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4a. Does the film offer options for escaping, leaving, and/or surviving domestic violence to women who are victims of domestic violence?

Yes  No

4b. If you responded “yes” to question 6a, what are the options for escaping, leaving, and/or surviving domestic violence? Are the options realistic? Why or why not?

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5. In what ways do you perceive the film as offering an accurate portrayal of domestic violence?

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6. In what ways do you perceive the film as offering an inaccurate portrayal of domestic violence?

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7. Do you believe the film's portrayal of domestic violence is helpful for victims of domestic violence? Why or why not?

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8. Do you think the film offers new or novel information about domestic violence to audiences? If so, what?

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## Appendix C: Follow-Up Questionnaire (Q2)

Please answer this second questionnaire honestly, as your feedback is both confidential and helpful as a means to help us ascertain what, if anything, could be improved. If you could take a few minutes to complete the survey, we would be appreciative. For your convenience, however, we have provided a self-addressed stamped envelope. If you must take the questionnaire with you, we are requesting return by April 13, 2006.

1. Do you feel that participation in this project was worthwhile for you? Why or why not?

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2. Do you feel that research similar to this project (i.e., research focusing on media portrayals of domestic violence and their effect on society) should continue in the future? If so, what benefits do you see this research yielding?

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3. Overall, how satisfied were you with the research process (i.e., method in which researchers contacted participants, availability of additional information if necessary, number of participants, location of focus group, time and date coordination for focus group, advertisements for focus group, etc.)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied

4. How satisfied were you with the researchers' facilitation of discussions?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied

5. Based on your responses to questions 3 and 4, do you have suggestions for what we could have done differently? (i.e., suggestions for future research projects similar to this one)?

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We greatly appreciate your willingness to offer your time and participation for this research project. We also appreciate your feedback and suggestions for future research projects similar to this one.  
Dr. Michelle A. Holling (P.I.), Joseph Richards, M.A. Candidate (Co-P.I.)