

Narratives of Scholars in the Field of Intimate Partner Violence

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my brother David Thompson Becher who passed away at the end of September in 2011. He never saw Dorothy born, or me (finally) finishing my Ph.D. I miss him every day.

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**Section I:**

**Setting the stage**

## **Introduction**

To begin this story of my journey through the divisions in the field of partner violence, I must first make it clear why it is necessary to make it *my* story at all. The first reason is the most obvious, which is that this is a qualitative study and, as such, I am embedded in the research process, a topic I will elaborate on in later chapters. The second reason, more subtly diffused throughout this project, is that I am as conflicted and divided as the field of partner violence itself. I am a person with knowledge and beliefs that align with what are seen as disparate traditions of scholarship in the field. Depending on the context, the situation, what I am reading and, sometimes the time of day, I find myself agreeing with one perspective or scholar over another. That is why this project came to be, to take the opportunity of writing my dissertation to ask the elite scholars in the field, positioned across the continuum, how it all fits together from their personal perspective and point of view. Therefore, this exploration of the divide in the field must also be a self exploration. Of why I find myself conflicted and what I hope to achieve for myself, for others like me, and for everyone with violence in their relationships.



## Chapter 1:

### What is partner violence and how big a problem is it?

Partner violence is the perpetration of physical, psychological/emotional and sexual acts by one current or former intimate partner against another. The United States government uses the term *intimate partner violence (IPV)*, but I choose to use the terms IPV and partner violence interchangeably. The term IPV was introduced by the CDC in 1999. Prior to this, the terms *spouse abuse*, *wife battering* and *domestic violence* were more commonly used (Nicolaidis & Paranjape, 2009). Domestic violence is still often used interchangeably with IPV, but I tend to avoid the term unless talking about a situation where a person is abusing multiple members of their family (e.g. partner, child, elder), or when talking about a time when that was the term of choice. It is also important to point out that these are United States-based terms; for example in Canada the term *woman abuse* is more commonly used.

In addition, when I use the term partner violence it is with the intention of inclusivity in order to acknowledge the variety of romantic partnerships and expressions of gender. I say this to make it explicitly clear that my use of the term is *not* with the intention of making a statement regarding my opinion of the gendered or de-gendered nature of partner violence. That is a topic which I will explore in greater detail later. Also, the word intimate can be problematic because it is unclear exactly what that means; is it a spouse, an ex-spouse, any romantic partner? At what stage of a relationship does it become romantic and who defines that? If an assault occurs on a first date, does that constitute IPV? As is common with complex social concerns, it is nearly impossible for

language to do justice to the multi-layered and sometimes contradictory nature of a phenomenon and so, whatever terminology is used, it is critical that it is unpacked to reveal the intentions of the author or scholar (Nicolaidis & Paranjape, 2009).

Regardless of the language, although language about partner violence is important and will be discussed further, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defined IPV as including physical or sexual violence, along with emotional abuse and included stalking and threats (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012). This is in contrast to the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, whose mission is to monitor crimes of partner violence. They defined partner violence as including “homicides, rapes, robberies, and assaults committed by intimates” (Catalano, 2007). This is an important distinction because the spectrum of behaviors considered partner violence by the CDC is based on a public health perspective versus the more limited purview of criminal justice. Some acts of abuse, while hurtful and damaging, do not violate the penal code, while others do. What is a crime and what is not a crime is a reflection of our social attitudes around what behaviors are in the interest of society to regulate. Even the use of the term *abuse* by the CDC versus the term *violence* used by the DOJ is an important one; for what exactly is the distinction between abuse and violence? At times they seem like synonyms but at others they seem to have nuanced, qualitative differences. What I perceive from the literature on the distinction between a public health approach to IPV versus a criminological approach, is that abuse represents a broader range of behaviors including psychological and emotional acts of aggression. Violence represents those acts such as physical or sexual violence (or threats of) that violate the penal code. Despite my

reading of the literature, I am still not completely certain if these distinctions are accurate, clear or uniformly applied.

In addition to the public health and criminological approaches outlined above, there are the two approaches that this dissertation is focused on: (a) typically labeled as *feminist research*, an advocacy perspective that focuses on the pattern of power and control in an abusive relationship, typically from a male toward a female (though not exclusively), and (b) a family science perspective, labeled as *family conflict research* or *family violence research* that views partner violence as one method of addressing conflict, studied in terms of individual acts of abuse, and typically finds that both men and women are problematic perpetrators in their relationships. It is the conflict between these two perspectives that gave rise to this dissertation; therefore both of these will be discussed far more in depth than the public health and criminological frameworks. The national United States prevalence data informed by the public health and criminal databases will be highlighted in this introductory chapter.

Before continuing, it must be stated that the use of the terms feminist research and family conflict research are problematic for me for several reasons and I use them with reservation. I want to highlight that I believe that all scientific endeavor is reflective of the values and politics of a researcher, who is embedded in a specific temporal and social context, and therefore the use of the label feminist research is not to imply that family conflict research is value-free. I also want to underscore that I believe a person can be a feminist researcher and also be affiliated with the family conflict perspective (and vice versa). The reasons for this are rooted in the multitude of ways feminism can be enacted

and performed; which I will also discuss in more depth. I use the terms because they are the most easily identifiable with the division but I am hopeful that someday soon we will establish new terms that are more inclusive of the complex lived realities of researchers and scholars.

Each of the frameworks discussed define IPV differently and definitions are important when describing a phenomenon and measuring it in order to establish prevalence. Before reviewing the recent prevalence literature, it should be noted that, over the past 40 years, other national surveys have been conducted on IPV (e.g. Nisonoff & Bitman, 1979) . Some of them, such as the National Family Violence Surveys in 1975 and 1985 (Straus, 1977-1978; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980; Straus & Gelles, 1986) will be discussed in greater depth in a later chapter as they are reflective of the feminist / family conflict divide. For the purpose of discussing prevalence, only recent surveys are highlighted.

From a health-based perspective, there are several sources of fatal and non-fatal IPV data. In terms of fatality data, the FBI provides crime reports from the Uniform Crime Reports- Supplemental Homicide Reports (UCR-SHR). The CDC has two databases: the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) and the National Violence Death Reporting System (NVDRS). The NVSS is comprised of death certificates and the NVDRS is a compilation of crime reports, coroner reports and death certificates. For non-fatal sources of IPV data, there are more databases: (a) the National Incidence-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), composed of crime reports from the FBI; (b) the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS), a random dial telephone survey from the

National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the CDC; (c) the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), a national household survey from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS); (d) the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Survey (NHAMCS), composed of emergency department records housed by the CDC; (e) the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), a review of representative samples of emergency room data; and (f) the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), a random dial telephone survey from the CDC (Saltzman & Houry, 2009).

The CDC houses the National Center for Health Statistics, which collects health data from diverse sources for statistical analysis. The CDC also operates the Division of Violence Prevention, which funds several initiatives including the ongoing National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) (Black et al., 2011).

NISVS is the first ongoing survey dedicated solely to describing and monitoring these forms of violence as public health issues. It also includes information that has not previously been measured in a nationally representative survey, such as types of sexual violence other than rape, expressive psychological aggression and coercive control, and control of reproductive or sexual health. NISVS is also the first survey to provide national and state level data on IPV, SV, and stalking (CDC, 2014, para.2).

The 2010 NISVS operated throughout the 50 states, including the District of Columbia. It consisted of randomly dialing both landlines and cell phones, asking participants to self-report a variety of abuse experiences. Participants were English or Spanish-speaking and over the age of 18. A total sample of 18, 049 interviews were conducted (9, 970 women and 8,079 men) between January and December 2010.

Based on the 2010 NISVS, 35.6% of women and 28.5% of men reported a lifetime prevalence of physical violence, rape, and/or stalking by an intimate partner.

Fewer participants (roughly 3 in 10 women and 1 in 10 men) reported additional experiences of psychological and/or physical consequences of the abuse (e.g. feelings of fear, PTSD, need for medical care etc.). Almost half of women (48.4%) and men (48.8%) reported experiences of psychological abuse, while 10.7% of women and 2.1% of men reported experiences of stalking by an intimate partner. In terms of the gender breakdown for perpetration and victimization, the vast majority of women reported their perpetrators were male. For male victimization, the data was more mixed. Male victims of sexual offenses reported that their perpetrators were mostly male, while male victims of stalking reported slightly more than half of the perpetrators were female and slightly less than half were male; “Perpetrators of other forms of violence against males were mostly female” (Black et al., 2011, p. 13).

In terms of participants who identified as ‘other than heterosexual orientation’, 2.2% (200) of women and 1.2% (148) of men identified themselves as bisexual and 1.3% (118) of women identified themselves as lesbian while 2.0% (148) of men identified themselves as gay (Walters, Chen & Breiding, 2013). At first glance these numbers do not seem overly robust but it is important to place them in context.

Little is known about the national prevalence of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence among gay, lesbian, and bisexual women and men in the United States. Information at a national level focusing on these types of interpersonal violence based on the sexual orientation of United States adults has not been previously available (Walters, Chen & Breiding, 2013., p. 7).

In terms of lifetime prevalence, the numbers for gay and bisexual men were too small to reliably estimate prevalence to the population. Bisexual women had significantly higher rates of lifetime prevalence of IPV including rape (46.1%), sexual coercion

(74.9%), physical assault (61.1%) and stalking (36.6%) as compared to lesbian and heterosexual women. A greater percentage of bisexual women (57.4%) experienced consequences as a result of IPV as compared to lesbian women (33.5%) and heterosexual women (28.2%). For lesbian victims of IPV, most (67.4%) reported female perpetrators while most bisexual (89.5%) and heterosexual women (98.7%) reported male perpetrators. For gay victims of IPV, most (90.7%) reported male perpetrators while most bisexual (78.5%) and heterosexual men (99.5%) reported female perpetrators (Walters, Chen & Breiding, 2013).

Data on criminal offenses are supplied by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, using two sources: The Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program which includes the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) manages the UCR Program that began in the 1930's as a repository for local, state, university, tribal and federal criminal data. One of the key points of difference between the data supplied by the UCR Program is that unlike the NCVS and other surveys, it is not self-report and is considered a source of official data. Official data like the UCR is also affected to some degree by sampling bias and human effort. As Gelles (2000) points out, "these data are limited by the accuracy and reliability of police reports (p. 788).

In 2007, 94% of law enforcement agencies in the country participated in the UCR. The UCR collects data on offenses and arrests (not the outcome of the criminal justice procedure) in eight areas classified as type I offenses: "murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor

vehicle theft, and arson” (United States Department of Justice, 2009a, p. 2). The NIBRS is an expansion of the UCR program that began in the 1970s and collects data on each specific offense within a much broader range of 22 offense categories covering 46 different crimes. Some other key improvements in the NIBRS are that it reports male victims of rape and crimes committed with computers. In the UCR program only data on female rape victims is collected. A critical weakness of the NIBRS, as compared to the UCR, is that as of 2007, only 25% of law enforcement agencies were participating in the program (United States Department of Justice, 2009b).

Based on preliminary data from the 1995 NIBRS, 27% of violent offenses occurred between a perpetrator and victim who had a relationship, and, of those, 46% were between spouses or common law spouses. In 2011, the NIBRS published its annual report where assaults and sexual offenses were grouped by victim and perpetrator relationship but only in broad terms; total victims, family members, family member and other, known to victim and other, stranger, all other (relationship unknown or victim was the offender). Spouses were included in the ‘family member’ category while ex-spouses (along with parents, siblings, etc.), current and former boyfriends and girlfriends (including same-sex relationships) were included in the ‘known to victim’ category (along with friends, acquaintances, etc.). In 2012, out of 1,270,947 victims of type 1 crimes including assaults, homicide, kidnapping/abduction, and sex offenses (both forcible and non forcible), 22.6 % (287,210) were family members, 3.3% (41,775) were family members and other, 54.7% (695,492) were known to victim and other, 8.3% (105,943) were strangers and 11.1% (140,527) were other (United States Department



of Justice, 2012). According to the UCR website, a new report is in progress that will further examine the relationships among victims and offenders (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010). Despite the lack of detail at this point about the exact nature of the relationships between victims and offenders, it is clear that most offenders had relationships with their victims; I would hypothesize that a portion of those relationships and the violence committed between them would fit the definition of IPV.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that in 2007, based on the UCR Program and the Supplemental Homicide Reports (SHR), 2,340 individuals were murdered by their current or former partners (70% women, 30% men). Black women were twice as likely as white women to be murdered by a current or former spouse and four times as likely as white women to be murdered by a current or former boyfriend (Catalano & Smith, 2009). There are some concerns about the accuracy of the homicide data as reported by the SHR. For example, Gelles (2000, p. 788) reported:

For instance, homicides that are unsolved in 1 year may be solved with an arrest and conviction in a subsequent year. Given the high proportion of homicides in which the perpetrator and victim are intimate partners, unless police departments update their data, the UCR homicide data will undercount domestic or intimate homicides. Other limitations of the Supplemental Homicide Report (SHR) data are that some police departments do not file the SHR or file only for portions of the year. In some years, entire states fail to file reports. The SHR data have missing data problems – a large portion of the reports lack information about the offender, including the relationship between the offender and the victim. Finally, cases are misclassified.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics National Crime Victimization Survey is a self-report survey about participant experiences of both reported and unreported crime. It uses a multi-stage cluster technique to identify a sample of representative households initially

identified based on census data. Each person in a household age twelve and older is asked to participate. As this is a crime victimization survey, the questions pertain to those acts that would be criminal offenses including threats or acts of physical or sexual violence and not including many of the acts characterized as psychological and/or emotional abuse. For the 2010 data, men and women experienced violence from family and acquaintances (including friends) at similar rates, but men experienced nearly twice the rate of stranger violence, (9.5 versus 4.7 per 1,000) while women experienced greater rates of IPV (4.8 versus 1.1 per 1,000; Lauritsen & Rezey, 2013).

The National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) was conducted in 1995-1996 through a telephone administered survey with a nationally representative random sample of 8,000 men and 8,000 women, who were age 18 and over. The NVAWS asked physical assault questions from the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1990). Sexual assault questions were taken from the National Women's Study (Rape in America, 1992). The authors developed their own stalking questionnaire. The NVAWS found that 21.7% of women and 7.3% of men reported lifetime prevalence of any experience of stalking (4.1% of women, .5% of men), physical assault (20.4% of women, 7.0% of men) or forcible rape by a current or former intimate partner (4.5% of women, .2% of men). Women reported experiencing significantly greater consequences from abuse with 41.6% of women and 18.8% of men reporting injuries as a result of physical assault. Men were also less likely to report their incident to the police (13.4% of men versus 27.8% of women), or to obtain a restraining order (3.6% of men versus 17.9% of

women) and see their perpetrator prosecuted (1.4% of men versus 7.6% of women; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nation (UN) both recently released data on IPV and sexual assault prevalence. The WHO study was comprised of a review of prevalence studies from across the world concerning girls and women age 15 and older. In addition, the WHO study incorporated additional analysis from a few large multi-country surveys: the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women (Garcia-Moreno, Janson, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006); the International Violence Against Women Surveys (Johnson, Ollus, & Nevala, 2008); GENACIS: Gender, alcohol and culture: An international study (Bloomfield et al., 2005); and the Demographic and Health Surveys (Kishor & Johnson, 2004). The majority of the data reported in the WHO report (87%) came from the first three surveys, respectively. The WHO study reported that 30% of women across the world experience a lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence. The regions with the highest prevalence (~37%) were low to middle income areas in Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and South East Asia, while the next highest was the Americas (~30%). High income areas had the lowest prevalence (~23%). The high income regions were located in North America, Western Europe, Scandinavia, Japan and Australia (World Health Organization, 2013).

The United Nations recently collected survey data on male use of violence across multiple countries in Asia and in the Pacific (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Sri Lanka). It is important to note that context matters when

discussing IPV. For example, in four of the six countries surveyed, marital rape was legal (Bangladesh, China, Cambodia, and Sri Lanka). The report on the survey data makes clear that it is an “epidemiological study informed by feminist theory (p. 13).” Across multiple sites in each country, representative survey data was obtained from households based on census data that were then chosen through a multi-stage cluster sampling technique. Men that were age 18 to 49 were surveyed. If multiple men within this age group lived in a household, one was randomly chosen. Approximately 10,000 men were sampled in six countries. Reports of lifetime prevalence of perpetration of IPV (including sexual violence) ranged from 26% (Indonesia) to 80% (Papua New Guinea). In Indonesia, and in one of the sites in Cambodia, men reported perpetration of sexual violence against their partner at higher rates than physical violence. For the rest of the sites and countries the opposite was true (Fulu, Warner, Miedema, Jewkes, Roselli & Lang, 2013).

### **How Big the Problem Is, Misses How Deep the Pain Goes**

A major critique of survey methods of prevalence research about IPV is that it fails to represent what is actually happening in the lives of victims. Debate over methodological approaches to studying IPV is a part of a much larger theoretical conversation that I will visit later in greater depth. For the purpose of presenting the description and prevalence of IPV I must state that I am a mixed method researcher and therefore I see the qualitative data as providing ecological validity to the important statistics provided by survey research. Because I see the two as complementary, when possible I will present the quantitative data alongside the qualitative analysis in an effort

to provide a full picture of the phenomenon of IPV, both in statistical significance and lived experience.

Data around IPV is problematic for a number of reasons. As Saltzman & Houry (2009, p. 37) point out “many datasets are available for estimates of IPV prevalence and incidence rates. However, given the complexities around type of IPV, ongoing IPV, and annual versus lifetime prevalence, a true rate cannot be stated”. Self-report surveys in the area of IPV are also problematic because of the sensitive and taboo nature of the topic (Gelles, 2000). Therefore, the goal of creating a representative survey on the prevalence of IPV that is accurate and reflects high construct validity may be a difficult goal to achieve.

Dobash & Dobash (2004) critiqued survey methodology that asks people to delineate their partner violence experience in terms of discrete acts (e.g. a slap, a punch, a kick etc.).

...this ‘act-based’ approach to the measurement of violence is usually based on the assumption that men and women can and do provide unbiased, reliable, accounts of their own violent behavior and that of their partner. Using this approach, reports of violence and injuries from men or women, from victims or perpetrators, about oneself or about one’s partner are all treated as unproblematic and as a solid evidentiary basis for estimates of prevalence and the development of explanatory accounts (Morse, 1995; Moffitt, Caspi, Krueger, Magdol, Margolin, Silva, and Sydney, 1997; Archer, 1999). (Dobash & Dobash, 2004, p. 377).

Violent events should also be studied in the context of actions and intentions associated with the event and its aftermath. Purely ‘act-based’ approaches rarely consider contextual issues that promote fuller understandings and more adequate explanations of such events. (Dobash & Dobash, 2004, p. 377).

When thinking about the complexity of human relationships, an act of aggression from one partner or another may mean radically different things depending on the context of

that relationship. While a slap may be categorized as a minor act of violence within a survey tool, that slap may occur in the context of a long term relationship filled with high levels of fear, control and danger. For that victim, a slap may have far more emotional and psychological consequences and meaning attached to it than perhaps a more severe form of violence that happened in another relationship. Therefore, in my opinion, qualitative methodology is a critical component of any exploration of the violence in relationships.

### **Historic and Cultural Context**

The rates of IPV and social reactions to it have fluctuated widely over the course of documented human history. In the United States, widespread societal attitudes condemning partner violence are relatively recent. The abuse of women by their male partners, historically termed wife abuse, has been supported through government sanctioned and pervasive misogyny that elevated the value of men over women. This included laws and social practices that viewed women and children as property of husbands and fathers.

Dating back to laws in ancient Rome, men were allowed by society to use physical force to control and dominate their female spouses. The Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1641 supported *justified* use of force by husbands (and fathers and slave owners) but outlawed *illegitimate* use of force (Mitchell & James, 2009). In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Judge William Blackstone, in his codification of English law, attempted to protect women through the *rule of thumb*. This oft-cited phrase was an effort to limit the size of the weapons a husband may use in beating his wife, as off-putting as that may to

seem to modern sensibilities. Men were limited to the use of a weapon that was no thicker than their thumb. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, various states started legislating different approaches to domestic violence. For example, in 1824 (*Bradley v. State*), the state of Mississippi enacted legislation that men may beat their wives within the prescribed limit of the *rule of thumb* without fear of criminal prosecution. In 1871, Alabama took away husbands right to use violence against his wife and in 1883, Maryland was the first state to make the practice of wife abuse a criminal act. Throughout the 1800s the growing Women's movement, Temperance movement and the Abolitionist movements pushed for social and legal changes in the status quo that had established wives as property of their husbands. The Married Women's Property Act was enacted by most states at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was legislation that gave limited property rights to women and made spouse abuse grounds for a woman to divorce her husband. Due to the common practice of *spousal immunity*, wives were typically prevented from suing their husbands for damages resulting from assault (Berry, 1998; Mitchell & James, 2009).

An even more common barrier to the movement against domestic violence were social attitudes such as the idea that violence was a *private* family matter and that outside involvement would be detrimental to family harmony. This was in addition to the idea that, under some circumstances, a husband's use of physical violence against a wife was appropriate. In reference to the above two points, the role of society was focused more on the idea of limiting the amount of force a husband may use against a wife rather than eliminating it in its entirety (Berry, 1998).

It was not until the 1960s and 1970s in the United States and Great Britain that several forms of grass roots social movements prompted change, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave Feminist movement, the Rape Crisis movement, and the Battered Women's movement. It was during this time that formal shelters for female victims started operating. The first one in the United States was opened in California. The first book about domestic violence "Scream Quietly or The Neighbors Will Hear" was released in 1974 by Erin Pizzey in Great Britain. In 1980, the Domestic Violence Intervention Project was founded in Duluth, Minnesota. It began the work of addressing domestic violence against women through coordinated community efforts of various systems including criminal justice, social services and mental health. The DVIP is commonly referred to as the Duluth Model and represents a foundational feminist-based effort to address domestic violence (Berry, 1998; Shepard & Pence, 1999). In the 1980s there was a renewed focus on the criminal justice system's response to IPV. In *Thurman v. city of Torrington* damages were awarded to a victim for an inappropriate response to an IPV call by police officers. A study in Minneapolis by Sherman & Berk (1984) indicated that mandatory arrest policies were important for preventing recidivism on the part of IPV perpetrators, heightening the role of the criminal justice system in addressing IPV.

In the 1990s the largest piece of domestic violence legislation, the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was introduced by now Vice President Joe Biden and was passed as a part of the Violent Crime and Control Act of 1994. The various provisions of VAWA included requirements for states to coordinate community responses to domestic violence, to ensure that orders of protections would be followed



across states, territories and tribal lands, and to offer protections for immigrant victims (Office on Violence Against Women, 2009).

My perspective is that the legislation of IPV as a crime at the federal, state and local level is a victory for human rights. I believe that a legislative system that does not support equality and human rights of every citizen (including children) through outlawing this kind of violence is a system that will support human rights abuses. However, the enforcement of those laws, including identifying that a crime has been committed, establishing appropriate consequences, and the prosecution of perpetrators remain problematic.

The police are the primary means by which a private crime of domestic violence is introduced into the criminal justice system. Historically, police officers and prosecutors were criticized for allowing perpetrators to go free because of prevailing social attitudes that minimized domestic violence (Horowitz et al., 2011). Sherman and colleagues demonstrated through some early studies that mandatory and pro-arrest policies help alleviate domestic violence under certain circumstances (such as the level of perpetrator conformity which is how much a person is concerned with adhering to social norms) (Sherman & Berk, 1984a, 1984b; Sherman, 1991, 1992; Sherman et al., 1992; Maxwell, Garner & Fagan, 2001, 2002). In order to combat the low rates of arrest and prosecution in domestic violence cases and based on the research of Sherman and colleagues, many states enacted mandatory arrest and no-drop prosecution policies. Critics of these policies reported that in an effort to increase the enforcement of domestic violence laws, the voices of victims and their ability to influence the process were compromised (Mills,

2003). In addition, police officers and prosecutors expressed frustration when victims failed to follow through with pressing charges or testifying against their perpetrators, leading to a sense of “burnout” when working with domestic violence cases (Horwitz et al., 2011). Restorative justice approaches have recently grown in popularity; they include options for non-punitive consequences for crimes of IPV while still holding perpetrators accountable within the contexts of their families and communities (Fernandez, 2010).

Despite the criticisms of the criminal justice solutions to IPV, there is still a need for social safety nets for victims and the insufficiency in what is provided. Activists must continually advocate for maintaining or increasing financial and structural support for victims of domestic violence (Felter, 1997, p. 16). Even as IPV emerges as a mainstream topic of conversation rather than a private, family matter, many of the structural inequalities that preserved sexism are still relevant. This creates “the paradox of state power- a state which both promises women protection, but protects the interests of men” (Daniels, 1997, p.1). I would also add that the structural inequalities that perpetuate racism, classism, ageism, ableism and heterosexism are also highly relevant and in many ways limit the effectiveness of state power to remedy IPV in the lives of those most vulnerable.

### **Different Theoretical Etiologies of Partner Violence**

The study of IPV has produced several different theoretical approaches. Some the most predominant include: Social Learning Theory, Cognitive-Behavioral Theories, Social Exchange and Investment Models, Family Systems Theory, Relational Control and Communication Models, Life Course Perspective, Conflict Theory, Feminist Theory,

Biological, Behavioral Health and Ecological Models. Some of the areas such as Social Learning Theory, Cognitive-Behavioral Theories, Social Exchange and Investment Models, Relational Control and Communication Models, Life Course Theory and Ecological Models are prevalent in mainstream understandings of IPV and inform most conversations about the topic, regardless of the primary theoretical approach. Therefore these areas will be discussed briefly but not given greater attention in later chapters. In addition, the biological and/or genetic approaches to understanding IPV and violence are ones that in my opinion are distinctly separate from any of the other approaches discussed here. As they are rather isolated in their influence, they will only be discussed here and not in their own chapter. The topics of Family Systems Theory, Conflict Theory, Feminist Theory and Behavioral Health Approaches are given greater attention because of their impact on current divisions in the field.

Social Learning Theory refers to the transmission of violence from parents, families, communities and the greater society through the mechanism of modeling violent behaviors to children as a an appropriate problem-solving tactic. Violence is rewarded and it is intertwined with positive experiences of love and attachment. Cognitive-Behavioral Theory is similar to Social Learning Theory in that individuals are exposed to scripts of thinking and action at an early age which are first encoded and then enacted. Social Exchange and Investment Models refer to the cost-benefit ratio analysis that any person in a relationship calculates at various points. When violence is present it may be offset or outweighed for the victim by other benefits and investments such as children, emotional attachment to the perpetrator, or a lack of alternative options or outside

resources. Relational Control and Communication Models refer to the idea that aggression is a form of unhealthy communication aimed at controlling the other person. While this idea is somewhat common to understandings of IPV, there are a few scholars who disagree with the idea that violence is about control. Dr. Richard Felson, who was interviewed for this dissertation, is one of them and his work will be discussed in a later chapter. Another somewhat controversial idea in this model is the idea that both partners play a role in violent communication. This concept stems in part from Family Systems Theory and will be discussed later in terms of its connection to ‘early victim blaming’ approaches to IPV and how that association still resonates today. Life Course Perspectives asserts that IPV is interwoven into a much larger pattern that takes into the account the unique history and path of the relationship in question, normative and non-normative life events, and the attitudes about violence both within the relationship and the greater society.

Biological approaches to violence in many ways operate in their own academic silo. This approach looks at violence as an inherent part of human nature, correlated with genetics, related to built-in neurobiological systems, or the result of a structural dysfunction in the brain. Rather than viewing violence as reflective of a problem within the individual, the family or the society at large, it looks at violence in humans much the way humans study violence in our distant primate relatives. Evolutionary psychologists argue that the success of our ancestors was dependent upon their capacity to exert brutal and effective violence. This led those ancestors with genes that promoted violent behaviors to successfully reproduce and murder less violent competitors and concludes

that we are the result of this genetic inheritance (King, 2012). Anti-social behavior has been shown through twin studies to have some genetic connection along with a genetic correlation between anti-social behavior and alcohol abuse disorders, but there is less empirical evidence for a direct genetic influence on aggressive behavior (Mitchell & Vanya, 2009). Dysfunction of the brain itself either through brain damage, brain tumors, or structural abnormalities is also considered a biological risk factor for violence. The biology of sex and the influence of hormones, particularly testosterone and cortisol, trace the etiology of male violence to the effect of these hormones on the brain. A similar neurobiological approach looks at the role of dopamine and serotonin in influencing aggression (King, 2012). While there is evidence that each of the approaches have some explanatory merit, they remain difficult concepts to accept as the full explanation: the capacity for aggression is within us all to varying degrees and it is nurtured and primed by environmental influences. In my opinion the reason for this is that if we accept as a society that the propensity towards violence is more strongly connected to factors that are outside of an individual's ability to control, than it does not make sense to have a criminal justice system that punishes such behavior. It therefore remains to be seen how much of these various approaches will be incorporated into mainstream models of understanding, preventing, and treating IPV. Later chapters will have sections devoted to more specific topics because of their direct relation to the divisions in the field of partner violence. The next chapter will elucidate further the debate between the feminist and family conflict frameworks.

**Chapter 2:**  
**The Great Divide**

As discussed in the previous chapter, prior to the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, a discussion of violence in the home was typically limited to the contexts of the temperance, religious and suffrage movements. With the rise of the women's movement, the plight of battered wives and abusive husbands became an important social concern. Feminists sought to establish protection for wives in the forms of laws that made IPV a crime and to build up systems of safety, support and resources. The primary emphasis was on protecting women and children from violent fathers and husbands.

During the 1970s, sociologists began researching violence in the family and this growth in research happened at the same time that new epistemologies and methodologies were also emerging in the field. In any historic analysis of IPV, it is important to remember that activists around domestic violence, fighting to save women's lives, were the ones who brought it to the light through grassroots efforts and organizing. Once it became more public, academics and scholars were finally able to research it in depth and began to have an academic discourse about it. I believe it is critical to keep in mind these two aspects of the beginning of this story: that new methodologies were also emerging in the social sciences and that activists working on the ground were the ones to force the issue into public awareness.

As I reviewed the literature it became helpful for me to organize it by decade. While I attempted to highlight the more seminal articles, books and book chapters published over the past 40 plus years, this review was by no means exhaustive. Additionally, many pieces of this story unfolded at conferences, in personal exchanges,

and in classrooms and were out of my reach. I reviewed in their own chapters pieces of literature that captured more about behavioral health approaches and criminal justice/critical criminology. I also caution that I focused my review on pieces and sections of various articles and books that interested me and increased my knowledge. Sometimes that meant that I highlighted the more provocative elements of a given work. Every work had pieces and parts that I did not address. By attempting to review only certain parts of these works, I did an injustice to their depth and complexity. I encourage readers to refer to the original source material for greater context and a more nuanced understanding of what each work was attempting to explore.

### **1970-1979**

In 1971, the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* published a special double issue about sexism in family studies, with the second part focused on family violence. Many of the articles focused on violence by parents against children or more generalized family violence, but at least three spoke in some way to violence between spouses: *Force and Violence in the Family* (Goode, 1971), *Violence Potential in Extramarital Sexual Responses* (Whitehurst, 1971), and *Violence in Divorce Prone Families* (O'Brien, 1971). Goode (1971) highlighted the role of force in the function of the family, but only explicitly applied this idea to child abuse. Whitehurst (1971) reported on the aggressive socialization practices of men that inhibit harmonious intimate relationships but also noted "female's tendency to aggravate quite subtly scenes of violence (p. 687)." O'Brien (1971) reported on results from a study of 150 divorcing families and found that one sixth reported violence of husbands against wives; these were typically men who had some



form of status inconsistency with their superior male role and who used force and coercive control to regain power in the family. This was the first in depth academic exploration in a journal that I could find about IPV and it was interesting to me both how outdated some of the analysis seemed and, on the other hand, how similar many of the theoretical arguments were to those espoused by some contemporary scholars

Erin Pizzey's *Scream Quietly or the Neighbors Will Hear* (1977) was an outgrowth of her work with abused women and founding of the first known shelter in the world, Chiswick Women's Aid. Originally released in 1974 in Great Britain, it was published in the US in 1977. In the introduction she described the various programs Chiswick Women's Aid offered and the fight to keep the doors open to any woman. The story of the first shelters or refuges throughout Europe was both awe-inspiring and terrifying. As a woman in 2014, it was almost hard to imagine living in a place or time where domestic violence shelters did not exist. Growing up in the United States, my entire formative understanding of domestic violence was shaped by the shelter system. Pizzey and other activists fought many obstacles to open safe places for women and children to escape from their abusers. Pizzey also addressed men by saying:

But I bitterly regret that we had to close the project for husbands because of a lack of funds. This work was done with the cooperation of the violent partner, who admitted his violence and discussed his rage and anger, in the safe and secure understanding that we did not consider him a brute but a badly damaged child. The fact that our arms were open to fathers, as well as mothers and children, was invaluable. One day we will continue this work but at present we have to concentrate on what we can with our limited resources (p. 5).

She addressed women's use of violence as well. "Many women, as we know from our experiences, have been as violent as the men they have left and also batter their children

(p.6)” but that, “The few women who are violent themselves are the exceptions. Most women are innocent of any provocation (pg. 34).”

Pizzey’s book was the powerful account of how a group of women came together to find connection in the midst of isolation and found instead the need for a place for women and children to escape from violent husbands and fathers. It was about how women who in escaping their abusers became in turn helpers of other abused women, and created the infrastructure of the program that would start the domestic violence shelter-based system that exists today. In more recent years, Pizzey has turned her attention to women’s use of violence and has sparked significant controversy in the area of feminist scholarship and activism. She is respected as a pioneer in the field but is also viewed as controversial figure.

Del Martin’s *Battered Wives* was published in 1976 and was the first discussion of the epidemic of wife abuse in America. Martin was a close collaborator of Pizzey’s and built on her work to highlight the grassroots efforts of shelters across America and abroad. Particularly interesting to me as a resident of Minnesota was the story of Women’s Advocates, a grassroots organization in St. Paul Minnesota, which opened their first shelter in 1974 and may have been the first shelter specifically designed to assist victims of domestic violence in the United States. It remains open today. Del Martin was an important figure in the United States battered women’s movement. The National Organization for Women (NOW) appointed Martin to co-chair a task force about the problem of battered women the same year that her book was published.

In the early 1970s, Murray Straus and his colleagues Richard Gelles and Suzanne Steinmetz began researching violence in the family. Much of the literature they wrote during the early and mid 1970s used gender, inequality and sexual asymmetry as primary organizing frameworks to their work. In his 1973 paper, Straus applied a general systems approach to the ubiquity of family violence because, the “theory views continuing violence as a systemic product rather than a product of individual behavior pathology (Straus, 1973, p. 105).” In that paper and his 1975, 1977 and 1979 papers, Straus discussed inequality and male dominance as one of the primary causes of conjugal violence; ideas typically associated with a feminist interpretation of violence (Straus, 1976, 1977; Allen & Straus, 1979).

The year 1977 was important because the journal of *Victimology* published a special issue about domestic violence in which Straus wrote an article *Wife Beating: How Common and Why?* (Straus, 1977-1978), Rebecca and Russell Dobash out of the United Kingdom published *Wives: The ‘Appropriate’ Victims of Marital Violence* (Dobash & Dobash, 1977-1978a) and *Wife Beating: The Victims Speak* (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Wilson, 1977-1978b), and Suzanne Steinmetz published *The Battered Husband Syndrome* (Steinmetz, 1977-1978). These became major voices and articles in the scholarly discourse about IPV in the years to come. At the same time that Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz were engaging in their work, Rebecca and Russell Dobash in the United Kingdom began their own line of investigation into IPV. This special issue in *Victimology* was the first instance that I could find of these two groups of scholars engaging in some form of academic discourse in the peer- reviewed literature, but it was

only the beginning of a long-standing conversation that continues to this day. For many, the clashes between Straus and the Dobash's work that would emerge over the next few years and the backlash to Steinmetz's article about battered husbands, is where the divide between the feminists and the family violence scholars began, at least in the literature. In that special double issue, the first rejoinder to Steinmetz's article *The Battered Data Syndrome: A Comment on Steinmetz's Article* was published (Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, & Bart, 1977-1978).

The first article by the Dobash's, *Wives: The 'Appropriate' Victims of Marital Violence*, was an examination of the phenomenon of abuse against women within the patriarchal societal constructs that supported it and gave it legitimacy for so long. They state:

There is considerable variation in the social meaning and the physical consequences of the acts involving force which occur between husbands and wives. This includes periodic slapping or pushing and shoving, which rarely if ever escalates and is not intended to result in serious injury or intimidation; repeated punching and kicking which is intended to do injury and to severely intimidate the victim but not to kill them (although this sometimes happens); and violence with the intention to kill. These behaviors differ in terms of motivations, purposes and coerciveness and should not be seen as necessarily cumulative or progressive. In this paper, we are not concentrating upon the least serious category, slapping and shoving, but upon homicides and especially upon the more severe and systematic assaults involving kicking and punching intended to injure and seriously intimidate (p. 427).

Dobash & Dobash (1977-1978) were clear that they were speaking particularly to the more severe end of the abuse spectrum in this article. They commented directly on the work of Straus and Steinmetz by saying that, while they and others report on the high levels of violence in the home, they "often failed to note that this violence is not randomly distributed among family members but is disproportionately directed at females

(p. 433).” The Dobash’s were referring specifically to homicides and severe assaults resulting in injury. In their second article in the volume, Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Wilson (1977-1978b), *Wife Beating: the Victims Speak*, they described a semi-structured, open-ended qualitative interviewing technique they used with women who had been violently attacked by their husbands and the results of three such interviews. They described the reason behind this methodological decision was because “we learned during the pilot study that attempts to explore theoretical issues through the use of abstracted questions or scales gave us very little information (p. 609).” They also noted that this technique allowed them to interweave aspects of historical and social analysis that were particularly relevant to the experience of violence against women. The stories shared in that article are difficult to read; they are intense, violent and incredibly brutal and clearly demonstrate cases of women who are trapped by societal infrastructure from leaving men who may kill them. The phrase she returned “because she has nowhere else to go” (p. 617) was stated in various ways, by the women themselves and by the authors. Reading the following statement through the lens of history and the voices of the women in the interviews was shocking, “until 1972 there was no place where women could go in order to escape the beatings they were receiving from their husbands” (p. 621). These articles, similar to Pizzey’s book, reinforced for me how necessary a shelter system is for victims of IPV.

Straus (1977-1978), *Wife Beating: How Common and Why?*, was the first presentation of results from the National Family Violence Survey, with the full results presented in the 1980 book, *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family*,

discussed in the next section. Both the article and the book described results using the Conflict Tactics Scales (initially called the Conflict Resolution Techniques); Straus described the development and validation of the CTS in detail in a 1979 article. I highlight this because of the controversy concerning the Conflict Tactics Scales. In the 1977-1978 article, Straus described wife-beating as a political term without an objective measure but described how he, Steinmetz and Gelles devised the solution to “gather data on a continuum of violent acts, ranging from a push to using a knife or a gun. This lets anyone draw the line at whatever place seems most appropriate for their purpose (p. 444).” Beating was categorized as at least one positive response to questions that included kicking, biting, hitting, hitting with an object, beat up, threatened with knife or gun or use of knife or gun over the past year. Straus (1977) reported that of the 2,143 couples surveyed, 3.8% reported husband beating and 4.6% reported wife beating. Because of the rate of reported husband beating, Straus (1977-1978) made this statement: “The old cartoons of the wife chasing a husband with a rolling pin or throwing pots and pans are closer to reality than most (and especially those with feminist sympathies) realize (p. 448).” There was the implication that those with feminist sympathies are out of touch with reality. Throughout the rest of the article, everything else presented by Straus struck me as balanced and fair; it was just that one turn of phrase that sat negatively with me. Straus (1977-1978) went on to write that “Although these findings show high rates of violence *by wives*, this should not divert attention from the need to give primary attention to wives *as victims* as the immediate focus of social policy” (p. 448) and gave reasons such as the higher level of repeated and severe husband-to-wife violence, the lack of

clarity of how much violence by wives is in the context of abuse, the large proportion of abuse while women are pregnant and the limitations on women's ability to leave their abusive marriages. He ended the article by pointing to the two main contributions to the high rates of wife-beating, namely sexual inequality and the violence of the greater society.

In *The Battered Husband Syndrome* (Steinmetz, 1977-1978a), Steinmetz focused on how beaten husbands were viewed by larger society; why the phenomenon was not given attention and then provided examples from the empirical literature. Steinmetz wrote: "Surprisingly, the data suggest that not only the percentage of wives having used physical violence often exceeds that of husbands, but that wives also exceed husbands in the frequency with which these acts occur" (p. 503). She also suggested that the reason society does not pay attention to battered husbands is because of the greater likelihood of injury when a man of greater physical strength attacks a woman. She concluded by stating: "This paper is not intended to de-emphasize the importance of providing services to beaten wives, but to increase our awareness of the pervasiveness of all forms of family violence (p. 507)." What I found interesting about this original article that has inspired so much controversy over the past 30 years, is that when it is compared to the contemporary articles, it is relatively sedate.

Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, & Bart (1977-1978) replied to Steinmetz (1977-1978a) in the same issue. My response to the tone of the article was similar to my reaction to Straus's words. In the first paragraph they wrote:

We deplore violence and share Suzanne Steinmetz's concern that our society should deal with the "basic social and cultural conditions" which encourage it.

However, this aim is not served by obscuring the social costs and consequences of violence by the stronger against the weaker, nor by the misleading description of research findings and selective citation of supporting evidence (p. 680).

In my opinion, there is a line between critiquing someone's work with the assumption that a scholar's choice of interpretation and representation of facts are assumed to be a consequence of the information they have available and intellectual decisions they are making. Both of which can be critiqued in a scholarly and professional manner. With the opening of their article, Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, & Bart (1977-1978) seemed to imply that Steinmetz was intentionally misleading readers about the rates of husband abuse and making a systematic effort to distract from the consequences of male violence against women. They went on to critique the data she presents using terms like "irresponsible (p.680)", "entirely inadequate (p.681)", "fallacious (p. 681)", "astounding (p. 682)", and "naïve (p. 682)." Though the information they reported is actually quite helpful in interpreting and critiquing Steinmetz's article, it is presented using words and tone that could be perceived as attacking and experienced as hurtful. I believe the answer to why they used such a style is explained by how they describe Steinmetz's work being used by public groups and legislature to impact policy.

It is beyond the scope of our critique to consider the responsibility of social scientists to accurately represent data in scholarly articles and to the public. Nonetheless, the fact that congressional representatives and millions of newspaper readers will believe that a federally-funded study showed that "more men than women are victims of domestic violence" is a serious cause for alarm. We are frankly disturbed by the quality of the scholarship represented in this article. If the topic were of only mild interest to the public, it would only be a question of scholarly standards. If the results of the article were not being widely disseminated, we would be less concerned. But the combination of the social importance of the topic and the wide dissemination of the "findings" poses a most serious issue for our profession (p. 683).



This idea that the work of the family conflict scholars was a serious threat to the lives of abused women is one that I will highlight repeatedly in this debate, though this was the first clear instance when I found it in a peer-reviewed journal article. Despite my understanding of why such facts would influence a scholar to be more aggressive in their critique of another's work, it does not prevent me from also seeing how such approaches can inhibit civilized discourse.

Steinmetz (1977-1978b) published a reply to the Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, & Bart's (1977-1978) critique in the same special issue. Point by point she addressed their criticism but her tone, in response, was similar to theirs. She peppered her reply with statements such as "I'm surprised they failed to notice" (p. 684), and "I can only express amazement" (p. 684). She suggested the authors review "almost any introductory anthropology text" (p. 684), reminded the reader that her goal for writing the paper was to bring scholarly attention to the issue and that "any goals beyond these are fantasies in the minds of my critics" (p. 684). She ended the reply by saying:

I am disturbed, however, by my critic's convoluted "logic" and by the great extent to which they have gone to locate "errors" in an attempt to discredit the findings. Their comments regarding my concern with under-reporting among husbands; or my alleged biases in reporting data; or my selectivity in "approving" of certain examples; or my failure to note that wives may have been provoked into abusing their husbands are uncomfortably similar to the responses which greeted those reporting on wife abuse only a few years ago (p. 684).

I saw these exchanges, those of the Dobash's and Straus's, but more particularly, Steinmetz and her critics, as the opening rounds in the battle between two approaches to investigating and addressing IPV.

In a 1984 review of the emergence of *The Battered Husband*, Pagelow wrote this account:

It began in 1977 when, during a scholarly meeting, Steinmetz presented a paper entitled “The Battered Husband Syndrome”, a title she later used for an article (1978a) . . . The very idea of husband battering seemed to titillate the collective imagination of the mass media. *Time* magazine, which never devoted more than a few inches of column space to battered wives, published a full page on “The Battered Husbands” (1978, 69) . . . Fascinated reporters and national talk show hosts latched onto the topic and telecast interviews from coast to coast. Eventually the claim of 250,000 battered husbands exploded into 12 million battered husbands (Storch 1978) and spread internationally . . . the image of thousands, perhaps millions, of husbands suffering as much as wives appeared to trivialize the issue and minimize the needs of battered wives, sometimes resulting in withdrawal of funding. One participant at a White House meeting on family violence in 1978 reported that her group was refused funding for a shelter for battered women and their children on the basis of *discrimination against men* because the group was unprepared and unequipped to offer identical shelter and services to battered husbands (Pagelow, 1984, p. 267-269).

Some of the arguments Pagelow made against the idea of the battered husband syndrome was that, while a few men may be physically weaker than their spouses or without resources with which to leave, this was not true for most men. Pagelow made the point that, while some men are assaulted by their spouses, few were subject to the long term coercive use of control and violence that many women experience. Therefore while the small percentage of men who were victimized by their spouses needed support groups and access to legal help, there was no need to create the same wide spectrum of intervention and services that were needed by battered women, particularly in the form of safe housing.

The next issue of *Victimology* in 1978 published another exchange between Steinmetz and a different set of critics, this time Fields & Kirchner (1978). *Battered Women Are Still in Need* (Fields & Kirchner, 1978) started out with saying:

Steinmetz's essay on violence against husbands is filled with baseless conjecture which gives substance to what had been a latent backlash against the movement to aid battered wives (p. 216).

They went on to describe how Steinmetz's article was successfully used to defeat funding efforts for a battered women's shelter, the same as described by Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, & Bart (1977-1978). They peppered their critique of the data she presented in the *The Battered Husband* with more personally critical phrases. These included things like "Steinmetz indulges in a little flim-flam" (p. 216), "Steinmetz's notion . . . is nonsense" (p. 221), and "preposterous conjecture" (p. 221). Fields & Kirchner (1978) stated that battered husbands need and deserve the same protections as battered wives but while it is "equally serious" it is "quantitatively less significant" (p. 222). Overall, once again I found that the critique that Fields & Kirchner (1978) offered of Steinmetz's data was helpful and interesting but that the occasional use of negative personal language was distracting and unproductive.

Steinmetz (1978) replied to Field & Kirchner (1978) by identifying some of the same things that I saw. She stated:

However, labeling research which may not fit one's expectations or ideology, as "baseless conjecture", "flim-flam" and "nonsense" does nothing to either further our insights on family violence or provide help to battered women (p. 223).

I strongly agreed with this statement. In addition, Steinmetz (1978) pointed out the same thing I noticed, which was how Field & Kirchner (1978) referenced the Pleck et al. (1977) article to describe how Steinmetz's article was used to defeat funding for a shelter for battered women. Steinmetz replied:

Had they chosen to investigate this claim instead of simply citing Pleck et al. (1977), they might have discovered that my article simply provided a convenient

rationalization for those individuals whose proposal was turned down for very different reasons. Yet the myth is perpetuated apparently because it is much more tantalizing than reality.

Whether it is true or not that Steinmetz's work was used against funding shelters is debatable, but I believe it is necessary that such a critique is made carefully and with substantiation. Steinmetz also used some pointed and personal language that seems unhelpful. In responding to Field & Kirchner (1978), she said "their comments suggest that they suffer from a lack of statistical sophistication (p. 223)" and "to suggest this . . . is rather ridiculous (p. 223)." She went on to make an argument that it was important for the field to use the conversation and debate prompted by her original article as energy to drive forward the research on violence between spouses. While the field has certainly moved forward in many ways, there are many elements of the modern debate that are exactly the same as these initial volleys.

In 1978, the US Commission on Civil rights released *Battered women: Issues of Public Policy*. The publication, which had many contributing feminist scholars, presented a framework for understanding IPV. Del Martin wrote/presented the introduction and framed the commission within the historical role of women in society and the systemic nature of patriarchy in general and patriarchy within marriage. Murray Straus also wrote a chapter, framing his work in the context of how common all forms of domestic violence are in US families, using data published in his next book *Behind Closed Doors*, which was released in 1980.

The Dobash's published *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against Patriarchy* in 1979. This was both an historical and a sociological examination of violence against

wives in the context of patriarchy and an elucidation of more contextual and ecologically embedded methodologies. In the introduction they said:

This book is the outcome of a continual process of working on a form of social science which is aimed at explaining social issues, not just measuring them and at providing evidence which relates to social action. This process engages us in going beyond the narrow concerns of most technical and academic research, requiring us to consider not only how one conducts better research but also how one's research relates to the wider social, economic, and political world which it will enter as part of the continuing intellectual and political discourse (p. x).

They grounded this advent of new methodologies as connected to a crisis in the field of sociology about the limitations of logical positivism in the social sciences. They questioned the usefulness of trying to find and apply general theories about violence and instead advocated for investigating violence within the relationship when it occurred.

This search for general laws and abstract theories is aptly illustrated in the general systems approach to society, the family, and family violence. Family sociologists who adopt this perspective argue that we should replace existing approaches to the family with the general systems approach. The promise of a general systems theory is, according to its proponents, that it can be applied to any type of system, human, mechanical, or biological. Following this methodology Straus presented data relating to husband-wife violence that emphasized power and dominance. . . . The general systems model removes people from the family setting, human beings with historically shaped motives, values, and intentions, and relates abstract concepts to other concepts, ignoring the historical and interactive aspects of the family. . . . We reject this extremely abstract method and think that the more general and abstract the approaches to interpersonal violence become, the less useful they are in the understanding of violence (p. 25-26).

Dobash & Dobash (1979) mentioned various ideas that are hallmarks of what is seen as a traditional feminist approach to IPV. In particular they discussed how harmful gender neutral terminologies like 'spousal violence' or 'marital violence' were because:

These terms imply that each marital partner is equally likely to play the part of perpetrator or victim in a violent episode, that the frequency and severity of the physical force used by each is similar; and that the social meaning and consequences of these acts are the same. None of this is true (p. 11-12).

They continued to say:

Sociologists who propose that “violence in the family affects just about everyone” or that “the marriage license is a hitting license” are not specific enough and miss the point. They ignore or fail to consider what most of the general public knows and what research reports indicate: physical force between adults in the family is overwhelmingly directed at women. The home is a dangerous place for women (and children) and markedly less dangerous for men. This is the crucial point. This is what requires understanding and has been overlooked by many social scientists (p.19-20).

By ‘sociologists’ and ‘many social scientists’, the implication was clear that, at the top of the Dobash’s list were Straus, Steinmetz and Gelles.

The same year that the Dobash’s published their book, Straus published the first seminal article about the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS), though it was developed and used throughout the 1970s (Straus, 1979). It remains one of the most widely used and cited violence measurement tools in the social sciences, both in its original form, the CTS, and its adapted form, the CTS II. Straus described that from a conflict theory perspective, all social groups need conflict in order to adapt, change and resolve accumulated hostilities. He then defined conceptual differences between conflicts of interests, the means by which conflict is managed, and the hostility or negative affect between two parties. The CTS is a measure of the tactics that people use when resolving conflicts of interests, i.e. reasoning, verbal aggression and physical violence. It is not exclusively a measure of IPV; it can also be used with child abuse, sibling violence and child to parent violence. The first prompt of the instrument sets the stage that all families have disagreements and use a variety of tactics to resolve these conflicts.

**1980-1989**

*Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family* (Straus, Gelles, &

Steinmetz, 1980) was released in 1980 and summarized the research from the first

National Family Violence Survey, which used the CTS. In the introduction they stated:

. . . while wife abuse has captured our attention, this does not mean that husbands are not “abused”. In fact, when we appear on television and radio discussing the “problem” of wife abuse, we frequently receive telephone calls from men who explain that they are victims of “husband abuse” and ask for equal time from researchers. One such caller pleaded that battered husbands fare far worse than battered wives because they do not have “men’s groups” and a National Organization of Men to argue their cause . . . It is important that we should not be misdirected by “politics of social problems”, which focus attention on issues such as wife abuse and child abuse. These are indeed of major concern. But the larger problem we are facing is not one of a single class of people, sex, or age group in the family being the most victimized. As the historical data show, and as the statistics we review in the following section bear out, the problem is one of *family violence* (p.12).

They went on to say that men and women are closer in their aggressive tendencies than is typically portrayed and that in many situations it is mutual versus unilateral aggression that is happening. They described “. . . the real surprise lies in the statistics on husband-beating. These rates were slightly higher than those for wife-beating! (p. 40).” Though they repeated many different times and in many different ways that women were as violent and perhaps more violent than men, they also contextualized this finding. They made it clear that their focus was on protecting women because:

Even though wives are also violent, they are in the weaker, more vulnerable position in respect to violence in the family. This applies to both the physical, psychological, and the economic aspects of things. That is the reason we give first priority to aiding wives who are the victims of beatings by their husbands. At the same time, the violence *by* wives uncovered in this study suggests that a fundamental solution to the problem of wife-beating has to go beyond a concern for how to control assaulting husbands (43-44).

Gelles (1980a) provided a review of research in the 1970s. He described that research conducted with women who name themselves as abused, done by researchers such as the Dobash & Dobash (1979), Walker (1979) and himself (Gelles, 1974), created bias in the research results. In describing the results from National Family Violence Survey, he said:

The same survey found that 4.6 percent of the wives admitted or were reported by their husbands as having engaged in violence which was included in the researchers "Husband Abuse Index." This piece of data, as reported by Steinmetz (1978a) in her article on "battered husbands" set off a major controversy in the study of family violence in the seventies. Steinmetz was accused by her critics (see Pleck et al., 1978) of having misstated and misrepresented the data. While there were significant political overtones to the debate and discussion, it became apparent that the presentation of only the incidence data did not fully represent the different experiences and consequences of violence experienced by men as opposed to women. As the decade closed, the investigators were still attempting to clarify and interpret the data on violence towards men (Gelles, 1979; Straus, 1980; p. 877-878).

Gelles (1980a) also went on to discuss the 'the woozle effect'. This was a phenomenon based on a term from a Winnie the Pooh story of taking a statistic in an article that was written in the context of several caveats and limitations and then reported several times without those caveats and limitations so that it became viewed as fact. He described this as happening with a statistic he reported in Gelles (1974) that 55% of the families drawn from police and social service agency records reported marital violence.

By the time Langley and Levy cited the figure in 1977, it had become so widely cited that Langley and Levy used it to extrapolate an incidence estimate for all married women and concluded that 28 million women were abused each year! (p. 880).

I highlight this term 'the woozle effect' because it emerged again in the 2000s as a tactic used to attack some scholars professional abilities and ethics. Gelles (1980) also



commented that the Dobash & Dobash (1979) argument of the causal effect of patriarchy “has the major drawback of being a theory which is essentially a single-factor (patriarchy) explanation of violence towards women (p.882).” In addition to this article, Gelles published a response to Dobash & Dobash (1979) in the journal *Society*. In that piece he said that no one could disagree that women were the primary victims of severe interpersonal aggression and that patriarchal social systems were a major causal factor but went on to say that their “fervor and single-mindedness” creates a book that is “flawed, narrow and often naïve (p. 87).” He said that they “distort the evidence and theory to fit their cause (p. 87)” and then provided a more specific critique using additional words like “limited” and “dogmatic (p. 88).”

In 1981, Dobash & Dobash published an article titled *Social Science and Social Action: the Case of Wife Beating* where they situated the social scientist within the systems that influence the social phenomenon that they sought to study, in this case wife beating. They provided a brief history of the intense efforts at social change that grassroots organizers had to make in order to increase the number of shelters for abused women from none in 1970 to 135 across the United Kingdom by 1980. The Dobashes described the prevalence of logical positivism in the social sciences and the failures of such a paradigm when attempting to solve complex social problems with research. Instead, they offered alternative approaches including an in-depth, contextual interviewing process typically used by ethnographers. “In deciding to use this approach, we explicitly rejected the use of large probability samples that must invariably employ superficial questionnaires and interviews using abstract categories relating to

preconceived and often irrelevant issues (p. 448).” They critiqued survey methodology as a clear example of a logical positivist approach to the study of violence against women but say “these criticisms do not constitute a rejection of the social survey in toto. But rather an objection to its application to complex problems and to an unflinching reliance on it as a complete and sure route to knowledge (p. 449).” The next section of the article was a resounding critique and rejection of the work of Straus, Steinmetz and Gelles. They focused first on the assertion of gender symmetry in the perpetration of violence. Dobash & Dobash (1981) stated that the questions asked in the CTS fail to assess context or injury; for example if a man punched a woman that would likely result in a far more serious injury than if a woman punched a man. They also cited the failure of the CTS to assess whether a person’s use of violence was within the context of self-defense. The Dobashes highlighted the problems with the development of the scale, for example the combining of threatened, attempted and actual acts of violence. The scoring categorizes acts by degrees of risk, for example, trying to hit using an object being viewed as ‘high risk’ while slapping is not. The Dobashes cited their research that indicated how high risk a slap can be, resulting in a broken nose and jaw and that attempts to hit someone with an object does not result in an injury “unless the blow is actually landed (p. 450).” They described that, based on the CTS and its scoring, a husband who has severely beaten his wife on several occasions and a wife who attempted to hit him with an object and threatened him with a knife in self-defense, would be both categorized as being beaten by their spouses. The Dobashes took the position that women were rarely perpetrators of severe violence outside of the context of abuse by their spouses and that Straus,

Steinmetz and Gelles inappropriately and irresponsibly used the term ‘battered husband’.

They did mention that:

Although there is no doubt that women do slap and shove their husbands on occasion or throw things at them, and this is certainly to be regretted, one must question any statistical manipulation that defines this, or violence used in self-defense as husband-beating (p.451).

In terms of the consequences of the work by Straus, Steinmetz and Gelles and particularly Steinmetz around battered husbands, they cited the Pleck et al., (1977) article and Crowe (1980) to describe the difficulty of shelters getting funding because of the family violence research. Dobash & Dobash (1981) argued that the work on the battered husband supported the status quo by diminishing the importance of battered wives. They asserted that it also created an intellectual equivalence between men who beat their wives and women who beat their husbands, so that the issue of battered wives would not warrant special attention. The argument was that, if someone asserted the focus needs to be on battered wives, the counterpoint was “what about the battered husbands?” contributing to the systematic prevention of positive social change. The Dobashes advocated for researchers to connect their work to community and action. These are ideas that pervade the social sciences today. They described that researchers who work towards collective social action are accused of ideology, while researchers who take state and federal funding are considered superior, even though they are engaged in similar social policy work. During the early 1980s Straus was still publishing articles that focused on the plight of battered wives including “Wife’s Martial Dependency and Wife Abuse” (Kalmuss & Straus, 1982) and publishing with feminist scholars (see Yllo & Straus, 1981).

In 1983, Breines & Gordon published their seminal article *The New Scholarship on Family Violence* in *Signs*. It was the first article that I read chronologically speaking that presented a feminist perspective that focused on empirical data with a rejection of exclusively empiricist approaches. In my impression, they offered a balanced analysis of the work of Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz by both highlighting their contributions to the field, what they found useful and what they found important to critique; which was their exclusive reliance on quantitative measurement data. Breines & Gordon (1983) reasonably pointed out that this type of data was useful for gathering information on correlation but not explanation and, that its lack of context kept their data abstract versus applicable to the lives of real people. They reflected that “their thoroughgoing empiricism appears to reflect a distrust of what can be learned from qualitative forms of insight (p. 502).” Breines & Gordon (1983) pointed to the impressive documentation Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz made of the incredible amount of violence within the family, but critiqued their use of listing potential variables that contributed to violence versus providing a broader theoretical analysis that would include a thorough reflection of power differentials and historical context. In addition, they suggested that the Straus “school” of researchers “show the naïveté of assuming that one can have peaceful families in a violent society (p. 504).” Breines & Gordon said they did this by advocating against all forms of violence but without sufficiently strong evidence.

However strongly one might agree, Straus's arguments on these points are not rigorous, nor are they supported by convincing evidence. Indeed it is characteristic of the Straus school that once its practitioners depart from quantitative methods, they seem to assume that no other kind of argument requires proof. For example, the evidence about the effects of television violence on behavior is weak at best. Nor have there been controlled studies, to our

knowledge, comparing family violence in societies with and without large standing armies and police forces (p. 505).

The article then began to dismantle some of the critiques made by Straus and Gelles, in particular against feminist approaches to the study of domestic violence, and the argument that their work was more ideological and less scientific because of their reliance on more qualitative methods of inquiry versus an exclusive reliance on quantitative data. They went on to critique the CTS as a tool as well as Steinmetz's work on battered husbands. What was unique to their analysis of Steinmetz's work was that they also analyze the arguments of those who challenged her and how those challenges fit into the overall discourse about women's use of violence. Their central thesis in this area was that, instead of trying to prove Steinmetz's data was flawed because women cannot or should not be violent, it was more important to understand the context of their violence; a perspective that many scholars share today.

Despite their appraisal on Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, they also cited several positive contributions that they have made to the field as well. The article by Breines & Gordon (1983) offered, in my estimation, an excellent example of how to critique another scholars' work, in a way that made it clear that the authors profoundly disagreed with their subjects while remaining within the boundaries of professional discourse and without resorting to negative global personal attacks.

In 1983, *The Dark Side of Families: Current Family Violence Research* was published and was edited by David Finkelhor, Richard Gelles, Gerald Hotaling, and Murray Straus. It was a compilation of work presented at the National Conference for Family Violence Researchers, which was held in 1981. What I found remarkable about

this book was that scholars from both areas of family violence and feminist scholarship participated, some with radically different perspectives. Gelles (1983), in *An Exchange/Social Control Theory*, remarked on feminist and critical approaches to the study of IPV:

While it is easy for liberal-minded social scientists to sympathize with these conceptualizations, the jump from the relationship between income and violence to a theory of racism and sexism is large and not yet fully supported by the available evidence. The use of ideology in place of scientifically informed theory has become increasingly common in the emotion-charged field of domestic violence and has partially inhibited a serious scientific program of theory construction in this area (p. 154).

Wardell, Gillespie & Leffler (1983) in *Science and Violence Against Wives* offered the counter point that to disconnect violence against women from its sociopolitical context is reflective of sexist biases within science itself.

The sexist bias of the literature reveals itself in parallels drawn between wife abuse and other social phenomena. These parallels commonly analogize wife abuse to attitudes about violence in general, or to any other kind of violence at all (including female violence against men), rather than to other forms of male violence against women. The result is that wife abuse is stripped of its behavioral outcome and gender bias (p. 78-79).

I appreciated that Wardell, Gillespie & Leffler (1983) concluded that “despite its genuinely benevolent intentions, the wife-beating literature is riddled with misogyny (p.79).” What I liked about this is that while they strongly voiced their opinion, they evaluated the social and cultural institutions of science as opposed to attacking the personal character of individual scholars.

In 1986, Straus and Gelles published the results from the second National Family Violence Survey using the CTS. They compared their most recent data to the 1975 results and found consistent rates of husband to wife and wife to husband violence. They stated that women were highly violent but also contextualized this by stating that husbands were

more likely to cause injury when they used violence and that women mostly likely used violence in retaliation or self defense to male violence. They also acknowledged the real danger in highlighting female violence because those statistics were used in the past to deter funding for shelters or against battered wives in court. But they took the position that information ultimately created the grounds for appropriate intervention, which would eventually lead to the elimination of violence within the family.

McNeely & Robinson's (1987) *The Truth About Domestic Violence: A Falsely Framed Issue* prompted a series of responses and counter-responses similar to Steinmetz's *The Battered Husband Syndrome*. In addition to providing the argument that a substantial group of men were victimized by their female partners, they went further to say that the focus on women's use of violence in self-defense gave license to abused women to use any means they chose to harm their perpetrators. McNeely & Robinson (1987) also claimed that the structural focus of the legal system on the plight of victimized women created an environment that:

provides the means by which women are able to victimize men socially merely by alleging their occurrence [rape, sexual abuse of children, child abuse]. For example, growing numbers of wives are falsely accusing their husbands in divorce disputes of having sexually assaulted their children. Wives reportedly are motivated to make the false accusations to improve their negotiating posture in property settlements, to improve their chances of being awarded sole custody of children, or simply to be vindictive toward divorcing husbands. Attorney McNally states that the popular view of these accusations has spawned a host of publicly financed support services that serve inadvertently in some cases to "... throw gasoline onto the fire." Typically staffed by social workers, the services provide assistance to legitimate victims, but also can prolong court proceedings and increase legal fees for men implicated in marginal or deceitful cases (p.488).

They went on to say that women who made those accusations benefited from free or low cost representation and that the large majority of child abuse accusations proved false.

They cited both vindictive wives and neighbors as the culprits. Saunders (1988) responded by critiquing the methodologies and presentation of data in the studies that McNeely & Robinson-Simpson (1987) used to bolster their argument, including Steinmetz's original *The Battered Husband Syndrome* and work by Straus and Gelles. They addressed the issue of false accusations by arguing that McNeely & Robinson-Simpson (1987) described unsubstantiated reports of child abuse as false accusations; unsubstantiated simply meant a lacking of:

sufficient evidence to be classified as reliable. Several studies who that when interviewers use a careful validation process, the rate of "fictitious" allegations by adults and children ranged from 6 to 8 percent and some of these reports were by former victims suffering from post traumatic stress who wrongly perceived that they were being revictimized (p. 181).

Saunders (1988) in his most pointed critique of McNeely & Robinson-Simpson (1987) described that "false portrayals of women as vindictive initiators of violence will only add to their oppression (p.182)." McNeely & Robinson-Simpson (1988) took the opportunity to reply to Saunders (1988) response. They reiterated the main thesis of their original article and described an argument that McNeely would expand on in later articles, that domestic violence is a human problem instead of a gender problem. They argued that concentrating on gender encouraged divisions between people instead of promoting their common humanity. In responding to Saunders (1988) study of women in a shelter, they reported that only a small percentage reported "initiating severe violence . . . It is entirely possible that women who seek shelter services are less complicitous in their own victimization than women more representative of the population (p. 186-187)."



I pause here to highlight the statement that women who initiate violence are complicit in their victimization. I believe that exact statement is what so many feminist scholars and family violence scholars were seeking to avoid up until this point in the debate. When I read that statement I had a strong negative reaction, similar to how I felt in response to the original article, where they described the ‘epidemic’ of false accusations. This was the first time I started to see an explicit connection between literature from the family violence field and much of the rhetoric associated with more anti-feminist and anti-victim political causes. The letters to the editor were all strong negative reactions to the McNeely & Robinson (1987) piece, mostly from practitioners working in the field. The editor included a note that said that most of the letters they received were negative although there were a few that were positive. They defended their decision to publish the article because of the need to make public, the private conversations happening in the scholarly community (Letters, 1988).

Kersti Yllo and Michelle Bograd co-edited *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse* published in 1988, an important book with several prominent feminist authors such as the Dobashs, Elizabeth Stanko, James Ptacek, Evan Stark, Ellen Pence, Melanie Shepard and Susan Schechter. The idea for the anthology developed out of meetings of feminist scholars at the second National Conference for Family Violence Researchers who sought to make sure a feminist perspective was represented at each presentation. In the forward by Diana Russell, she discussed Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, the CTS, and the controversy over their methodology and findings. Given the recent publication of data from the second National Family Violence Survey, she wrote “Their refusal to listen and

learn from the dialogue is distressing, since in many ways they have been pioneers in the field of wife abuse research (p. 8).” She then went further and wrote:

It becomes clear that just as the problem of battered wives cannot be eradicated as long as men have the power in the family and society, so the problem of patriarchal research on “family violence” will not easily be transformed by feminist critiques. We should not be surprised that it is feminists whose views are considered distorted, not the mainstream researchers. This is not to say that we should stop what we are doing any more than that battered women should give up their struggle to be free of violence (p. 8).

When I read the above statement, I had a strong reaction to the equivalence between family violence researchers with batterers and, feminist researchers with battered women. I believe what disturbed me most about it was that there was no room for disagreement or nuance. I also kept in mind that at this point in the divide, several feminist researchers had been referred to by Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz in ways that were globally negative and invalidating. Therefore, I suppose it was logical that some feminist researchers would situate this conflict within their broader fight for social justice and make such equivalencies. In the introduction by Michelle Bograd, she wrote that “feminist scholarship is not simply about women. Instead, it is dedicated to advocacy *for* women (p. 15).” Feminist scholarship was motivated by an effort to improve the lives of women, and so the real life implications of the work of Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz became a major point of contention. She also stated that “many sociologists tend not to be antifeminist, but “gender neutral.” That is, violence is seen as a problem of both sexes (Gelles, 1972; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; p.19).” This was an interesting point given the strong perspective from the introduction that implicated family violence researchers in collusion with patriarchal interests. I highlight this to make the point that,

clearly, by the late 1980s, things were quite tense between many feminist scholars and the family violence scholars, but within that conflict there was still a multitude of perspectives.

Kurz (1989) provided the first delineation of debate that I found that defined the family violence and the feminist approaches. Kurz provided a review of some of the history that I have outlined and clarified that Straus, Gelles, Steinmetz in:

Their analysis, as well as their use of the terms family violence and spouse abuse, rather than battering or wife abuse, indicate that it is the family, not the relationship between women and men, which is their central unit of analysis (Gelles 1985; Gelles and Straus 1988; p. 492).

I believed this to be an important point, which was that their unit of analysis was a foundational difference between the two perspectives. Kurz also stated that while family violence researchers acknowledged that power differentials, between husbands and wives were a risk factor for abuse, “they assume that power can as equally be held by a wife as by a husband (p. 494).” Feminist scholars in contrast viewed sexism and patriarchy as the key risk factor for battering. In addition, in Kurz’s comparison, there was a wide difference between how family violence and feminist scholars viewed equality between the genders. Family violence scholars viewed husband-wife relationships as mostly equal, while feminist researchers viewed most husband-wife relationships as unequal, with wives at a disadvantage, due to economic and social disparities. I appreciated Kurz’s point that, for “family violence researchers violence is the primary problem to be explained, while for feminists an equally important question is why women are overwhelmingly the targets of violence (p.498).”

To conclude the review of this decade, in 1989 Murray Straus presented a paper at the American Society of Criminology that provoked intense controversy. While I was unable to find a written version of that paper, Straus published a piece, *Women's Violence Toward Men Is a Serious Social Problem*, which is a revision of the paper he presented at that conference (Straus, 2005). In that chapter Straus made the point that, even though violence by women tends to result in less injury, this was still a major problem because it both perpetuated the use of violence in the family and created the risk for women to be seriously hurt by their male partner. Straus questioned the ethics of several studies about IPV that did not acknowledge or discuss women's use of violence and that, in his words, "the data on assaults by women were intentionally suppressed (p. 58)." He went on to use words like "deception" and "cover-up" to emphasize this point (p. 58). In the past Straus noted that he used to report that the most likely explanation for the high incidence of violence by women was that it occurred within a context of abuse by a male partner. He questioned that conclusion in this chapter with a review of some recent literature about the circumstances surrounding homicides by women and data from the second National Family Violence Survey about women who used violence. He cited data that some women use violence against men who have not been physically violent towards them in the past year and that some women initiate violence against their partners versus acting in self-defense or retaliation. Straus explained that "it is painful to recognize the high rate of domestic assaults by women. Moreover, the statistics are likely to be used by misogynists and apologists for male violence (p. 67)". Despite this caution, he shared his opinion that drawing attention to and addressing women's use of violence, in addition to male's use of

violence, was the only way to end violence within the family. Straus went on to say that “most partner violence is mutual” (p.68) but then offered several caveats: 1) Women’s use of violence did not justify their partner’s use of violence, 2) Despite equal rates of assault, women experienced greater injury, and 3) Male’s use of violence and the civil rights of women needed to remain the focus in social and cultural contexts where women continued to be oppressed. In that same volume, Loseke & Kurz (2005) engaged in a dialogue with Straus (2005), debating and criticizing each others’ perspectives (because the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of that volume came out in 2005, I summarize that section as I discuss literature in the 2000s).

### **1990-1999**

*Relationship Violence by Women: Issues and Implications* (Flynn, 1990) and *Domestic Violence is a Human Issue* (McNeely & Richey Mann, 1990) added to the conversation that women’s use of violence and male victims were important subjects to research and develop interventions. Flynn (1990) made the point that while feminist scholars have been concerned about the impact of diverting the focus from female victims and by doing this, it gave energy to an anti-feminist political backlash; this did not substantiate the denial of women’s use of violence and the presence of male victims. Even if male victims experienced less severe injury, their victimization was still important to address and women who perpetrated deserved help. It was interesting to me that while Flynn (1990) acknowledged the feminist concern over how the focus on male victims could be misused; there was no discussion of how to address that misuse while still continuing forward with a program of research on women who perpetrate and men

who are victims. McNeely & Richey Mann (1990) presented a more assertive perspective:

One reason many people have difficulty with the notion of women inflicting injuries on men is because men, on average, are larger, stronger, and more adept at fighting with their hands than women. However, the average man's size and strength are neutralized by guns and knives, boiling water, bricks, fireplace poker, and baseball bats. Many fail to realize that domestic assaults do not involve pugilistic fair play, or to consider that attacks occur when males are asleep, or incapacitated by alcohol, age, or infirmities. Perhaps more surprising is that young husbands are not spared victimization. Military men in their fighting prime are not uncommonly stabbed or shot by spouses in unprovoked episodes of violence (Ansberry, 1988; p. 130).

McNeely & Richey Mann (1990) were clearly of the position that women were equally and often more severely and intentionally violent than men. In their view, the reason for lower rates of men in hospitals reporting injury, or female arrests and males in need of shelters was connected to social attitudes about men that prevented them from reporting or asking for help. In the conclusion of the piece, they wrote that by making IPV solely about men's violence against women, it encouraged division. They argued that "we simply do not need to encourage artificial divisions between men and women any more than we need to encourage or maintain divisions among races, the age groups, the healthy versus the infirm, or those with different sexual orientations (p. 131)." This struck a particularly negative cord with me and I believe that is because my professional socialization has focused on the intersections of power and privilege across race, ethnicity, social strata, gender, and community. These intersections then create unique opportunities for risks and resiliencies. Because of this, I overall found Flynn (1990) raised a more persuasive argument than McNeely & Richey Mann (1990). I would have appreciated from Flynn (1990) more of a discussion about how scholars in the family

violence field should responsibly address anti-feminist political backlash. I also agreed with the call for more research to understand the needs of male victims of IPV.

Bograd (1990)'s *Why We Need Gender to Understand Human Violence* was in the same volume of the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* that published McNeely & Richey Mann (1990). In addition to providing the previously documented feminist arguments for a gendered perspective versus a humanist perspective, she wrote:

In my opinion, when authors argue that domestic violence is a human issue, they are not simply stating the obvious, but are arguing, intentionally or unintentionally, that an openly acknowledged politically conscious and specific focus on the experiences of battered women is either unwarranted or unscientific (p.134).

I respected Bograd's (1990) point because I believe there are interpreted subtexts to this discussion and, whether valid or not, it is helpful to me when they are elucidated. I also welcomed how she used the phrase "In my opinion" because it left open the room for disagreement and more dialogue.

Both Straus and the Dobashes published articles in the next year, Straus's (1992) *Sociological Research and Social Policy: The Case of Family Violence* and Dobash, Dobash, Wilson & Daly's (1992) *The Myth of Sexual Symmetry in Marital Violence*. Straus (1992) provided a brief history of the controversy and discussed the interaction of mass media and scholarship and also reported on some of the experiences he and his colleagues have had.

As a result of the depth of the objections to our findings on assaults by wives, some of us became the object of bitter scholarly and personal attacks. These attacks included obstruction of my public presentations by booing, shouting, and picketing. In elections for office in scientific societies I was labeled as antifeminist despite being a pioneer feminist researcher on wife beating (Straus, 1973, 1976). Suzanne K. Steinmetz, a coinvestigator in the first National Family

Violence Survey, was the victim of more severe attacks. There was a letter-writing campaign opposing her promotion. There were phone calls threatening her and her family, and a bomb threat at a conference where she spoke (p. 226).

This was the first personal account (thought it would not be the last), that I found in the literature of how some scholars in this debate experienced criticism that crossed the line into personal attacks and acts of threatened violence.

Dobash, Dobash, Wilson & Daly (1992) engaged in a thorough analysis of the argument by family violence researchers that women's use of violence is as serious a social problem as male's use of violence and included a descriptive critique of the CTS as a measurement tool. While the main point in the article is that de-gendered analysis of IPV is a mistake and obscured the reality of what is actually occurring, they also provided evidence that women are almost exclusively violent out of desperation. Their critique of the evidence showing women's violence is quite convincing yet I still wanted to know how women experience their own use of violence, how they talk about it, and interpret it, in addition to how incommensurate it is to men's use of violence.

In some ways, Claire Renzetti's book *Violent Betrayal: Partner Abuse in Lesbian Relationships*, released in 1992, was the response to the gap in feminist scholarship I felt was apparent. From her sample, which she explicitly stated was non-representative; she found equivalent rates of battering between lesbian partners and heterosexual partners. The greatest factor associated with battering was the high level of emotional dependency of the perpetrator on the victim. She called for a focus on finding, building and adapting appropriate resources and treatments for lesbian batterers and lesbian victims of battering. In her interviews she found that lesbians who used violence in self-defense were



sometimes quickly labeled as mutually abusive, leading them to question their experience of feeling victimized. Renzetti (1992) asked those who were helpers in the fight against violence, to challenge their own internalized values and stereotypes that guide them to label a lesbian victim more quickly than a heterosexual woman who used violence in self-defense.

The focus on women's use of violence, its meaning and how it impacts the idea of victimization continued to develop in the early 1990s. Schwartz & DeKeseredy (1993) analyzed Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz's position over time to demonstrate that their focus on women's use of violence had now shifted into assigning responsibility to women for their own victimization. What they were referring to was the repeated discourse that a focus on women's violence was important because it placed them at risk for victimization. They documented, in particular, the shift Straus made from arguing that his data on women's use of violence should be understood within the context of potential attempts at self-defense, to a position that much of women's use of violence could not be explained as self-defense. They explained:

The major message Straus and Gelles bring is that we cannot solve the problem of abuse within the family until we stop blaming the male for all of the violence, and begin to blame the woman as well. Of course, this has been an essential part of their work for more than a decade. What has changed over this time was a matter of emphasis. The old emphasis was on how violence was a family problem, not one of wife abuse (p. 256).

Schwartz & DeKeseredy (1993) went on to make the pointed comment:

Straus and Gelles argue that most researchers will not study battered husbands because they are afraid of the abuse which will be heaped upon them. An alternative explanation may be that many researchers are better able to set priorities as to what is important and what is relatively minor (p. 257).

DeKeseredy is well-known for his application of male-peer support theory as to why men are at increased risk of perpetrating IPV on college campuses. In Schwartz & DeKeseredy (1993) they used male-peer support theory to explain why some men who are abusive use the popular press simplification of Straus's perspective to support their use of violence against their female partners as justified, particularly if their female partners use violence in self-defense. I thought this was an interesting intellectual perspective on the real danger of popular misinterpretations of data and support for the call Schwartz & DeKeseredy (1993) make for feminist sociologists to actively engage with the public through popular media outlets.

Renzetti (1994) was titled *On Dancing With a Bear: Reflections on Some of the Current Debates Among Domestic Violence Theorists*, reacted to the argument that research showing women use violence indicated a need for a different theoretical framework than feminism.

It is not surprising to me that the data presented by proponents of the "women are as violent as men" argument serve to undermine feminist theory—that is, feminist theory as they have formulated it. However, what is surprising, especially in light of the current diversity within feminism and the explosion of published research written from a variety of feminist perspectives, is that such proponents continue to depict feminism as a single, unified, unchanging paradigm . . . It is the case that all feminist theories do share the assumption of the centrality of gender as a variable for understanding human behavior. This is precisely why I am unwilling to follow Dutton's (this issue) and others' calls to "move beyond" feminism or to abandon it altogether. Intimate violence is gendered, as are individual and institutionalized responses to that violence (p. 196).

Renzetti described how the focus on 'women are as violent as men' results in women increasingly having to prove that they are 'pure' victims. Women who used violence violate the standard of an appropriate victim by the rules of a male dominated criminal

justice system and were increasingly prosecuted for their acts of self defense. Renzetti argued that instead of moving towards gender neutral theoretical approaches, more complexity was needed by adding an intersectional framework, integrating how multiple intersecting experiences impact the perpetration and experience of IPV.

In that same volume of *Violence and Victims*, Dutton (1994)'s *Patriarchy and Wife Assault: The Ecological Fallacy* is the piece that Renzetti (1994) was referring to in the quote referenced above. Dutton (1994) critiqued the feminist analysis of IPV and made a brief comment that some of the distortions in analysis and information are a reflection of a particular paradigm. The idea of paradigms is one that I will explore in far more detail in Chapter 5: Paradigms and Meta-Narratives and is a critical piece of my Methods, Findings and Discussion. This was the first time that I saw this idea referenced in my reading of the literature. He argued from an ecological perspective that more macro-level influences like cultural gender stereotypes have less of an influence on IPV perpetration as indicated by the evidence than individual psychopathology interacting with cultural factors. He wrote:

In a culture that isolates men emotionally and alienates them from their ability to sense and know their own feelings, dependency on a female who is perceived as a conduit to one's inner self will remain problematic . . . Males try to control the things they fear, and intimate relationships are a source of great fear (Pollack & Gilligan, 1982). Hence, a complete understanding of anger does not only reflect on outbursts of anger but also on chronic resentments and control of another. It also renders the "case" against "anger control" treatment for assaultive males artificial. It is not an issue of "anger versus control" as Gondolf and Russell (1986) put it; anger and control stem from the same origin: terror of intimacy (p. 177).

Dutton's perspective was that most men are not abusive towards their spouse and of those that are, only a few use severe and frequent violence, therefore research and clinical

intervention should focus on the differences among men who perpetrate and not their similarities. Dutton has been and continues to be a strong and some might say an inflammatory voice that is clearly against a feminist theoretical approach to IPV and therefore his work will be cited again in this historical review.

Michael Johnson published his groundbreaking article *Patriarchal Terrorism and Common Couple Violence: Two Forms of Violence Against Women* in 1995. Johnson's work represented an attempt to integrate the research collected by both the feminist and family violence scholars into a cohesive explanatory model. The essential point he made is that what feminist researchers are documenting is patriarchal terrorism (later known as intimate terrorism) while family violence researchers are studying is common couple violence (later known as situational couples violence). Victims of patriarchal terrorism tend to be women and tend to be those who need shelter and emergency room services while victims and perpetrators of common couple violence are those documented in representative surveys, seen in clinical offices by therapists and tend to be both women and men.

Felson (1996)'s *Big People Hit Little People: Sex Differences in Physical Power and Interpersonal Violence* was an interesting and novel addition to the debate in that he acknowledged that males tend to use physical violence more "successfully" than females in that it resulted in more severe injury, but attempted to disconnect that from patriarchal influences and connected it to a broader human phenomena that "big people hit little people." He also described that the norm of protecting women from harm should be considered in any analysis of gender and violence. He reported results from his study that

indicated that males were more likely to use violence generally than females and caused more severe injury when they do. In support of the norm of protecting women, he documents that men are actually more likely to use violence against other men. He framed his results within the model of coercive control and a cost benefit analysis; men had greater likelihood of success using physical force in accomplishing their goal because of their greater size and strength which supported their use of physical force. Women had less likelihood of success and greater risk of injury (i.e. costs) and therefore used severe violence less. This changed in regards to weapons, Felson (1996) reported that while women were less likely in his sample to use violence generally, when they used violence, they were more likely to use a weapon and when they used a weapon, they had a greater likelihood of causing injury. I found Felson's work interesting and convincing that there are elements of the interactions between gender and violence that sometimes get obscured. He occupied an interesting place in the field because his work reflected the asymmetrical violence of men but disconnected that from a socio-historical, relational analysis to an even greater extent than any of the family violence scholars previously.

Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy & Sugarman (1996) was a presentation of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale or the CTS2. They addressed reviews that the CTS did not ask questions of context and defended their position that it was not supposed to; instead they argued that the CTS and CTS2 should be used with accompanying measures and assessments of context to address this deficiency. The criticism that the CTS did not measure injury or consequence, resulted in an adaptation to the CTS2 that included a separate scale that assessed injury, although it is not embedded in the physical violence

sub-scale. They also added additional items to each of the three original subscales (verbal reasoning/negotiation, verbal aggression/psychological aggression, physical violence/physical assault). One of the more overwhelming criticisms of the CTS was its lack of any questions assessing sexual violence. In response, Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy & Sugarman (1996) added a sexual coercion subscale. They adapted a particularly controversial question “I threw something at my partner” to “I threw something at my partner that could hurt”, since one of the common critiques was someone could throw a pillow and it would still count as an act of severe violence. Additionally, they developed a range of minor acts and range of severe acts for each of the subscales and not just the physical violence subscale.

Anderson (1997)'s *Gender, Status, and Domestic Violence: An Integration of Feminist and Family Violence Approaches*, was an example similar to Johnson (1995) of an attempt to integrate the two perspectives, though this piece used socio-demographic variables versus a typology approach. In addition to an attempt at integration, it also reflected the growing idea of intersectionality as an appropriate method for studying domestic violence. She argued, based on her analysis of data from Wave I of the National Survey of Families and Households, that race, socioeconomic status, age, education and cohabitating status influenced the risk factors for domestic violence, but influenced men and women's risk in different ways.

DeKeseredy, Saunders, Schwartz, & Alvi (1997) provided a feminist analysis of women's use of violence in dating relationships. They stated “there is no doubt that some women strike men and some of these acts can be labeled abusive. Few in the field would

argue that there are not battered men or abusive women (p. 201).” This reflected to me a transition in the field, to make this statement so clearly, particularly by feminist scholars, in light of the controversy over Steinmetz’s work. They asked the question of why women use violence and provided a critique of the CTS, around the same problems of the limitations of counting acts of violence, the lack of context and the lack of questions about sexual violence. Using data from the Canadian National Survey on Woman Abuse, they analyzed questions that asked women whether their use of violence was retaliatory, self-defense or first strike. They found that while many women reported using violence, most of it was self-defense and only a small proportion was severe in nature. They also reported that a small group of women reported that their use of severe violence was never in self-defense, which supported the idea of a sub-sample of women who exclusively perpetrated.

Other articles that came out at a similar time demonstrated a growing interest for feminist scholars in male victims of IPV and women’s use of violence. An interesting article by Muelleman & Burgess (1998) found that over half of the male victims reporting to a hospital emergency room with injuries by a female partner, also had their own history of perpetration in the form of an arrest for a domestic violence assault. Mecham, Shofer, Reinhard, Hornig, & Datner (1999) in their interviews of 866 male patients coming into the emergency room, found that almost 13% reported victimization experiences. There were no questions, however, assessing their own experiences of perpetration and within what context their victimization occurred.

*New Versions of Victims: Feminists Struggle with the Concept* edited by Sharon Lamb was published in 1999. Renzetti (1999) in that volume wrote a chapter *The Challenge to Feminism Posed by Women's Use of Violence in Intimate Relationships*, which I believe was a strong contribution to the continuing growth of nuance in the area of feminist scholarship on women's use of violence. She described a phenomenon occurring in the early 1990s of popular writers and young women, decrying mainstream feminism as reflecting an assertion that women are superior to men and rejecting the term. She wrote:

Those who share this view typically argue that if women want to be equals with men, they must take responsibility for their behavior just as they want men to do. One manifestation of this anti-feminism is the widespread belief that women are as violent as men but are not held accountable for their violence. Such a view has been popularized in journalistic discussions intimate violence (see, for example Pearson 1997), but it can also be found in academic works (e.g. McNeely and Robinson-Simpson, 1987; Steinmetz and Lucca, 1988; Stitts and Macklin 1997; Straus, 1993). Indeed, feminist researchers of intimate violence have sometimes been accused of hiding or suppressing data on female-to-male violence (see, for example, DeKeseredy, 1998; p.42-43).

Following an analysis of the data, she called for the creation of a feminist theory of women's use of violence that would include contextual analysis and collaborative research with women who use violence that would be grounded in a strengths-based model. Renzetti (1999) stated that she was hesitant to work in the area of women's use of violence for:

fear that my work will be used against women. However, as the media attention that has greeted books like Pearson's (1997) indicates, the issue is already being used against us. I urge feminists, therefore to seize this issue and make it our own . . . Documenting, denouncing, and acting to prevent men's violence against women does not require us to deny women's agency (p. 51-52).



To provide context to the above quote, the book Renzetti referred to as Pearson (1997) is *When She Was Bad: Violent Women and the Myth of Innocence*.

DeKeseredy (1999), in a further reflection of the forces in the broader society impacting the debate in the 1990s, examined the antifeminist backlash in Canada, with its misuse of data from the CTS. He described how authors in popular media outlets sensationalized the few accounts of women who have used severe violence and then, along with data from the CTS, to make the claim that ‘women do it too.’ DeKeseredy gave examples of how those appearances were praised for bringing attention to the overwhelming and inappropriate focus on women’s needs and the shameful oversight of male victims and critiques were seen as a part of a conspiracy to elevate women over men. DeKeseredy recounted disturbing vignettes after disturbing vignette of popular media authors irresponsibly publishing pieces that commented on his work, without fact-checking, and then preventing or limiting his ability to respond to the seemingly malicious accusations being made about him, his work and his colleagues. In one of the examples of the antifeminist backlash he experienced, he described:

One example is University of Alberta philosopher Ferrel Christensen, who on January 12, 1996, sent a letter to Health Canada, the federal agency that funded the CNS and VAWS, and to the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association (CSAA). He enclosed a petition and unpublished article titled “A Case of Distorted Science in Canada” (1995) claiming that I and Katherine Kelly had violated ethical principles and presented CNS data to the media, federal government, and the general public that intentionally distorted the perception of truth. It should be noted that only six other people signed this petition, and the CSAA and Health Canada did not find us guilty of violating ethical principles. This is not surprising, since we had obtained approval to administer questionnaires from 44 different ethical review committees situated at each of the institutions included in the CNS (p. 1268).

He discussed how ‘well-placed lies’ are difficult to discredit or counter when they are given space by popular press outlets and how they can marginalize feminist scholars. DeKeseredy described intense harassment and threats in reaction to his work by antifeminist individuals and members of what he referred to as ‘men’s rights’ advocacy groups. My reaction to this article and the research from the review of this decade was mixed. It seemed clear that both feminist perspectives and family violence scholars were growing closer in many ways to understanding that intersections of influence matter and should be considered in examining IPV and that women’s use of violence matters and should be studied. On the other hand, the criticism and harassment some scholars reported experiencing seemed to be gaining intensity and was connected to a wider social, political and legal area of influence.

### **2000-to present**

Johnson & Ferraro (2000) provided an update and an expansion of Johnson’s (1995) typology approach to IPV. In addition to patriarchal terrorism, now dubbed intimate terrorism, and common couple violence (since termed situational couple violence), violent resistance and mutual control dyadic patterns were also added. Violent resistance was seen as typically being women acting in self-defense or retaliation to a male intimate terrorist. Mutual resistance was the case of, as Johnson & Ferraro (2000) put it, “two intimate terrorists battling for control (p. 950).” Intimate terrorism was further explained within the model of coercive, controlling violence. Coercive controlling violence was the systematic use of power and control by one partner against another partner where many non-violent actions or behaviors become associated with violence

because of the environment of fear. I highlight Johnson's work because of his role in attempting to integrate the two areas of research and the level of criticism his work has received from family violence scholars (particularly Dutton). Feminist criticisms of Johnson's work were that his typology of mutual resistance does not have supporting empirical evidence and that the typology of situational couple violence may in fact be a form of nascent intimate terrorism (see DeKeseredy, 2011; Frye, Manganello, Campbell, Walton-Moss, & Wilt, 2006).

Archer (2000) briefly summarized the history of the debate and synthesized what he viewed as the two theses that attempt to capture why two areas of scholarship find such different data. He presented the Dobash's work and the critique of the CTS and survey methodology that fails to account for context and injury and also Johnson's typology approach, which is that the groups are drawing from different samples that experience violence in dramatically distinct ways. In an effort to add to the conversation, he conducted a meta-analysis of sex differences and violence. He found that, overall, women use violence more often than men but with a small effect size; this finding changed depending on whether someone was looking at act-based measures versus meaning-based measures. This supported the argument of the Dobashes and their colleagues. When looking at meaning-based measures (words that indicate fear or danger), men looked more aggressive. This was also true when reviewing the data on physical injury, that men injured their female partners more often, though again, this effect size was small. He also found some support for Johnson's typological approach based on a few studies with the CTS done with women in shelters, indicating high levels

of male against female violence, with some female violence. Archer (2000) cautioned the interpretation of these results because other studies show that women in shelters inflated their partner's use of violence and underestimated their own. He also presented a review of a few studies that asked about initiating violence and in what context and that women and men equally initiated violence; indicating that self-defense could not be the explanation for the majority of violence that women report. In his discussion he stated:

In western nations, there will be a greater impact of the norm of disapproval of men's physical aggression toward women and a lesser impact of patriarchal values. The pattern of physical aggression observed will be more influenced by individual and relationship variables and less by patriarchal power (p.668).

Similar to Felson, Archer raised the idea of chivalry as a protective factor for women that should be considered as a part of an analysis of IPV and agreed with Dutton that a nested ecological approach was more appropriate and accurate than a feminist interpretation.

Several scholars responded to Archer (2000), including White, Smith, Koss, & Figueredo (2000), O'Leary (2000) and Frieze (2000). Archer (2000b) then replied to these responses in another example of point-counterpoint in the debate between perspectives. White, Smith, Koss, & Figueredo (2000) critiqued Archer's (2000) methodology including his inclusion and exclusion choices. For example, they cited his decision to not include studies of sexual violence and the impact that would have on findings of sexual symmetry. They also questioned the helpfulness of the meta-analysis given its limitation in furthering social policy and social science in a positive direction. O'Leary (2000) took a more moderate position that Archer's (2000) work presented a convincing argument that women's use of violence was a problem. However O'Leary (2000) stated that knowledge of the many battered women in shelters having experienced

severe violence, the rates of sexual violence against women, and the male to female homicide rates made it difficult to accept any study that stated that women were more violent than men. Frieze (2000) offered support for Archer (2000) and shared the perspective that his work should inspire the shift towards more research on women's use of violence, more programming for female batterers and more services for male victims and female victims of lesbian partners. Frieze (2000) also called for more information about how sexual violence fit into the picture of symmetrical aggression. In addition to responding to his critics, Archer (2000b) reiterated his findings and his decision to keep sexual violence separated from IPV. He also acknowledged the wealth of research that outside the home, men are much more violent but reflected that within the home, women were as violent as men and sometimes more so. Archer (2000) finalized with a counterpoint to White, Smith, Koss, & Figueredo (2000) that policy decisions were best made when informed by empirical data rather than choosing to disseminate data based on its fit with existing political agendas.

Kimmel (2002) provided a review of the debate but also offered more of the political context that the debate was occurring within, with particular reflection on men's rights activists. Kimmel wrote:

Domestic violence, they argue, exhibits gender symmetry; that is, an equal number of women and men are its victims. Although such activists draw our attention to the often ignored problem of men as victims of domestic violence, their efforts are also often motivated by a desire to undermine or dismantle those initiatives that administer to female victims. To many of these advocates of gender symmetry, compassion is a zero-sum game, and when we show any compassion for women who are the victims of domestic violence, we will never address the male victims (p. 1333-1334).

He emphasized that articles like Archer (2000) presented a picture of gender symmetry in IPV that went against the common knowledge most people have that male violence against women and not women's use of violence against men was a world-wide public health problem. Kimmel (2002) asked why is it, if women used violence against men to a similar degree that men use violence against women, were women primarily the ones in shelters and hospitals and why is it that most other violence outside the home is committed by men and not women? While Kimmel (2002) argued that a gender symmetrical interpretation of the data was flawed and that men used violence as a form of instrumental control over their partners in a way that was categorically different from the expressive way women used violence, he also argued that studying women's use of violence and the experience of male victims was important. Just because male victims in need of services and shelter were not as numerous, that did not mean that they did not deserve access to those resources when they were in need. Kimmel (2002) also asserted that family violence research was important because it described how ubiquitous violence is in our lives and that; in fact, the field of IPV needed both kinds of research. Kimmel (2002) then gave credit to Straus and Gelles (1999; Gelles, 2000) for responding to political groups misusing their data to argue for defunding efforts to help female victims of IPV. What I found interesting about this article was that it was once again an attempt to bring the two sides together similar to Johnson (1995) and Anderson (1997). While there seemed to be some efforts on the part of feminist scholars to look at women's use of violence and more efforts from scholars (i.e. Johnson, Anderson, Kimmel) to integrate

the data from both camps, there were also political groups operating in the public arena that were growing stronger and louder.

Saunders (2002) further elaborated on these efforts:

The implications of the controversy go far beyond the halls of academia. On one side of the controversy are some men's rights groups who use scholarly publications to further their belief that widespread bias exists against men and that such bias affects them negatively in child custody disputes. For example, the Men's Defense Association, assisting men with "divorce discrimination," has an aim: "to protect the traditional image of fathers, family and manhood from the onslaught of 'politically correct' thinking that men are evil, violent and unnecessary in child development" (Men's Defense Association, 2001). In a recent suit filed by some members of the National Coalition of Free Men and a father's rights group against the state of Minnesota, the complaint requested that funding for domestic violence programs be stopped on the grounds of discrimination against men. Specifically, they claimed that rates of violence against men approach, equal, or exceed those against women and further claim that programs are designed only for aiding women (p. 1425).

Saunders (2002) outlined how these groups used the data provided by Straus, Gelles, Steinmetz and other family violence researchers, which they cited without context or analysis of methodologies, to support the legitimacy of their argument. Saunders went on to review the literature to demonstrate that woman experienced a greater quantitative and qualitative experience of victimization by male perpetrators than male victims of female perpetrators.

Dutton (2005) argued that the reason feminist scholars refused to acknowledge the equivalent use of violence by women, or evidence that men were injured at equal rates, was due to social psychological phenomena like confirmatory bias, belief perseverance and group think. He presented the idea that this was reflective of the gender paradigm and quickly escalated his argument.

Any and all data inconsistent with this view are dismissed, ignored, or attempts are made to explain them away. The function of the gender paradigm originally was to generate social change in a direction that righted an imbalance against women (see Dobash & Dobash, 1978, 1979; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly 1992; Patai, 1998; Walker, 1989; Yllo & Bograd, 1988). The result, however, has been to misdirect social and legal policy, to misinform custody assessors, police, and judges, to disregard data sets contradictory to the prevailing theory, and to mislead attempts at therapeutic change for perpetrators (see also Corvo & Johnson, 2003; Dutton, 1994; George, 2003; p. 680).

He went on to discuss the radical feminist paradigm and how it led feminist scholars to reject a wide array of data contradicting many of their fundamental points. Included in his review was an examination of the criticisms made against the CTS and CTS2 data and data that was used to claim women were more injured by male violence, and in fact argued that not only were men and women similarly aggressive, they were also similarly injured. Dutton (2005) addressed Johnson's typology by presenting evidence that indicated there were equivalent numbers of female intimate terrorists who were not addressed in Johnson's work. As I continued to read the literature, Dutton's voice increasingly grew more and more assertively against a feminist perspective.

As previously mentioned, a chapter from the 2005 *Current Controversies in Family Violence 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, contained a chapter that Straus adapted from his 1989 speech. In that edition, Loseke & Kurz (2005) wrote a chapter *Men's Violence Toward Women is the Serious Social Problem* in which they outlined challenges to family violence research and its potential misuses.

In their scholarly articles, family conflict researchers often argue that evidence of women's violence against men should not be used to excuse men's violence toward women. Yet their findings *are* used that way. Because it places such emphasis on women's violence, the family conflict perspective provides rhetorical support for judges and juries who acquit rapists and wife beaters with the justification that rape victims and battered women have provoked their own



victimization, and that men therefore are not responsible. The family conflict perspective also provides rhetorical support for members of the public who will not offer sympathy or assistance to any woman evaluated as less than a “pure” victim. In the conclusion to his chapter, Straus recognizes this but states that he is “willing to accept certain costs to achieve a non-violent society.” We note only that he is *not* experiencing such costs (p. 91).

They also discussed how men’s rights groups were using family conflict data and cited the example from 2003 with The Men’s Defense Association and the Minnesota Battered Woman’s Act. Loseke & Kurz (2005) concluded by stating that it was important to pay attention to women’s use of violence and male victims but to do so in ways that were gendered and careful to understand that simply because a woman used violence does not mean she was unworthy of support and help in escaping a violent relationship.

Straus (2005) explained some of the differences in his perspective from Loseke & Kurz (2005) as differences in priorities over what action they wanted to see happen and what prices they were willing to pay.

For example, although domestic violence victims who need the services of a shelter are overwhelmingly women, I am willing to accept the cost of radical male advocacy groups misusing the results of my research to oppose shelters for domestic violence victims that do not provide the same services for male victims. I am willing to accept the rare instances in which they have been successful as a bearable cost, because there is no way of avoiding it without suppressing the evidence on female violence. Violence by both men and women against a partner are criminal acts and morally repulsive, except in rare cases of self-defense (p. 71).

He went on to address what he saw as a denial of the facts and self-censorship in the feminist scholarship and advocacy world that led to a loss of credibility with the general scientific community. I had a strong reaction to Straus (2005) in that I am curious to know, since Straus made it clear he was aware that radical groups were potentially misusing his data to defund shelters and other services for women who experience

violence, what had he done to redress those efforts? I would imagine that having the pioneer researcher in the area of family conflict research asked to give an opinion in these legislative battles would help counter-act some of these anti-funding efforts. Perhaps this was an unfair expectation but I was left feeling unsettled by his statement that seemed to beg for political engagement on his part.

Dutton's (2006) *Rethinking Domestic Violence* was a powerful example of the growing negativity and animosity in the divide. Dutton (2006) outlined several major pieces of his theoretical framework including his nested ecological approach to IPV and his perspective that North America could no longer be viewed as a patriarchal culture, therefore making much of the feminist approach to IPV inappropriate. In a subsection of his book, he highlighted the term 'the woozle effect', discussed before by Gelles and others in this review of the literature. He described DeKeseredy as having committed this error and that his work "contains numerous instances of presenting data and misinterpreting them (p. 28)." His main critique of DeKeseredy's work was that he had focused on male perpetration of violence and that when he had reported data on women's use of violence, he failed to place his results within the existing family violence literature showing how much violence was committed by women. Dutton peppered his book with various 'woozle alerts!' to identify instances when research, in his opinion, had been incorrectly conducted or incorrectly interpreted in order to support a feminist approach. Overall, while this approach to the book was engaging to read and certainly kept my attention, the tone felt mocking and disrespectful of any scholars who Dutton disagreed with.

Straus (2006) outlined the ways in which the dominant gendered explanation of IPV continued to repress positive developments in the areas of research, scholarship and intervention. He described incidences where the federal government suppressed data that women used violence in high rates against male partners but offered that the era of “cover-up” (p. 1088) was coming to an end. Straus stated that evidence indicated women tended to be more injured than men but also offered that this may be the reason they used violence so often, because of the potential low level of risk of injury to their partner. He also presented the convergence theory that there is a strong correlate between women’s gains in equality in society and their increased participation in crime. Given Straus’s (2005) previous comment on men’s advocacy groups, I thought it pertinent to include the following quote:

There is a small but increasingly influential men’s movement starting to change the political climate. For example, they have lobbied members of Congress to make the renewed Violence Against Women Act gender inclusive. In New Hampshire, the legislature created a committee on the status of men. There is a hotline for male victims and another that is explicitly gender-inclusive. Both have been refused funding under the Violence Against Women Act; however, legal action is being taken to reverse that, just as legal action was crucial in the effort to force police and prosecutors to treat violence against women as the crime that it is (p. 1091).

To me there was a difference in the men’s groups Straus described here and the groups he described in Straus (2005). The difference to me was that some groups were seeking to dismantle funding for female victims and use family violence data showing sexual symmetry to do so while others were seeking to find services and resources for male victims and were asking for them to be included in funding resources. There was an important difference between those two groups of activists, with different motivations

and different intentions, and I believed it was important to know which of those groups Straus seemed to be aligning with and which of those he was not. The implication from Straus (2005) and Straus (2006) was that he was against the former and that he was supportive of the latter, though his level of active engagement with their individual political efforts was unclear.

DeKeseredy (2007) responded to Dutton (2006) with *Understanding the Complexities of Feminist Perspectives on Woman Abuse: A Commentary on Donald G. Dutton's Rethinking Domestic Violence*. He described Dutton's (2006) as a participant in the conservative, antifeminist backlash. DeKeseredy (2007) systematically went through Dutton's (2006) points about feminism and offered counter-points, namely that Dutton's conceptualization of the multitude of feminist theory was inaccurate and outdated, with very little cited of recent feminist work. DeKeseredy (2007) argued that Dutton (2006) (like other proponents of sexual symmetry in violence) failed to take into account experiences that were widely reported as asymmetrical. He wrote:

To reach these conclusions, Dutton and other proponents of sexual symmetry artificially narrow the definition of violence between intimates to obscure injurious behaviors that display marked sexual asymmetry, such as sexual assault, strangulation, separation assault, stalking, and homicide. Rather than an unacceptable or hysterical broadening of the definition of violence, these behaviors are commonly part of abused women's experience (p. 875).

DeKeseredy (2007) critiqued Dutton's (2006) attempt at making it appear as though feminist scholars were dogmatic and anti-science while family conflict scholars "are objective scientists pursuing the truth (p. 876)." In reaction to Dutton's (2006) position that feminists were political and ideological, DeKeseredy (2006) countered with the point that Dutton (2006) and other family violence scholars were associated with the political

aims of some antifeminist men's rights groups. DeKeseredy (2006) made clear his position that while all research and all researchers operate in political contexts, most feminist scholars simply operate within a framework that is in the practice of making those contexts and allegiances overt rather than hidden agendas. He also countered the opinion that feminist scholars were exclusively in favor of criminal justice solutions including arrest and prosecution to address IPV and offered several examples as counterpoint. DeKeseredy (2007) concluded with the opinion that in fact "there is much less paradigm hostility than that described by Dutton in this late period of modernity (p. 881)" and several examples of scholars across perspectives working together to end violence in intimate relationships.

Dutton, Hamel & Aaronson's (2010) *The Gender Paradigm in Family Court Processes: Re-balancing the Scales of Justice from Biased Social Science* was a critique of gender-based approaches for making custody evaluations in family court. They described that various forms of social science "chicanery" (p.2) have been used to support a feminist political agenda versus adhering to the rigors of the scientific process and the established norms of the scientific community. Dutton, Hamel & Aaronson (2010) provided evidence for what they term the gender paradigm mindset that afflicted family court judges and behavioral health clinicians, leading to inappropriate custody evaluations and family court decisions. They highlighted the recent focus on identifying less clear-cut cases of coercive control that were indicated by reports of fear and sexual abuse, even though they may be "uncorroborated" because they were mostly hidden phenomena. Dutton, Hamel & Aaronson (2010) critiqued these methods as supporting the

use of false accusations of abuse and recommended more evidence-based methodologies for assessment including personality tests and parenting knowledge. They went on to critique Johnson's typology approach to IPV and examined the risks to children from abusive female caregivers.

Molly Dragiewicz published *Equality With a Vengeance: Men's Rights Groups, Battered Women, and Antifeminist Backlash* in 2011. Dragiewicz (2011) detailed the lawsuit Booth v. Hvass in 2001, which was the attempt by a group of men's rights activists to dismantle Minnesota domestic violence legislation under the claim that it encouraged discrimination on the basis of sex. "Significantly, the desired outcome of the case was not more services for men but the elimination of all state-funded domestic violence services, including those the plaintiffs knew helped men (p. 28)." While the case was ultimately unsuccessful, it was only the first of several lawsuits attempting to argue that domestic violence legislation was discriminatory based on theories of sexual symmetry. Dragiewicz pointed out that most of these attempts have been unsuccessful except for one case in California (Woods v. Horton 2008) where the legislation was ordered to be changed to reflect gender neutrality while also including provisions that men and women may need different services. Since in practice California shelters do offer services to men and provide help finding emergency housing, the legislation in fact changed very little. Dragiewicz presented how the sex symmetrical arguments used by such groups, based on the research of family violence scholars, were pulled into a narrative argument that claimed that violence against men (by women) has been overlooked, and that the violence against women (by men) has been inflated (typically

through false accusations) for the political gains of feminists. This reasoning provided the foundation for arguments to dismantle legislation that provided funding for services for female victims of IPV such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and encouraged a return to IPV's privatization within the home. Dragiewicz's points were compelling but what continued to strike me was the role of advocacy for male victims, which she highlighted to great effect. Some of the groups which were seeking to challenge domestic violence legislation were not asking for services to be available to male victims while others were. My impression based on my reading thus far was that improving legislation, research and services to meet the needs of male victims (as long as existing resources for female victims and children were not reduced), would be something most scholars in this area would agree with. The repeal of legislation providing services and funding for victims, under the argument that there was a vast feminist conspiracy of false accusations against men, was something I believe most scholars in this area would not agree with. Therefore, my impression was that men's rights activists and the men's rights movement was not a monolithic enterprise and that there were voices within it that advocated for male victims while others were more explicitly anti-feminist. Both may have used the research of family violence scholars but I believed that the former may have used it in a way that advanced the needs of those afflicted by IPV while the latter may have used it in a way that may have prevented those who needed services from receiving them.

In 2011, *the Journal of Aggression and Violent Behavior* published a special issue based on the divide in the field that grew out of an invited study group that occurred in

October 2010. Attendees included Murray Straus, Michael Johnson, Walter DeKeseredy, Zeev Winstock, Sandra Stith, Amy Holtzworth-Monroe, and Edward Gondolf. The attendees each wrote articles for the special issue. Winstock & Eisikovits (2011) in the opening piece wrote:

Research over the past decades has produced no resolution, especially in light of the express disagreement over how to perceive, define and study the problem and how to approach its intervention. There would be broad agreement that this state of affairs significantly reduces the ability to promote an effective social response to partner violence. The cleavage can be dealt with in many ways. The simplest and most readily available, yet least recommended, is to attempt to settle it by forceful means. Alternatively, it can be tackled from a skeptical perspective, which assumes that neither of the two prevailing perspectives is necessarily correct. Accordingly, both outlooks are to be researched while seeking ways to mediate between them, and since there is still doubt as to what is true and false, use the two paradigms carefully to reduce risk and increase the prospects in dealing with the various expressions of the problem. This special issue is not only an example of such an approach that is based on an effective dialog between scholars who disagree over core issues of partner violence, but it is also an opportunity to become acquainted with the growing body of knowledge on domestic/family violence, with all its complexity and various aspects (p. 277).

Straus (2011) was an examination of how Johnson's typologies hold up in an empirical review. He concluded that Johnson's argument was wrong that the divide represented research of different types of IPV (i.e. intimate terrorism and situational couple violence). That in fact, most of the research supporting gender symmetry showed that violence was both severe and mutual and that according to Johnson's definition of an intimate terrorist, many intimate terrorists were women. He argued instead that the divide was representative of the physical effects of perpetration instead of the type of perpetration and reflected that while both men and women committed serious violence against one another frequently, women experienced greater physical injury. Johnson (2011) was a strong reply to the recent article by Dutton, Hamel & Aaronson (2010), *The Gender*



*Paradigm in Family Court Processes: Re-balancing the Scales of Justice from Biased Social Science* as well as a reiteration of his typology approach with its supporting evidence. Johnson (2011) addressed what he viewed were various misrepresentations by Dutton and colleagues, including the idea that feminism was a one-dimensional theoretical framework, that feminists rejected that women use violence, that feminists elevated women as nonviolent and degraded men as violent, that feminists argued that patriarchy was the only explanation for IPV, and that feminists exclusively controlled the political and social policy around IPV. He systematically countered the points offered in the Dutton, Hamel, & Aaronson (2010) article and wrote:

So, what's up with these authors? Why the comic book caricatures of the feminist analysis? Why the gross misrepresentations of what Joan Kelly and I wrote in our 2008 article? Why the single-minded focus on alleged evidence that women are as bad as men? (p. 295).

DeKeseredy (2011) provided a detailed and thorough elucidation of the many nuances of modern feminism and feminist research on IPV. Winstock (2011) described the divide as a “paradigmatic cleavage” (p. 303), and couched it in terms of the transitions between paradigms as described by Thomas Kuhn (1962). I describe more of Winstock’s perspective in my brief review of his 2013 book *Partner Violence: A New Paradigm for Understanding Conflict Escalation here and in chapter 5: Paradigms and Meta-Narratives*. Stith (2011)’s description of a couples-based intervention for IPV is further highlighted in the next chapter, chapter 3: Behavioral Health, Relational Therapy, & Batterers Intervention Programs.

In 2012, Dutton wrote a piece *The Case Against the Role of Gender in Intimate Partner Violence* in which he responded to the special issue articles by Gondolf,

DeKeseredy and Johnson in the journal *Aggression and Violent Behavior*. He wrote:

Both Gondolf and DeKeseredy criticize me for not reading the recent "feminist" research on woman abuse. DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz (2007) made the same argument in their disingenuous review of *Rethinking Domestic Violence* (where DeKeseredy failed to disclose that his review might be colored by my outing him in that book for misreading his own data) (p. 102).

In addition to his critique of feminist scholarship, he also referred to the movement towards more of a family-based prevention model where "The exclusive focus on "violence against women" will be viewed as an anachronism and the demonization and otherization of men (Corvo & Johnson, 2003; Taylor, 2009) as an aberration (p. 103)."

As my review of the 2000s progressed, I saw a gradual increase in the personal nature of academic articles in this area, particularly from Dutton. His level of animosity towards feminist scholars, particularly DeKeseredy was palpable and made it difficult for me to read his work.

Winstock's (2013) *Partner Violence: A New Paradigm for Understanding Conflict Escalation* built on Winstock (2011) and established the divide as one of a clash of competing paradigms in the tradition of Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). While I elaborated on Winstock (2013) in the chapter on *Paradigms and Meta-Narratives* there were a few pieces of the book I wanted to highlight for this review. In recognition of the growing negative emotion in the debate, Winstock wrote:

Tagging family violence scholars as antifeminist (by feminist scholars) does not mean that the former are victimized by the latter. Scholars on both fronts contribute to shifting the focus from theoretical and methodological questions to interests (especially those motivating the other party). As a result, the question

“what is the gender basis of the problem of partner violence?” made way for the question “who does the other party in the controversy serve, and for what purpose?” Shifting the discourse from the professional to the interpersonal infused the controversy with hostility. This turned the disagreement into an escalating conflict between feminist scholars and family violence scholars, with each camp turning a blind eye to the other, mainly working to defeat the other party’s truth. Paradoxically, those most identified with professional insights for coping with conflicts, escalation and partner violence, cannot implement this in their own professional environment (p. 14).

I shared Winstock’s point that the questions of political alignment and personal integrity were ones that shifted the debate and made it more difficult to engage with, particularly when arguments were framed in ways that seemed spiteful or mocking.

**Chapter 3:**

**Behavioral Health, Relational Therapy and Batterer Intervention Programs**

Clinical interventions for IPV and in particular, interventions for perpetrators and relational treatment options are a central interest of mine. I have experienced working with psychological trauma and one of the reasons I became more involved in the field of IPV was because of the intersection between psychological trauma and IPV perpetration. To this purpose, I will begin this chapter by reviewing some of the historical and contemporary context of behavioral health approaches to perpetration and later move to a review of batterer intervention programs. I will then discuss some of the current research about individual psychological co-morbidities, with a focus on PTSD. I will end this section by briefly reviewing relational approaches to IPV and highlighting one form of couple's therapy used with couples experiencing IPV. While there is an entire body of work related to IPV victimization and treatment options, I will only focus on interventions that include the perpetrator. Many states mandate batterer intervention programs for a person convicted of IPV perpetration (Maiuro & Eberle, 2008). Both individual psychological treatment and relational interventions are considered supporting options to a batterer's intervention programs (Edelson & Tolman, 1992). Over the past few years, this has begun to change, with more discussions about individual psychological and relational treatment as appropriate interventions in their own right, without the need or mandate for attendance in a batterer intervention program. This movement is viewed with some trepidation because of the historical context of missteps by the behavioral health and couple and family therapy community in appropriately addressing IPV and concerns about victim's safety during relational intervention.

### **Historical Context**

The influx of psychological research about IPV in the 1960s and 1970s tended to focus on women as pathological victims (see Scott, 1974; Snell, Rosenwald, & Robey, 1964; Walker, 1979). Examination of male perpetrators also focused on pathology, with the perspective that perpetration was a symptom of a behavioral health problem and individual treatment would end the violence (see Foy, Eisler & Pinkston, 1975). When such individual factors were focused on, the broader influences of society were ignored (Edelson & Tolman, 1992).

As Bograd (1984) outlined in her excellent feminist critique, couple and family therapists were also intervening with families based on a systems theory view of violent interaction where each partner engaged in cyclical, recursive behaviors. These interventions were based on many pervasive cultural beliefs such as traditional gender role ideology and the importance of the preservation of a marriage. A systems-level analysis became a convenient way to reinforce ideas about the power of a woman to cause her own victimization by acting in ways not appropriate for a wife or a woman in society. Feminist therapists and scholars became concerned that in such a climate couples therapy was not safe for women. One concern was that with a focus on the relational processes occurring between a couple, violence would be relegated to one of many treatment goals instead of being *the* treatment goal. Additionally, how could a woman feel safe to share her thoughts and feelings with her perpetrator in the room, potentially ready to use violence against her when they went home? Bograd (1984) pointedly observed:

This raises a question that family therapists often acknowledge but leave to others to answer: What is the relation of family systems theory and interventions to

society? To paraphrase a leading feminist scholar on wife battering, family systems approaches to husband-to-wife violence make wife battering simply a mental health problem. Family systems theory can illuminate why this husband hit this wife on this particular occasion. It remains mute on the larger questions of why husbands use physical force with their wives, or why men use physical force against women. Family therapists may argue that these questions are beyond the scope of professional concern. But therapists who employ a clinical theory founded on the axiom that context is all *cannot* continue to ignore the gender-based inequality that constitutes the background of any systemic model of wife battering (p. 567).

It was precisely this lack of ecological context and meta-awareness that individual psychological and relational approaches lacked that made them ineffective and potentially dangerous modes of treatment. As such, group-based batterer intervention programs were designed to fill this gap. As Edleson & Tolman (1992) described:

The group addresses the ecology of battering in a more direct way than may individual treatment. Although many men who batter express regret about their behavior, they are given mixed messages by those around them or even messages of direct support for their abuse of women. Through the group, the man's social networks expand to include others who may be supportive of him becoming non-abusive (p. 55).

I believe that the contemporary professional recognition by couple and family therapists of the influence of power, privilege and broader socio-historical forces has created a new opportunity for relational treatment options for IPV than once existed. The next section will review batterer intervention programs as they have become the primary method of intervening with perpetrators.

### **Batterer Intervention Programs**

Treatment-as-usual for perpetration of partner violence is oriented towards the male perpetrator with institutionally supported treatment (at the state and federal level) tending to focus on preventing male recidivism and treating female victims. Court

mandated perpetrator treatment and/or community based batterer intervention for men convicted of partner violence typically involve sex-segregated psycho-education, cognitive-behavioral techniques and group therapy. The Duluth model is the most well-known and widespread interventions of this type and it is reflective of a feminist theoretical perspective and its treatment method addresses male perpetration as rooted in societal misogyny (Mederos, 1999). Men learn about the role of sexism and male privilege in their use of violence against their female partners. Female use of violence in this model is understood in the context of male use of violence or as conceptually distinct from male perpetration because of social and gender dynamics and is seen as requiring a distinctly different form of treatment (Mederos, 1999; Dasgupta, 2009, Whitaker & Niolon, 2009). Meta-analyses of effectiveness research on male perpetration programs reveal inconsistent outcomes (Babcock, 2004, Feder & Wilson, 2005). Dutton (2006, 2008, 2010) was passionately against batterer intervention programs and said “By any reasonable standard, Duluth treatment is a failure (Dutton, 2006, p. 314).” He was more supportive of groups that are exclusively cognitive-behavioral in nature, are gender neutral and incorporate couples-therapy. Given the high prevalence of partner violence and the lack of evidence for treatment options for male perpetrators that are consistently effective, there is a call for more research into exploring what is missing in current systems of care and identifying what is needed for developing effective new approaches. This conversation is deeply connected to the greater dialogue about feminist and family violence approaches to IPV. Gondolf (2012) pointed out that:

There are claims that batterer programs are simply not effective and, furthermore, are ideologically rooted in an outmoded feminist paradigm- a perspective that



sees men's acting out of a sense of entitlement or control over a woman as an extension of sexism in society and gendered roles in relationships. As a result, many specialized programs for domestic violence offenders are being questioned, replaced, or supplemented by alternatives. In some jurisdictions, court referrals to the established programs have dropped substantially. In others, mental health or alcohol treatment programs are dealing with the offenders. At the same time, there are counterclaims that batterer programs are making an important contribution to the work against domestic violence and are headed in the right direction. From this point of view, many of the alternatives have diverted attention to the batterers' psychological well-being and away from victim safety (p. xii).

Gondolf (2012) noted that this focus on the psychological associations with perpetration is a shift from earlier models of programming that were more "educational or didactic (p. 16)." This return to searching for psychological or relational treatment options comes from what many see as the continued and unrelenting problem of IPV that requires the need for new solutions. Gondolf (2012) referred to more traditional batterer intervention programs as relying more on using cognitive-behavioral techniques in addressing broad commonalities of gender role socialization, while the new psychological focus relies more on "distinctive individual factors and couple dynamics that contribute to violence (p. 92)." Gondolf (2012) argued that these two approaches can and most likely should be integrated, but that a psychological approach in absence of addressing broad socialization influences is not the answer either.

### **Psychological Co-Morbidity and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

Several studies and meta-analyses describe a significant relationship between diagnoses of PTSD in combat veterans and their perpetration of partner violence (e.g., Beckham, Moore, & Reynolds, 2000, Jakupcak et al., 2009, McFall et al., 1999, Taft et al., 2007a, 2007b; Taft, Watkins, Stafford, Street & Monson, 2011). Impulsive aggression can be a symptom of PTSD (van der Kolk, 2001) and the question emerges, should all

perpetrators of IPV get screened for PTSD? If perpetrators are screened for PTSD and a trauma -focus is included in their treatment; would such an intervention improve outcomes? One hesitation of such integration is that PTSD will be looked to as a cause and/or excuse for partner violence and this will remove the consideration of power dynamics that standard partner violence treatment incorporates.

Though the literature on PTSD has tended to focus on soldiers and veterans, men who perpetrate partner violence in community samples are also at higher risk for PTSD. PTSD is an anxiety-based diagnosis where, following exposure to a traumatic event, a person feels fear, helplessness and horror and, over time, that person develops a set of symptoms across three areas: Avoidance, re-experiencing, and increased arousal (DSMIV-TR, 2000). In a United States-based nationally representative sample, Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes and Nelson (1995) found 15% of women and 5% of men were either currently or previously diagnosed with PTSD. Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Merikangas, & Walters (2005) found an overall lifetime prevalence of 6.8% of developing PTSD in a replication of the previous nationally representative survey, with women at significantly higher risk of developing any anxiety disorder, including PTSD. In contrast, across four post conflict African countries with high rates of trauma exposure, rates of PTSD ranged from 15.8% to 37.4% (de Jong et al., 2001). Breslau et al. (2004) in a sample of United States urban youth found that 82.5% of the sample had experienced at least one trauma with 7.1% of the 82.5% meeting diagnostic criteria for PTSD at the time of the study. Evidence suggests a dose effect relationship where the more traumas that are experienced, the greater the risk of developing PTSD with a

threshold level of traumatic experience at which all people will develop PTSD (Neuner et al., 2004). This is important because it indicates both the significant prevalence of and potential for PTSD in community samples of men who may perpetrate partner violence.

***Partner violence perpetration and prevalence of PTSD.***

In one sample of partner violent men, 12.7% met diagnostic criteria for PTSD (Rosenbaum & Leisring, 2003). Another study of 133 partner violent men compared to 44 matched controls, found that partner violent men were significantly more likely to report symptoms of PTSD as well as to match with MCMI II (Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory II) profiles of men diagnosed with PTSD (Dutton, 1995). An exploration of behavioral health diagnoses in 103 female perpetrators of IPV found that 44% met or exceeded diagnostic criteria for PTSD (Stuart, Moore, Gordon, Ramsey, & Kahler, 2006). A 2012 study of 308 male perpetrators of domestic violence found that 26.2% met the clinical cutoff for PTSD (Shorey, Febres, Brasfield, & Stuart, 2012). A cross-sectional study in Norway across five perpetrator treatment programs found that 18.4% of 194 men met diagnostic criteria for PTSD (Askeland & Heir, 2014).

***Trauma in childhood and later perpetration of partner violence.***

For men who perpetrate partner violence, there is a positive correlation between experiences of violence and abuse in childhood and partner violence in adulthood (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Hanson, Cadsky, Harris, & Lalonde, 1997; Whitfield, Anda, Dube & Felitti, 2003). Following treatment for partner violence, a history of child abuse is also a risk factor for recidivism for male perpetrators (Tollefson & Gross, 2006). In addition, experiences of child abuse and parental rejection increase risk for developing PTSD in

adulthood (Taft et al., 2008, Yehuda, Halligan & Grossman, 2001) and men who perpetrate partner violence are at higher risk for having a diagnosis of PTSD.

***PTSD and higher levels of anger and violence.***

In a sample of 60 combat veterans, those with PTSD reported more anger and partner violence; trait anger (the dispositional tendency to experience anger) mediated the relationship between psychological and physical perpetration. The authors outlined how PTSD was associated with trait anger, the more trait anger, the more risk for physical perpetration; with anger as the potential pathway between PTSD and partner violence (Taft et al., 2007). McFall, Fontana, Raskind, and Rosenheck (1999) compared inpatient and outpatient Vietnam veterans with PTSD and a community sample of Vietnam veterans on violent acts. They found that the in-patient veterans with PTSD, who typically have more severe symptoms than out-patient veterans with PTSD, were more likely to perpetrate violent acts than both other groups. McFall et al. (1999) explained their findings by suggesting that hyperarousal lowers the threshold of self control when angry; the more severe hyperarousal symptoms, the greater the likelihood to perpetrate violence. In addition, Orcutt, King and King (2003) found in their structural equation modeling of data from 376 male Vietnam veterans, that men with previous trauma, who were also diagnosed with combat related PTSD, were at higher risk for perpetrating partner violence.

A key finding to emphasize is that while childhood experiences of trauma and adult PTSD are associated with partner violence, there is no evidence suggesting that these factors *cause* partner violence. The majority of survivors of child abuse and those

diagnosed with PTSD do not perpetrate partner violence. However, important connections between traumatic experiences in childhood, PTSD and partner violence have emerged from previous literature that would be critical to incorporate into any new, developing research.

In my opinion, the support for the integration of PTSD and partner violence perpetration intervention is strong. But treating PTSD without addressing broader social forces in an effort to decrease IPV would be a mistake. Additionally, there are also other areas of important co-morbid research on substance abuse, ecological considerations (i.e., unemployment, cultural membership, etc.) and relational factors that provide support for their integration into existing treatment programs. While these areas will not be covered in-depth, it is important to acknowledge them because they often intersect with trauma to create multiple avenues of increased risk (see Anderson, 2002; Coker, Smith, McKeown, & King, 2000; Hirschel, Hutchison, & Shaw, 2010; Stith et al., 2004b; Stuart et al., 2006).

### **Relational Treatment Options**

In *Family Interventions in Domestic Violence* edited by John Hamel and Tonia Nicholls, Hamel (2002) argued in the first chapter that:

Clinicians should be free to intervene at all points in the relationship and family system as necessary. “Family therapy,” of course, need not involve all members of the family in the same session or even in the overall course of treatment. Rather, interventions are made on the basis of the relationships among the family members, the type of abuse, how each member affected, and their role in maintaining the dysfunction (p. 4).

The volume was clearly supportive of gender-symmetrical approaches (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz are in the acknowledgments) to the treatment of IPV and encouraged clinical

freedom to conduct couple and family therapy with clients who were experiencing IPV (when they deemed appropriate). One glaring problem I had with the volume was the lack of a chapter or explicit conversation on sexual violence and rape. In the index, there was one page listed for a reference of rape (p.11). All references of sexual abuse were related to reports from a research study about various risk factors and perpetration/victimization.

This was the one quote I could find mentioning sexual assault:

Furthermore, although women engage in high degrees of unwanted sexual behavior toward men, some of it coercive (Frieze, 2000; Krahe, Waizenhofer, & Moller, 2003), men perpetrate the overwhelming number of rapes in intimate partner relationships (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000; p. 11).

Hamel (2007) then included a highly graphic passage from Walker's (1979) *The Battered Woman* about a woman's repeated sexual brutalization by her perpetrator and then paired it with a quote from a man in Cook (1997) describing his partner throwing scalding coffee in his face and bashing his forehead in with the heel of a boot while he was sleeping. In my opinion, while these are both terrible experiences, and one is not worse than the other, they are also qualitatively different. I found it difficult to understand this lack of confrontation of the experience of sexual violence as a part of IPV by family violence scholars. For contrast, I found it interesting that Yllo (1999) in the edited volume *Coordinating Community Responses to Domestic Violence* discussed how "when it comes to marital rape, the Duluth model does not now uphold its basic principles on protecting victims, holding assailants fully accountable, and changing the way the community thinks (p. 236)." Dutton's (2006) *Rethinking Domestic Violence* had no reference of rape or sexual violence in its index. In fact, Dutton (2006) cited a study by Pimlott-Kubiak & Cortina (2003) about the exposure and consequences of abuse and

trauma on both men and women. In the original article, using data from the National Violence Against Women Survey, when sexual violence was included in the analysis, both men and women had more severe negative long-term outcomes, with 18% of women and 3% of men in the sample experiencing lifetime sexual violence. Dutton (2006) only cited the statistics without the sexual violence data. It appeared to me that this absence of addressing the sexual violence in IPV was something that must be worked on by both feminist and family violence scholars, though it did seem that perhaps the family violence scholars had farther to go. As a couple and family therapist, I saw this as an important area to address when considering and evaluating the potential for relational therapies, for a clinician cannot intervene with what is not named. This seemed particularly important to explore since sexual violence is one of the few areas remaining where scholars on both sides can seem to agree there remains a gendered difference.

Stith, McCollum, & Rosen (2011) outlined a couples-based treatment for IPV that includes a rigorous screening process. They argued that:

Although couples treatment is controversial and we agree that not all couples who have experienced violence in their relationship should be seen conjointly, we are also convinced that a specific group of violent couples can use and benefit from a thoughtful couples counseling approach. That group includes couples who have experienced mild-to-moderate violence, who want to stay in their relationship, and who want to end the violence between them (p. 18-19).

Stith, McCollum, & Rosen (2011) articulated that contemporary couples' therapists are trained in systemic thinking that holds people accountable for their violence and does not hold someone accountable for the violence of their partner. They cited research that indicated couples' therapy can be done safely and effectively and that it meets the needs voiced by many couples. In perhaps the most compelling argument to me, they stated

how many couples therapists are most likely already working with violent couples, who are simply not disclosing because the therapist is not asking and the client is not telling. Many of these couples are seeking out conjoint treatment, are not mandated to treatment because of a domestic violence crime and the only professional interaction they may have is with a couple's therapist. Because of the current limitations on working with couples based on the concerns so clearly articulated by Bograd (1984), many couples' therapists do not know how to work safely with the couples they see when violence is raised as a problem. The only option left to the couple's therapist is to say they cannot work with the couple *as a couple*, and either work with them individually or refer them to traditional, sex-segregated treatment programs. It leaves the couple in a place without many options and it leaves the couple's therapist in an ethical quandary.

Stith, McCollum & Rosen (2011) recommended universal screening of all couples for IPV with a combination of both in-person and written assessments, with in-person interviews conducted separately with each member of the couple. Using broader, more open language allows clients to use their own words to describe how conflict is resolved and tends to encourage greater disclosure about any violence or abuse that is happening. This in conjunction with asking about specific acts can also encourage disclosure since Stith, McCollum & Rosen (2011) stated that many clients do not describe their relationship as violent or abusive. In addition to a semi-structured interview and a lethality assessment, they outlined utilizing several standardized self-report measurements. Further in-person interviews take place individually to discuss in more detail what each partner reported. High levels of violence or disagreement in reporting



are both typical exclusion criteria. If high levels of violence are reported, the therapist does a thorough, in-depth assessment about the meaning of those acts, particularly the fear and emotional impact experienced by the victim. The therapist then has the discretion to refer them into the treatment protocol depending on the outcome of their assessment. For example, they told the story of a couple where both partners individually reported an incident where the husband choked the wife and both partners individually reported that this was the penultimate incident that instigated their desire to get help. In such a case, a couple may be referred into the treatment program. Other exclusionary criteria include any description of fear on the part of one partner about the other around sharing uncomfortable things in session, a refusal to remove fire-arms from the home, an active and untreated substance abuse problem, or if either member of the couple is not committed to keeping the relationship intact.

Domestic Violence Focused Couples Therapy (DVFCT) is based on solution-focused principles of psychotherapy (Stith, McCollum, & Rosen, 2011). Typically, a male-female co-therapy team works with the couple. The central goal of DVFCT is the elimination of violence in all forms from the relationship with secondary and tertiary goals of improving the relationship quality and increasing personal accountability. Both a primary and a secondary set of interventions are offered if barriers arise such as the threat of or reoccurrence of violence. The primary set of interventions contains many of the strength-based techniques of solution-focused brief therapy, including setting specific goals and recognizing successes. The secondary set of interventions centers on safety, time-outs, referrals to other professionals and temporary separations if needed. The

undergirding assumptions of DVFACT are that safety is the number one priority and that violence is chosen behavior. Stith, McCollum, & Rosen (2011) outlined that the beginning stages of treatment are highly structured and therapist-led with typically the first six sessions conducted with each partner separately. Sometimes this happens in the context of sex-segregated, multi-couple groups. While Stith, McCollum, & Rosen (2011) offered a layout for session structure and the steps of treatment, safety is always first and the therapist has the discretion to change the protocol with that aim in mind. Following the individual or sex-segregated group sessions, which focus on a variety of topics including negotiating time-outs and substance abuse counseling, conjoint treatment sessions typically begin. The conjoint treatment sessions can only begin if both members of the couple have individually signed a no-violence contract and created a safety-plan. Each member of the couple is met with individually both before and after each session to assess safety. At any point, the therapists have the discretion to move from conjoint treatment back to individual or sex-segregated group treatment for a period of time or end conjoint treatment all together. Stith, Rosen, McCullum, & Thomsen (2004) and Stith, Rosen, McCollum (2011) showed that couples who went through both types of treatment (individual sessions and multi-couple group sessions) had lower rates of violent recidivism in their relationship than control groups. The multi-couple treatment group actually had lower rates of recidivism than the individual session treatment group. Given what Edelson & Tolman (1992) wrote about the importance of the group context in counteracting negative social influences and creative positive social pressure for non-violence, this made sense to me. Perhaps as the research accumulates about the DVFACT

and other programs like it, there will be increasing evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of the group-based model.

While many critique a one-size-fits all to perpetrator treatment and suggest screening for different types of perpetration based on perpetrator typology (i.e., Holzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994) or dyadic typology (i.e., Johnson, 1995), there remains the question of whether individualized treatment and intervention is actually realistic. Given the high rates of IPV and the requests for treatment from those mandated to treatment because of prosecution or from those who desire to eliminate violence from their relationships, can the broader infrastructure meet the need of such individualized approaches? Who would fund the process of testing screening protocols, designing research studies, implementing differential treatments, and following participants over time? To create change in the current system in a way that is methodical, and incorporates the best practices of program evaluation and research design with a primary concern for victim safety, would require a unified and comprehensive network of like-minded and collaborative clinicians, scholars, advocates, judges, legislatures, probation officers, and non-profit community organizations. The process would be messy, fraught with debate, and would most likely be slow. Given the state of the division as documented in this review so far, it is difficult to imagine that such change is possible except in small, close-knit networks of communities with professionals who have deep relational connections along with funders who are interested in improving the options available those who perpetrate violence and the family members in relationship with them.

**Chapter 4:**  
**Criminal Justice, Critical Criminology, & Restorative Justice**

No conversation about the intersection of criminal justice and IPV can be started without mentioning the work of Lawrence Sherman and Richard Berk. As previously discussed, as the problem of IPV emerged in the 1970s as an area of public attention, there were strong cultural and societal factors preventing arrest for and prosecution of criminal acts of IPV. Sherman & Berk (1984) was a study with the Minneapolis police department where police were assigned to respond in a randomly assigned way to an act of simple assault. They could either arrest the perpetrator, do informal mediation between the parties or they could order the perpetrator to leave the home for eight hours. Recidivism was assessed through follow up interviews conducted with victims for up to six months after the incident and through police reports to look at rates of re-arrest. In their analysis Sherman & Berk (1984) found that arrest showed a significant impact on lowering rates of recidivism compared to the other treatment conditions. The deterrent effect of arrest and being temporarily held in jail was disconnected from prosecution; only three perpetrators ultimately were prosecuted or served jail time. They also detailed several problems with the validity of their study including the challenges for various police officers in adhering to the research protocol and this influence on the validity of the results. Sherman & Berk (1984) concluded that:

Therefore, in jurisdictions that process domestic assault offenders in a manner similar to that employed in Minneapolis, we favor a presumption of arrest; an arrest should be made unless there are good, clear reasons why an arrest would be counterproductive. We do not, however, favor requiring arrests in all misdemeanor domestic assault cases (p. 270).

Berk & Newton (1985) replicated this finding using an analysis of longitudinal criminal justice data on 783 incidents of male perpetrated IPV against their wives. While Sherman

& Berk (1985) offered evidence to support arrest in simple assault IPV cases, they also clearly said they were not in favor of mandatory arrest policies. Perhaps, because of the broad nature of the problem of IPV and the desire to find solutions for it to help keep victims safe, by 1991, 15 states had enacted mandatory arrest legislation based on their study. This step was premature because the National Institute of Justice funded six replication studies of Sherman & Berk (1985) across the country and the results were mixed. Some of the studies supported Sherman & Berk (1985) in that arrest showed long term effects on recidivism while others showed the opposite, that arrest was significantly associated with an escalation in violence (Sherman, Smith, Schmidt, & Rogan, 1992). Sherman, Smith, Schmidt, & Rogan (1992) analyzed the data from multiple cities and concluded that factors such as employment and a perpetrator's stake in conformity affected the impact of arrest. They concluded:

For domestic violence offenses, the findings raise troubling policy implications. A policy of arresting employed persons but not unemployed persons would punish employment. A policy of not arresting at all may erode the general deterrent effect of arrest on potential spouse abusers. Yet a policy of arresting all offenders may simply produce more violence among suspects who have a low stake in conformity (p. 688).

Mandatory arrest policies for crimes of IPV inspired by the original Sherman and Berk Minneapolis experiment have faced intense criticism. Some of the primary critiques are that these policies unfairly impact low SES communities of color, that women are being arrested for perpetration when they are acting in self-defense and that arrest does not reflect the course of action that some victims would choose, undermining a victim's autonomy. Additionally, there is the argument that the criminal justice system serves victims poorly, that arrests do not deter the violence and that they place victims at greater

risk. Victims are also blamed for not reaching out or for working against the criminal justice system, for example by choosing to not testify against their perpetrator.

Mandatory arrest policies have been associated with a more feminist position in the field of IPV, or what Goodmark (2012) referred to as dominance feminism and Mills (2003) called mainstream feminism. Mandatory arrest also coalesces with what some might term a more traditional criminology approach that views crime through the lens of a deterrence theoretical model, namely that people avoid committing crimes because the sanctions are too high (Dutton, 2006).

While certainly voices in the battered women's movement historically advocated for mandatory arrest of perpetrators, contemporary feminist positions are far more nuanced. Pence & Shepard (1999) described how the battered women's movement sought to help abused women primarily through two forms of advocacy, individual and institutional. They wrote:

Institutional advocacy, however, also focuses on how the state should intervene with men who beat women, regardless of the desires of an individual woman who is the victim of an individual man. Thus, the demands of the battered women's movement to criminalize violent men often conflict with the interests and desires of women who are living with those men (Edwards, 1989; p. 11).

Pence & Shepard (1999) articulated how one form of institutional advocacy was the coordination of individual shelters with police departments and legislatures to support an expansion of the criminal justice system to intervene in the lives of women and children in order to protect them. Another form of institutional advocacy was the coalition of various members of a community to coordinate efforts to reduce violence, with criminal justice being one component of a much broader effort. In describing the journey of the

DAIP, a flagship feminist intervention with IPV, Pence & Shepard (1999) detailed their struggle with the criminal justice system and that form of institutional advocacy:

We knew that most battered women had legitimate reasons for not wanting to have the state engage in a hostile criminal proceeding against their partners, yet we pushed prosecution as a means of holding men accountable and protecting victims. On one hand, we recognized that the system was too slow, too adversarial, too inconsistent, too incident focused, and too unwilling to follow through on its own orders to be of predictable help to victims of battering. On the other hand, we thought that continuing to simply dismiss these cases would only reinforce abuser's notions that they can safely use violence in their intimate relationships (p. 32).

Given this choice, many in the battered women's movement focused on strengthening the criminal justice system institutional response to IPV. However, there was still the problem of what to do when victims did not want to pursue prosecution and punishment of their perpetrator. Pence & Shepard (1999) documented that they and others in the movement came to the perspective that their work was a piece of a broader human rights effort on the part of women. They paralleled their work to the civil rights movement's fight for integration in the public school system in the 1960s, observing that sweeping societal change is often difficult and typically is made more so for the pioneers who endure it. Because of that, Pence & Shepard said "Our solution was to pursue cases even when a victim does not want it (p.33)." Despite this position, they were also deeply aware of its many conflicts and problems; awareness that only grew over time. They highlighted that "we have had to address the reality that the system's response does not have the same meaning across class, race, and gender lines (p. 33)." Pence & Shepard (1999) described their learning over time as reflecting an acknowledgement of female



perpetration and adapting programming to integrate acknowledgement and respect for culture and the intersections of power and privilege. Pence & Shepard (1999) wrote:

I think it would be fair to say that somewhere down this long road to change we came to the realization that even if we could handpick every police officer and judge and prosecutor, we would still not eliminate the bad case outcomes that continue to occur after we had changed almost every policy (p. 37).

They finalized the chapter to write that their goal for institutional advocacy has shifted, “our goal is to create a different social climate, not to promote certain courses of action (p. 40). Pence & McDonnell made it even more explicit this shift in support from mandatory arrest policies.

Many cities adopt a strict mandatory arrest or a no-drop prosecution policy on domestic violence cases, as if apprehending and convicting batterers is the only goal of intervention. This course of action is shortsighted and ultimately fails because the victim is the biggest obstacle in convicting the abuser. The victim, who may or may not be helped by a conviction, is seen as the problem (p. 42).

Despite this shift in perspective from some of the preeminent feminist thinkers, who have historically been associated with the push for the criminalization of IPV, other scholars still see this influence as negatively permeating our various societal systems for intervention. Linda Mills in her book *Insult to Injury* (2003) detailed this when she referred to mainstream feminist approaches to IPV in an attempt to categorize those self-named feminists who focus on “a monolithic legal approach to domestic violence (p. 4).” Given what Pence & Shepard (1999) described about the history of their position, I believe Mill’s (2003) description is accurate to some degree. I imagine that Pence & Shepard (1999) may have even agreed with this analysis as reflective of their particular historical position in time. Mills (2003) presented that while some feminists in the battered women’s movement “have now begun to question the decision to focus so

heavily on the criminal justice system (p. 4)”, there is still a strong coalition of “mainstream feminists” who continue to advocate “for an exclusive focus on punishment in response to domestic violence (p.4).” Mills (2003) added that the mainstream feminist focus on arrest and prosecution is reflective of the interests of a particular group of privileged, white heterosexual women. She drew attention to a similar gap that I noted in my historical review of the literature, namely that “what is appallingly apparent is that we have refused to address the role of women in the dynamic of intimate violence (p.9).” Mills (2003) made a call for engaging in therapeutic and community-based interventions with IPV that actually started to heal the root beginnings of violence instead of continuing to blame, punish, and traumatize and thereby keeping the cycle of violence and trauma continuing. She allowed for extenuating circumstances that would support making a decision to proceed with a criminal justice intervention on a battered woman’s behalf; such as physical incapacitation due to injury, or a diagnosis of complex PTSD or a perpetrators possession of weapons that he has used in the past. Mills is an advocate for a restorative justice (RJ) approach to IPV, which will be discussed in greater detail in the later part of this chapter. Restorative Justice (RJ) is an umbrella term for forms of conflict resolution connected to the “social movement that seeks to transform how communities respond to crime (Ptacek, 2010, p. 6)” that grew out of criticisms of the colonial, racist, classist, sexist elements within the systems designed to deliver justice. Goodmark (2012) applied an anti-essentialist feminist legal framework to developing new ways of intervening with IPV.

Anti-essentialist feminists argue that the composite “woman” has simply substituted the experiences of those with power- white, heterosexual, middle-class

women-for all women . . . An essentialist view of women elides the complexities of identity and the ways that various identities shape women's experiences. Anti-essentialist feminism focuses instead on the ways that those identities intersect, constructing and reinforcing women's oppression (p. 136).

Both Goodmark (2012) and Mills (2003) argued that women who are victimized should have the power to decide what course of action they want to take.

These critiques align with an emergence of voices from different areas that advocate for a more intersectional approach to understanding and exploring IPV. An area of strong criticism against the criminalization of domestic violence is how it affects communities of color, communities afflicted by poverty and immigrant communities. People of color are incarcerated at alarmingly disparate rates compared to whites. For many, these rates are reflective of institutionalized racism and poverty, as enforced and reinforced by the criminal justice system. When viewed through this lens, domestic violence laws become an instrument of oppression versus an instrument of justice (Kim, 2012). In addition, when victims from vulnerable communities do reach out for help from the legal system, research indicates that they are exposed to consequences resulting from greater state interference in their lives. This could mean arrest if they engaged in self-defense assaultive behaviors and/or interaction with the child welfare system because of children's exposure to domestic violence in the home. If a victim is currently on probation for an unrelated crime, their risks from further interaction with the legal system are exponentially increased. For undocumented victims, many of these same risks are compounded by uncertain legal status, despite provisions in VAWA to protect them. Victims from vulnerable communities, already exposed to heightened rates of state interference in their lives, may see the choice of safety as offered by the criminal justice

system as inviting more severe consequences than trying to manage an abusive situation on their own (Coker, 2004). This type of exploration is reflective of a particular sub-area of Sociology, namely critical criminology and in particular, feminist criminology, critical race criminology and newly emerging black feminist criminology. Potter (2006) in *Black Feminist Criminology*, argued that feminist criminology is rooted in a mainstream feminism that puts the experience of gender, before the experience of race or SES, whereas black feminist criminology and critical race feminist theory examines the intersections of experience. These intersections are key factors in understanding and developing appropriate approaches to addressing IPV in the lives of women and men from communities of color.

What is interesting to me is that I believe that most feminist scholars have shifted in their perspective on the unilateral application of criminal justice solutions to IPV, similar to the shift around women's use of violence and male victimization. However, in my observation, many of these initial positions have become codified and institutionalized, and the systems themselves are not flexible enough to shift with the change in position many feminists have taken. Perhaps some feminists still adhere to these perspectives but this may be reflective of voices more disconnected from the broader scholarly discourse. It is these rigid systems and established norms of discourses that are in my opinion the actual foci of the criticism of Mills (2003), Goodmark (2012) and others. Goodmark (2012) stated this explicitly:

Forty years into the legal revolution, the time for tinkering around the edges of the system has passed . . . Feminists created this system; feminists must now undo the harm caused by the system we created. The theoretical underpinnings of the legal

system must change to make the system work more effectively for women subjected to abuse (p. 159).

In my opinion, this call for feminist scholars to engage in challenging a legal framework that they helped create and with which they now somewhat disagree, is a reasonable challenge. I believe the call for Restorative Justice (RJ) solutions for IPV represents a coalescing of positions between those on both sides of the divide who are interested in making an institutional shift in how IPV is addressed (e.g. Dutton, 2006; Ptacek, 2010). Though not everyone agrees that RJ approaches are an appropriate area of intervention to explore due to concerns for victim safety, perpetrator accountability and sensitivity to power, it is something that many in the field are talking about. Though Dutton (2006) offers tentative support for RJ and in particular, Mills' Intimate Abuse Circle (IAC) model, he suggested screening practices for perpetrators with psychopathy and personality disorders that would make them inappropriate for such dyadic, collective processes.

Common forms of RJ are victim-offender mediation, family group or community conferencing, and peacemaking circles. There is concern that RJ practices will mirror the movement towards mediation in the court system. Mediation has been extensively critiqued by those in the domestic violence community because of evidence that mediators seem to ignore reports of abuse and fail to hold perpetrators accountable for abusive behavior (see Rubin, 2008 as cited by Ptacek, 2010). A core component of RJ is the idea of *reintegrative shaming*, "this is a form of shame that condemns the action of the offender, but welcomes the offender back into the community if he or she is remorseful (Ptacek, 2010, p. 20; see Braithwaite, 1989)." Other goals of RJ include

providing needed services and resources to the victim, preventing recidivism of the perpetrator, accessing community healing and addressing the intersections of race, class, gender, and other forms of power and privilege in the lives of both the victim and perpetrator (Frederick & Lizdas, 2010). Rubin (2010) described a powerful story of the intersection between government efforts to institute an RJ approach to IPV and sexual violence and the feminist women's groups within the community who saw real risks in their efforts. Rubin (2010) told the story of how Nova Scotia rolled out a plan for implementing RJ across the province with little consultation with local women's groups. The local women's coalition began conducting focus groups with women who had experienced RJ to get a sense of what their experience was so that they could provide evidence to the government about their efforts from the voices of real victims of IPV and sexual violence. What the group found was that the vast majority of victims felt unsafe and without voice when participating in the RJ practices as currently implemented. After presenting their findings to the government, a moratorium was put in place for RJ intervention following IPV or sexual assault. The government soon after started another research project into RJ practices in the province, again without consultation with the local women's' coalitions. The author, in collaboration with a government agent, decided that an RJ approach to addressing this wrong was an appropriate way to proceed given the context. What happened was:

In the circle, no changes were committed to immediately. Nothing changed in the fundamental power imbalance between the university and women's equality seeking community. But I can say that the experience created a space in which to move forward with less bitterness and discouragement. It affirmed for me again that the safety and equality concerns around particular RJ techniques and institutionalizations do not mean that the women's community is opposed to some

of the underlying principles of RJ. In fact, some of these are decidedly mutual: respect for human experience, confidence that change can occur, and the elimination of force as the primary means to achieve aims (p. 101).

I appreciated this description of both the potential difficulties of implementing RJ with IPV, the reminder once again of the necessity of working with local women's coalitions, connecting community voices to broader policy and creating opportunities for innovative solutions that open dialogue as opposed to shutting it down.

In Mills' Intimate Abuse Circle (IAC) model, participation is voluntary and initiated at the behest of the person identified as the victim. The pathways of the criminal justice system are open and available to the victim if they so choose. An Intimate Abuse Assessment Team, meets with the victim to discuss their various options and their pros and cons of their choices. In assessing whether the IAC is an appropriate pathway, one of the considerations is whether the couple seeks to reconcile and the extent to which the couple is connected to a community. The idea of community is important I believe, particularly as one of the criticisms of RJ is the limitations of what can be done when the greater community does not consider the crime to be that harmful, as has historically been the case with many forms of IPV. The assessment team also conducts an extensive screening process informed by lethality risk factors and typological research. If a couple is accepted into the program, the team starts recruiting people from the couple's community to participate in the circle, as well as a small group of outside experts and professionals. Experts can provide an important lens on particular aspects affecting the situation, such as drug or alcohol abuse or aspects of power and control in abusive relationships. A trained facilitator helps manage the conversations in the circle and

encourages acceptance of accountability from both parties while taking a strong stance to prevent any form of victim blaming. The end goal of the circle is a commitment to ending violence in the relationship, healing, and a greater understanding and reflection of the contributing factors and patterns that led to violence in the first place. IAC is grounded in two main perspectives, the power of relationships to create contexts for change and healing and the power of narrative therapy to affect peoples' guiding life narratives and thereby enact profound life transformations. In 2005, Mills refined the idea of the IAC into two different approaches, peacemaking circles (as an alternative to batterer treatment and a compliment to the criminal justice system) and community-based healing circles. Mills' work has been highly criticized by several well-known feminist scholars including DeKeseredy (2004), Coker (2004), and Stark (2004). DeKeseredy (2004) described Mills' work as providing a simplistic interpretation of feminist perspectives and the use of her work by neo-conservative elements in society. He also found fault with her IAC approach because of its lack of addressing the larger structural forces supporting widespread violence between intimates and particularly, of men against women. Mills (2004), in a response to his critique, promoted the perspective that women have more agency in their roles as victims than is ascribed to them in mainstream approaches to intervening with IPV; this is not victim blaming but it is empowering. She also countered his point that RJ approaches do not address broader social forces and is of the opinion that that is exactly what engaging the community does. Finally, she also rejected his assertion that her work was associated with a neo-conservative political position and said that "DeKeseredy's knee-jerk inclination to pigeon-hole me as part of a conservative



backlash is symptomatic of the mainstream movement's reflexive rejection of alternative approaches to domestic violence (p. 984)." I point to this dialogue in the literature as ways in which the conversation about criminal justice is an area that is simultaneously rich for opportunity in engendering new and creative solutions and dynamic research on IPV and also an area of profound disagreement in the literature. Because of the example that Rubin (2010) described of her own experience, it makes me think, do we need a restorative justice approach for those of us in the field of IPV itself?

## Section II

**Chapter 5:**  
**Paradigms and Post-Modern Meta-Narratives**

As described in Chapter 2: The Great Divide, Winstock (2011, 2013) used the term “paradigmatic cleavage” to explain the family violence and feminist divide. While not the first to name the divide as a clash of paradigms, he is a leader in bolstering this position with theoretical arguments from the philosophy of science tradition. I believe Winstock’s work is a contribution to the field but I also disagree in some ways with his approach and conclusions. It was my attempt to deeply think through why my position differed from his that led me on the path towards this dissertation. To illustrate this I first discuss some of the literature and critiques about paradigms and compare and contrast this with Winstock (2011, 2013). I then take the concept of paradigms and match it with the concept of meta-narratives or grand-narratives, which grew out of the post-modern tradition. Last, I connect these ideas to my choice of narrative-methodology. Both post-modern and narrative methodologies will be described in detail in later chapters.

Thomas Kuhn, a major contributor to modern thought within the philosophy of science, established the current use of paradigms in his seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). His work challenged the idea that science is disconnected from the social and cultural zeitgeist in which it occurred and argued that in actuality, newer ways of thinking about what science is and how it is conducted tend to emerge and replace older versions. These established norms of thinking and enacting science were called paradigms and went beyond science to encompass *Weltanschauung*, a reflection of how reality itself is viewed. When paradigms shared common ground, they could co-exist but when they were so epistemologically and ontologically distinct that they had little-to-no shared space to engage in discourse with each other, a clash of paradigms ensued, with

a winner and a loser. The loser became the outmoded, outdated way of thinking and the winner became the new norm of science. From Kuhn's perspective, these clashes were to be expected and the whole of science was a story of one paradigmatic revolution after the other. This conflicted with the idea that science was the forward progression of the accumulation of facts and data, disconnected from the social and cultural forces of its time. For a period of time after a revolution or clash, there was a time of calm when a new normal dominated the intellectual landscape. An example that Kuhn described of a paradigmatic revolution was the transition from Ptolemaic astronomy to Copernican, which changed our view of our place in the universe. One of the main functions of a paradigm in Kuhn's view was to support the search for complimentary and supporting evidence and to suppress competition or disagreement. As Dietze (2001) described, "Loyalty to the dominant paradigm and its normal science is obtained mainly through conversion, coercion and education (p. 38)." When the wealth of evidence questioning a paradigm became overwhelming, so began the revolution and a period of crisis when multiple paradigms competed for dominance. It was during this competition that those aligned with particular paradigms sought to convince others in their professional community of the truth of their position. Adherents to each perspective used the theories, arguments and evidence based on their paradigm to support their paradigm, creating a circular argument that could never convince the other side of their position. The winner and the loser of a clash of paradigms cannot be solved with evidence, since evidence itself differs by paradigm. Kuhn argued that eventually a crisis developed until a tipping point of professionals made the irreversible social and emotional 'gestalt shift' from one

paradigm to the other. If a gestalt shift was going to occur, according to Kuhn (1962), it would happen all together or not at all.

It is with these points that Winstock viewed the divide between feminist and family conflict scholars as a crisis of paradigms. Winstock (2013) wrote:

A paradigmatic cleavage, unlike controversy over facts, does not necessarily require recognition or resolution. Terminology, principles, and facts are created and exist within a given paradigm. Outside of this paradigm, or within a different one, the same terminology, principles, and facts can be perceived and interpreted quite differently. Hence, true or false are limited to a specific paradigm. This is evident in the controversy over the role of gender in partner violence. The controversy stems from different paradigmatic perspectives that compete over the identification, classification, and understanding of partner violence. As such, it cannot be mediated, settled, or resolved. However, the parties' perspectives can be examined and comprehended based on the paradigms that guide them. If, indeed, a paradigmatic cleavage is present, then any attempt to resolve the controversy based on facts is doomed to failure. Moreover, such attempts create a false awareness that it is only a matter of time until a theory or method is found that will mediate or decide between contradicting arguments. Such false awareness that results from the lack of understanding that a paradigmatic cleavage is at hand, widens and perpetuates the controversy over facts, and even worse, sets it on a path of escalation (p. 20-21).

As I discussed in previous chapters, I do not see these two perspectives as intrinsically oppositional because I see value in much of the work done by scholars on both sides in advancing the field of IPV. Perhaps it is my couple and family therapy training or a quirk of personality, but I do not believe conflict is inherently negative, I believe that when conflict is handled well, it is a positive experience, though when conflict is handled abusively it is unilaterally negative. I have no desire for a scholarly field without rich conflict; I only wish that it had fewer discourses colored by abusive and pejorative language and associations with threats, accusations and violence. I do not want nor need to live in a world where one perspective dominates the intellectual landscape

and suppresses divisive voices. I view many scholars as operating within an intellectual space that is able to hold both perspectives as having value (e.g., Michael Johnson). However, as Winstock (2013) so clearly explained, there are several features of the debate that precisely fit Kuhn's (1962) description of a scientific revolution. These include the long-standing nature of the debate, the lack of viewing the evidence marshaled by the other side as evidence, the way scholars can read the same study and come to radically different conclusions about the results and how many seem to be engaged in an effort to convince the scholars in the field of the appropriateness of their position and the inappropriateness of others.

Given my reaction to Winstock's (2013) work, both an appreciation of how well the divide fits into Kuhn's work and yet my own lack of conflict between these two perspectives, I sought out other traditions within the philosophy of science that might offer alternative perspectives. I learned that Kuhn's (1962) approach to paradigms is not a universal perspective. Dietz (2001) articulated:

The term 'paradigm' is commonly used to denote a theory, cluster of theories or particular perspective within a specified field . . . For Kuhn, a paradigm defines a scientific community that works together within its set of shared assumptions . . . In other words, a paradigm is a cluster of conceptual, metaphysical and methodological presuppositions embodied in a tradition of scientific work, forming the 'conceptual spectacles' for the scientist. There is for Kuhn no independent vantage point from which different paradigms can be 'measured' or assessed. He argues that both the theories and data of science depend on the prevailing paradigm, and that therefore with each paradigm shift (paradigm change) the old data are reinterpreted and seen in entirely new ways, and new kinds of data are sought (p.5).

In the field of IPV, based on my reading of the literature, there has never been an established normal science that was so foundational that it became the 'spectacles' for the

majority of scholars in the field. The dual approaches of feminism and family conflict, with their different theories and epistemologies, have been present since the beginning of the scholarly exploration of the topic. The field has been shaped by their often intense and sometimes divisive discourse. In the field of philosophy of science, other scholars have questioned Kuhn's thinking in 1962 on the conflictive nature of paradigms. There is the interpretation that Kuhn's (1962) position is:

. . . paradigms are incommensurable. Kuhn's argument on incommensurability has commonly been understood as claiming that there is no possible means by which individual paradigms can be rationally evaluated or compared, that one paradigm is just as good as another and that progress in science is made only through faith as one paradigm gives way to another (p.47).

In reaction, Kuhn strongly denied that this was his position and stated that this was a misinterpretation of his work (Kuhn, 1970). Kuhn (1970) broke down his previous description of paradigms into two parts, the *disciplinary matrix* and *exemplar*. The disciplinary matrix is the broader belief system of the scholarly community; this included things like values, techniques and also what constitutes the important problems to be solved. The exemplars are the solutions to the problems or products of the scientific endeavor that everyone in a community agrees upon. While Kuhn is most well-known for his term paradigm, he moved away from it and has not named it in published work since the late 1970s (Dietz, 2001). Kuhn transitioned in a number of ways in his perspective.

. . . he now purposefully develops the metaphor [of language] as his central understanding of science. Science, he says, operates somewhat akin to a natural language with all the inherent issues of vocabulary, understanding, learning, translation, and so on. One significant change is that he now understands the scientist as being able to participate in more than one lexical taxonomy at a time, in the same way as one might learn and understand more than one natural language (Dietz, 2001, 89; Kuhn, 1983).



As we know from language, there are some words that are unable to be translated from one language to another; this metaphor is where incommensurability still holds. I would argue based on Kuhn's refinements of his work, that if the division between feminists and family scholars is more a reflection of different languages, then they are two languages that share many common elements. There are certainly elements of the disciplinary matrix that many scholars in the field share, while there are substantial differences in the exemplar they apply to the problems and solutions of IPV. For example, all scholars across the fields that I reviewed agreed that IPV is a problem deserving redress (the disciplinary matrix) but many of the scholars argued about the causes of the problem, whether it is a predominantly male perpetrated problem or one caused by both genders (exemplar). Additionally, in keeping with the metaphor of language, I believe I am able to understand and appreciate the lexicon of both camps but that there are certain areas that are not commensurable (e.g., the extent and the nature of the problem of female perpetration).

My search for alternative explanations within the field of philosophy of science also led me to the idea of explanatory plurality or scientific pluralism, which I believe is a complement to Kuhn's (1983) linguistic metaphor. The central idea behind pluralism is that the sciences cannot be fully explained by any unified perspective and that multiple perspectives and languages are needed.

According to the pluralist stance, the plurality in contemporary science provides evidence that there are kinds of situations produced by the interaction of factors each of which may be representable in a model or theory, but not all of which are representable in the same model or theory. Each factor is necessary for the phenomenon to have the various characters it has, but a complete account is not possible in the same representational idiom and is not forthcoming from any

single investigative approach (as far as we know). A more complete representation of some phenomena requires multiple accounts, which cannot be integrated with one another without loss of content (Kellers, Longino, & Waters, 2006, p. xiv).

I would argue based on this idea that there is evidence to support the concept that feminist and family conflict perspectives can co-exist within a philosophy of science that embraces explanatory plurality versus the pursuit of monism or a dominant paradigm of normal science in the field of IPV.

This leads me to my next point, which bridges the work on paradigms to my methodology. Kuhn's use of the language as a metaphor for divisions in science, I believe connects with the post-modern view that science is a practice of story-telling, with some more stories more dominant and others more subversive. This storytelling is in the form of meta-narratives or grand narratives as the philosopher Jean Francis Lyotard (1979) described them. The idea of a meta-narrative is similar to that of paradigm; in my opinion they are simply different terminology based on the area of study (philosophy of science versus post-modern philosophy). From a post-modern perspective, these meta-narratives both organize and legitimate knowledge at the expense of stifling and dominating other forms of knowing, similar to Kuhn's (1962) paradigms. Boje (2001) argued that Lyotard's position on meta-narratives was too severe and that some meta-narratives can create opportunities for micro-stories or alternate forms of knowledge to emerge. Similar to the transition from the total incommensurability of paradigms to the position that paradigms reflect different languages, there was a transition in the area of meta-narratives to create a more encompassing and less binary perspective. In my observation, there are some voices in the field of IPV that exemplify the clash of two meta-narratives and two

paradigms, that this clash, because of its provocative and inflammatory nature, seems to drown out the richness and diversity of meta-narratives. It is this flamboyant conflict of meta-narratives or languages that share far fewer common concepts (as Kuhn, 1970 would put it) that has become the driving narrative in the scholarly discourse about the divide rather than a narrative that recognizes the meta-narratives embracing a more pluralistic stance. I believe, because of my personal experiences with scholars in the field, that there are feminist and family violence meta-narratives that exist more in harmony because they allow for more micro or local stories to develop but these meta-narratives are not given public acknowledgment to the extent of more “universalist” meta-narratives. Boje (2001) defined “universalism” as a “historical account that privileges one relatively narrow point of view or grand principle that glosses over differences in other stories” (p. 7). Given the passion that researchers and scholars bring to the work, is it surprising that being “glossed over” has created such antipathy? My goal with this dissertation was to search out these alternate meta-narratives that allowed for more diversity in the form of micro-stories to flourish and to highlight them as well as to search for the narratives that indicated points of paradigmatic conflict.. I believe and hope that highlighting these alternate pathways of knowledge in the field will create an opportunity to publically share a narrative about the field that that shows nuance, diversity and productive discourse. This is offered in counterpoint to a more divisive perspective that advances a Darwinian struggle of survival of the fittest paradigm, which emotionally and intellectually does not resonate with me. As Boje (2001) wrote using ideas of White & Epston (1990) “A form of resistance to grand narratives is therefore not only to resituate

the dominant grand narrative, but to ‘restory’ in ways that reauthor the lives of the tellers” (p.7). Ultimately this dissertation was an attempt to restory for myself, the meta-narratives of the partner violence debate.

**Chapter 6:**  
**Feminism and Post-Modernism**

Feminist theories use the lens of gender to critically examine how and where voices of women and their experiences are silenced or oppressed. In the 1960s and 1970s the feminist movement, which advocated for the rights of women in the United States and elsewhere, encouraged and accompanied the battered women's movement. The feminist movement and the fight against partner violence are inextricably connected. Both have shifted and changed over the past four decades and therefore the current conversation is couched within the complexities of contemporary feminism. This is in many ways a necessity as I am a contemporary feminist, shaped by my context and therefore this provides the filter through which I represent and interpret feminist thought.

Current conceptualizations of feminism are complex and diverse. Some authors argue for the paradoxical nature of contemporary feminism, that simultaneously, ideas of feminism are broadly diffused throughout popular culture and yet young feminists seem unconcerned with activism and advocacy. Many feminist theorists divide the movement into waves with the 1<sup>st</sup> wave in the 1800's, the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave in the 1960s and 1970s and the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave in the 1990s. There is also rejection of this metaphor of waves, because it seemingly overlooks much of the efforts of less visible voices in the movement such as those of people of color, the working class and members of the LGBTQ community (Reger, 2012). Contemporary feminism is further complicated by the idea "that it has become problematic to assume that a clear-cut connection can be made between women's lives and the assumptions underpinning the variety of feminisms that have emerged" (Budgeon, 2011, p. 2). This is an important point because, while the battered women's movement was connected to the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s or 2<sup>nd</sup> wave

feminism, current conversations about partner violence are grounded in 3<sup>rd</sup> wave feminism and discussions of anti-feminism and post-feminism. Contemporary feminism is also influenced by somewhat different forces than previous forms of feminism and/or feminisms, this is not to say that “older feminists have distorted the truth about difficult issues, either through ignorance or narrowness (Bailey, p. 23 as cited in Budgeon, 2011, pg. 7). At the same time that contemporary feminism challenges ideas from other contextually-informed modes of feminism, there is also a disturbing challenge from the area of post-feminism:

. . . in itself a form of anti-feminism. These “conservative, ‘post-feminist’ claims that feminism dis-empowers women by encouraging a ‘victim identity’ and that women should therefore reject feminism in favor of embracing power, in the pursuit of individual goals (Budgeon, 2011, p. 15).

However:

Privatizing gender issues in this way reaffirms the status quo and works to create the appearance that the current social order is as it should be, because feminism has been transcended. Post feminism from within this perspective is closely aligned with, and bolstered by patriarchal interests (Budgeon, 2011, p. 24).

As previously discussed, these patriarchal interests emerge most strongly with some men’s rights groups that are insistent on contracting the gains of the battered women’s movement versus advancing the needs of men who experience IPV, either as victims or perpetrators. Others argue (e.g., George & Stith, 2014) that feminist perspectives that unilaterally focus on patriarchy and male violence against women are advancing an essentialist form of feminism that aligns with second-wave feminism and instead argue for a contemporary, anti-essentialist form of feminism that allows family conflict scholars to also be feminists. Second wave feminism is often associated with standpoint theory

and is criticized as being reflective of an essentialist position.

Standpoint theory is named as a “transitional epistemology” (Harding, 1987, p. 186) within the multi-faceted area of feminist scholarship, which encompasses various philosophies of science, political ideologies, epistemologies and methodologies. The four main feminist political ideologies elucidated in the literature are liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism and womanism. Liberal feminism is focused on advocating for changes within existing social institutions while womanism, socialist and radical feminism are focused on overhauling the institutions themselves. Socialist feminism advocates for addressing inequalities in class systems, while radical feminism focuses explicitly and exclusively on gender. Womanism encompasses the intersectionality of race and gender in addressing oppression and provides a critique of liberal, socialist and radical feminism (Kramarae & Treichler, 1985).

These traditions then inform the redefinition of feminist ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology is about the objective nature of reality and how perceptible that reality is. Epistemology centers on knowledge, what it is, and how it is attained (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Harding classifies feminist scholarship into three “transitional epistemologies” (Harding, 1987, p. 186). Within the first category of feminist empiricism are two types, “spontaneous” and “contextual.” “Spontaneous” refers to research entrenched in prevailing attitudes and ideas momentarily in power and “contextual” empiricism refers to research that acknowledges the mutable and temporal nature of dominant scientific discourse (Harding, 1993, p.53). “Feminist empiricism reflects a union of postpositivist realism and liberal feminism” (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). In post



positivist realism, there is an established reality but that reality is almost impossible to perceive (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In connecting post-positivist realism and liberal feminism, feminist empiricism is oriented towards reducing gender bias in the research process (Campbell & Wasco, 2000).

The second category of standpoint theory describes all research as socially and politically located and hierarchically organized (Harding, 1987, p. 188; Hartstock, 1983, 1985). “Feminist standpoint theory is based upon post-positivist critical theory, informed by the traditions of radical and socialist feminism as well as womanism” (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 781). From an epistemological position, post-positivist critical theory asserts that there is an objective reality but that it is only perceived through lenses deeply affected by intersecting systems of power and oppression (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The connections to womanism, radical feminism and socialist feminist create a call for change in oppressive scientific and social institutions.

Standpoint feminist theory is still positivistic in that it describes reality as having truths but it is post-positivistic in that those truths must be “stitched together imperfectly (Haraway, 1988, p. 586).” When conducting research within standpoint feminist theory, the “standpoint” of the researcher must be revealed. This is done in order to compensate for researchers’ imprecise ability to distill the truth of the world (Haraway, 1988, p. 586).

The third category falls under post-modern epistemologies, which claim that a feminist-based scholarship that focuses exclusively on gender inequality does not capture the broad nature of women’s diverse realities (Harding, 1987, p. 188). “Feminist postmodernism integrates postpositivist constructivism with radical feminism” (Campbell

& Wasco, 2000, p. 782). In the epistemological positioning of postpositivist constructivism, there is no unilateral objective reality to be measured (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). When science presents findings as truth, it is reflective of who has the power to define what reality is and what it is not (Olesen, 2005). One of the challenges of feminist postmodern scholarship is how to engage in the exploratory process in creative and open ways, without reinforcing oppressive ideologies (Campbell & Wasco, 2000).

Post-modernism emerged around the same time as the feminist movement, so it is not surprising that the two would intersect as well as diverge. Lyotard, one of the preeminent postmodern scholars wrote:

Science has always been in conflict with narratives. Judged by the yardstick of science, the majority of them prove to be fables. But to the extent that science does not restrict itself to stating useful regularities and seeks the truth, it is obliged to legitimate the rules of its own game. It then produces a discourse of legitimation with respect to its own status, a discourse called philosophy (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxii).

He went on to say that post-modernism, as he defined, it is “incredulity toward meta-narratives (p. xxiv).” Rosenau (1992) in *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences* wrote about the profound challenge and transformation created by postmodernism in the social sciences. She created an important distinction between two forms of postmodernism, the affirmative and the skeptical. The skeptical post-modernists can be described as nihilistic and is often what many think of when they hear the term postmodern; it is as Rosenau (1992) described, the “the post-modernism of despair (p. 15).” The affirmatives on the other side of the coin as Rosenau (1992, p. 16) wrote:

. . . have a more hopeful, optimistic view of the post-modern age. More indigenous to Anglo-North American culture than to the Continent, the generally optimistic affirmatives are oriented toward process. They are either open to

positive political action (struggle and resistance) or content with the recognition of visionary, celebratory personal nondogmatic projects that range from New Age religion to New Wave life-styles and include a whole spectrum of post-modern social movements. Most affirmatives seek a philosophical and ontological intellectual practice that is nondogmatic, tentative, and nonideological. These post-modernists do not, however, shy away from affirming an ethic, making normative choices, and striving to build issue-specific coalitions. Many affirmatives argue that certain value choices are superior to others, a line of reasoning that would incur the disapproval of the skeptical post-modernists (Bordewich, 1988; Frank, 1983, p.405; Levin & Kroker, 1984, p.15-16).

This area of affirmative post-modernism is more in-line with various forms of feminisms while skeptical postmodernism stands in stark contrast. Although both feminism and affirmative postmodernism share a questioning of the established knowledge structures and systems of authority which support them, there are also strong disagreements between the two.

. . . the affirmatives are uncomfortable with either extreme of objectivity or relativism. Consequently, and often in search of a compromise, some of them adopt an inherently contradictory position. Feminist and ecological post-modernists, for example, are ambivalent about post-modern relativism and anti-objectivism, especially when discussion turns to their particular group. Feminists applaud post-modernism's critique of modern social science and its denial of a privileged status of male opinion. But they denounce post-modernism for not giving special authority to women's voices; they argue that, in the cases of "rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment," there is a difference between fact and "figuration." The victim's account of these experiences is "not simply an arbitrary imposition of a purely fictive meaning on an otherwise meaningless reality," and they warn post-modernists against the "total repudiation of either external reality . . . or rational judgment" (Hawkesworth, 1989, p. 555). Post-modern feminists face a possible inconsistency between embracing a relativist form of post-modern philosophy and combining it with a very real commitment to challenge an objective reality (Rosenau, 1992, p. 115).

This tends to come into particular relief when discussing standpoint theory, though based on my reading of affirmative postmodernism, I do not believe there an essential conflict between the two. Additionally, many feminist scholars state that the criticism that

standpoint theory is essentialist is actually inaccurate and a misinterpretation. Harstock's (1983) *The Feminist Standpoint* is considered a foundational standpoint text and Harstock is considered one of the primary feminist standpoint theorists. Hirschmann (1998) argued that Harstock advocated for feminism as a methodology and not as a set of political conclusions, with Harstock's particular standpoint a reflection of the grounding of women's experiences within the capitalistic structure of the home and child-rearing. Hirschmann (1998) discussed that it is the misinterpretation of standpoint theory that has led many white, privileged feminists to assert a universalist and essentialist perspective of the female experience in the world, denying the importance of how race and class and other experiences deeply impact a particular standpoint. Hirschmann (1998, p. 88) wrote:

However, does all this make feminist standpoint a postmodern strategy? Or does it simply illustrate standpoint's (or perhaps my own) modernist blinders to the point that postmodernism is trying to make? It is a bit of both. We cannot get away from the fact that feminism is and must be in part a modernist discourse. Without the subject "woman," regardless of how we define it, feminism cannot exist; this subject, however, is at odds with postmodernism because it seems to freeze a notion of identity in time. Standpoint feminism suggests that the definition of "who we are" will shift and change, in postmodern fashion, in response to different material conditions as well as to the fact that each individual occupies more than one experiential and identity location.

Harding (1990) offered that standpoint theorist and postmodern theorists are similar in their deep distrust of meta-narratives, but are different in their perspectives on reality. For Harding (1990), standpoint theorists see the multiple (often contradictory) realities of social institutions that create hierarchies of gender, race, class, ability etc. Within these hierarchal structures, it is those at the bottom or outside the hierarchy who are the ones who can actually see the institution clearly. She argued that:

. . . standpoint theory does not require any kind of feminine essentialism, as this frequently mentioned critique supposes. It *analyzes* the essentialism that androcentrism assigns to women, locates its historical conditions, and proposes ways to counter it. Standpoint theory does not assume that women are different from men in that they are free of participation in race, class, and homophobic social relations. These theorists constantly call for more vigorous feminist analysis of and politics against these forms of oppression (p. 99).

My interpretation of feminist standpoint theory given this reframe is that it is difficult to see both the macro and micro influence of power and privilege when you are the one receiving incalculable benefits. Therefore it is easier for me to identify systems of oppression related to gender and how they impact both my daily life and life trajectory than it is for me to make those same connections as they relate to my experiences of being white and middle-class. In order to adequately address oppressive systems, scholars and thinkers from all points in social institutions, but particularly those most negatively impacted by them, need to be at the forefront of creating change in those social institutions. Harstock (1990) stated that:

Perhaps theories of power for women will also be theories of power for other groups as well. We need to develop our understanding of the difference by creating a situation in which hitherto marginalized groups can name themselves, speak for themselves, and participate in defining the terms of interaction, a situation in which we can construct an understanding of the world that is sensitive to difference (p. 158).

I agreed with this use of standpoint theory as a launching place to understand, explore, and confront oppressive social institutions.

In addition to feminist theory and affirmative postmodernism, post-positivism is also important to discuss, with degrees of inter-relatedness and discord. Post-positivism shares with positivism and modernist thought that there is a shared reality that can be measured but that it is only “imprecisely apprehendable” (Daly, 2007, p. 30), reflecting a

belief in critical realism. There is a spectrum within post-positivism between how subjective and objective that interpretation of reality is. Some might argue that while there is a shared reality and while it can be measured, there are varying degrees to which our interpretations, based on human and therefore inherently imperfect measurement, is an actual reflection of what exists. On the other extreme, some post-positivists might say that there is a shared reality; it is an objective reality that we can measure and interpret, but that those interpretations are influenced by who we are, where we are, when we are, and what we believe. Post-positivism also coincides with the belief that the scientific endeavor (while afflicted by missteps and mistakes), can overall result in an accumulation of valuable knowledge (Daly, 2007).

As this dissertation is an examination of the narratives of science and paradigms, my own narratives of science must be stated and made explicit. I view this study as positioned between contextual feminist empiricism, standpoint theory, affirmative postmodernism and more subjective post-positivism. In reflection of my connection to standpoint theory, I used the personal pronoun of 'I' to represent the interconnection between my self-as-researcher and the research process and product. This study was entirely contextual in nature in that it represents an exploration of the narratives in the scientific study of partner violence (including my own) and yet such standpoint realities of context are real and de facto exist. It is also post-modern in that, I believe reality is not fixed, it is changing and depends on who we are, when we are, where we are, etc. I believe it is helpful for scientists to utilize a constant process of reflection, evaluation, feedback and change to encourage our theories and methods to shift dynamically as

needed versus remaining fixed, stagnant and eventually, obsolete. My stance is affirmative in that I believe there are important positions to take a stand on and to make value-based decisions. I believe violence in human relationships is wrong. I believe violence unfairly intersects with other oppressive systems to make those with multiple points of oppression more vulnerable and those with multiple points of power more able to use violence without redress or justice. Both of these positions reflect standpoint feminist theory and the affirmative portion of post-modernism. However, I believe everyone can be victimized by violence, including those with privilege in some aspects of their life. While all violence needs to be addressed, I believe the solutions need to remain dynamic in order to serve the competing demands of justice: both moving towards a society that will not tolerate violence, and meet the needs of the person or people victimized by violence. I believe we live in a world filled with those who perpetrate and who are victimized and we need sustainable and appropriate ways to decrease perpetration and provide healing, justice and support to victims. This reflects a more affirmative post-modern perspective. I believe the ways that we go about theorizing, studying and finding both macro and micro solutions, need to be bottom up, reflecting the unique ways of experience as they are impacted by those most harmed by oppressive systems, reflecting standpoint theory. I am a social scientist though, I believe in the collection and accumulation of data (while that data that is subjective and biased), in building towards theory, method and intervention that will decrease IPV. This reflects my post-positivist orientation. I am also conflicted because of my affirmative post-modernist stance. I believe we can use our theoretical and scholarly work to inform the creation of

policy at the macro and micro systems level to positively adapt current institutional ways of addressing IPV. At the same time I deeply question the ability of institutions to be helpful in dealing with one form of violent oppression when they are heavy with other forms of violent oppression. On the other hand, how can we not attempt to use our larger systems to address IPV? Is there a way to use a broader system to intervene without recreating the oppressive systems of the broader culture and society? I believe in multiple, intersecting ways of intervening that would combine and sustain collaboration between coordinated community response systems, shelters, advocates, trained behavioral health providers working with individuals, couples and families, psycho-education support groups, restorative justice, and criminal justice options. In an ideal world, such collaboration would be implemented without echoes of the sexist, racist, classist, heterosexist structures of society. Such an approach would have to be entirely flexible and based on the unique experience of the individual, couple, or family in question, as situated within a broader analysis of social structures and influence. I question whether any intervention can be enacted without recreating oppression and whether our systems can handle flexibility, ambiguity, and uncertainty. However, I remain firmly optimistic that the only option is to try and that most humans, communities and societies would prefer to live in a world with less violence perpetrated by them against their loved ones and by their loved ones against them. Therefore this dissertation is not only an exploration of the divide itself but also a call to action to address it, with action as a critical component of feminist scholarship.



**Chapter 7:**  
**Contextually-Situated Narrative Inquiry**

Mishler (1995) described the field of narrative inquiry as falling into several general categories. I envisioned this study as fitting into the category described as “storytelling in interactional and institutional contexts” (p. 111) or contextually-situated narrative inquiry.

Models discussed here focus instead on the interactional and institutional functions of storytelling. Their perspective is similar to culturally oriented approaches, but they place more emphasis on the socially situated features and effects of stories. When, for example, are stories told? Who has the right to tell them? And what purposes do they serve in interpersonal and social contexts? . . . The significance of stories for socializing new members is evident in a variety of cultural and institutional contexts (p. 112).

There are several examples of narrative inquiry, politically positioned within interactional and institutional contexts. Some of the most prominent examples of this type of approach are within the areas of medical socialization and management and organization. Hunter, in her book *Doctors stories: The narrative structure of medical knowledge*, discussed how doctors are socialized by narrative to current practices of medicine and how storytelling “shapes clinical judgment (Hunter, 1991, p. 148).” Paget utilized narrative analysis to decipher the complex interactions between doctors and patients, particularly how dominant practices of communication increased opportunities for miscommunication. An example of a narrative study positioned contextually in swirling political and cultural waters was *“Making sense of marital violence: One woman’s narrative”* by Catherine Kohler Reissman. In this study, Reissman couched the narrative of the study’s participant in a political and cultural context where marital rape was legal (Reissman, 1992). My particular focus with this dissertation was to engage in an exploration of stories related to science and scholarship, meta-narratives and

paradigms (broken down into disciplinary matrixes and exemplars), politics and social movements. Given that goal, contextually-situated narrative inquiry seemed the most appropriate approach.

Boje (1991) was a particularly strong influence on my thinking, related to his work on storytelling organizations and ante-narrives. He wrote:

Stories are to the storytelling system what precedent cases are to the judicial system. Just as in the courtroom, stories are performed among stakeholders to make sense of an equivocal situation. The implication of stories as precedents is that story performances are part of an organization-wide information-processing network” (Boje, 1991, p. 106).

Even when there are eye witnesses, to continue the analogy with courtroom behavior, the interpretation of the exact sequence of events and how those events speak of the motive of the defendant are made or broken in the performance of the story and by the credibility of the teller. What is interesting about storytelling in organizations is that stakeholders also posit alternative stories with alternative motives and implications to the very same underlying historical incident. The story takes on more importance than mere objective facts. In complex organizations, part of the reason for storytelling is the working out of those differences in the interface of individual and collective memory” (Boje, 1991, 107).

In reading through Boje’s description of organization, most often meaning businesses and corporations, I struggled to see what distinguished a business from a scholarly community. In each instance there are various individuals, clustered into groups and hierarchies, working together for a common goal. I saw the potential of Boje’s work, about how the stories within organizations shape the past, present, and future, as deeply applicable to the idea that stories of narratives, meta-narratives and paradigms are shaping the past, present, and future of the field of IPV. The idea of science as stories connects well when approaching this topic from a philosophical perspective, whether that is a philosophy of science, a philosophy of history or an amalgamation of the two. As Danto

(1965) wrote:

So it seems to me that there is as much justification for the claim that we can reconstruct a 'scientific explanation' as a narrative as there is the reverse claim, and that an account in narrative form will not lose any of the explanatory force of the original, assuming it had any explanatory force to begin with (p. 237).

Boje (2001) coined the term ante-narrative, which I believed was deeply applicable to this dissertation.

Antenarratives are prospective (forward-looking) bets (antes) that an ante-story (before-story) can transform organizational relationships . . . These fragile antenarratives, like the butterfly, are sometimes able to change the future, to set changes and transformations in motion that have impact on the big picture. More accurately, antenarratives seem to bring about a future that would not otherwise be. The key attribute of antenarratives is that they are travelers; moving from context to context, shifting in content and refraction as they jump-start the future. What is most interesting about them is how they morph their content as they travel (p. 14).

I interpreted that antenarratives can represent themselves in a variety of ways. I saw them as a reflection of micro-stories that differ from a dominant narrative, some growing and picking up speed and energy, some disappearing but influencing the trajectory of the dominant narrative. I saw antenarratives as also potential indicators of a clash of paradigms, creating room for emerging narratives and meta-narratives to grow and transform. This dissertation was also itself a form of ante-narrative, it was a bet on a future in the field of IPV that at this point, differs in some important ways from some more dominant perspectives. This position was reflective of the work done by Erikson et al. (2005) and Erikson et al. (2006), whose exploration of the antenarratives of female officers in the navy was part of a successful effort to prompt organizational change around gender roles and leadership.

The presence of antenarratives that differed from a larger meta-narrative reflected

the presence of chaos in an organization.

Chaos is not just entanglement to the neglect of order. Chaos is movement whose order is hidden, subterranean, preconscious. Its antenarrative chaos of the subterranean . . . order and complexity dynamics of storytelling (Boje, 2011, p. 2).

I deeply appreciated this perspective, similar to the idea I presented in a previous chapter about my lack of desire for monism in the field. I saw conflict and chaos as not the enemies of the scholarly community but as indicators of a thriving and dynamic field. When viewed this way, antenarratives are evidence of growth versus stagnation and are to be explored with excitement versus being seen as evidence of the failure of the field to come to consensus. Narratives are about what was, antenarratives are about what will be. Because of their power to shape the future, the antenarratives we invest in and see as truth will become the future and reshape our view of the past.

Boje (2011) outlined different forms of antenarratives: Linear, Cyclic, Spiral, & Rhizome. Linear antenarratives encompass at their most simple, the beginning, middle and end of how we move into the future and accomplish a goal. It is about the story of a future event as we imagine it happening, with no unexpected or unanticipated events interrupting the sequence. Cyclic antenarratives are projections of future events and goals that run in cycles, such as the seasons. Some cycles are inappropriately interpreted, as Boje (2011) described when people hold on to stocks because of their interpretation of business cycles without attention to an imminent bankruptcy. Spiral antenarratives are an interplay of stories that seem to get repeated over and over again, and looking back through the lens of time, these iterations increased in intensity, and led to a particular concluding point. Spirals can turn into vortexes where at its center “there are few ante-

narrative options, few moves, and it is futile to struggle. It is best to wait till the spiral opens up, more choices are apparent, and one can break free (p. 11).” I interpreted that spirals occurred when the available antenarratives that emerged most frequently reflected a particular range of future stories or bets on how the future will emerge. There is some driving force at the center keeping the available options within a somewhat closed system; it is only by gaining distance from the center that more open versions of the future emerge. Within a vortex, these options are far more tightly constricted and only a particular and small range of envisioned futures are available. Each cycle of the telling of the antenarratives only supports and constrains the retelling at the next cycle. An example of spiral ante-narrative as described by Rosile (2011) was about how hearing others repeat the ante-narrative ‘well everyone cheats,’ seeing others cheat, and engaging in cheating, only increases the likelihood of more and more cheating until the ante-narrative becomes the future and everyone does engage in cheating. Rhizome antenarratives are not linear, nor cyclical, nor are they spiral. They move and grow in ways that can be covert and erratic to predict and are observed only when they become too obvious to ignore. Boje (2011) described the rhizome in nature as a metaphor, a plant sending out a runner to form a rhizome, which forms another plant, which keeps the process spreading on and on. “The key facet of rhizomes is movement. They don’t stand still; they are not lines (p.12).” Rosile (2011) described the application of a rhizomatic ante-narrative to her experience as a professor after having learned 20% of her students cheated.

If 20% cheated, surely another 20% knew about it and did nothing. In addition, this particular variety of cheating (via text messaging) required an out-of-class confederate to text in the illicit information, extending the network of people involved beyond the classroom. I began to focus on rhizomatic antenarratives. Both

the active collusion and passive complicity of participants comprise a network of rhizomatic antenarratives which, over time, can contribute to a “cheating culture.” Due to this culture aspect, the claim that my cheating does not affect anyone else is spurious for many reasons, including the result that one person’s cheating feeds the “everyone-does-it” antenarrative (p. 91).

In my analysis, I attempted to both identify antenarratives and to break them down when possible into their potential sub-types.

The chapter that most profoundly influenced my ante-narrative thinking, as it related to meta-narratives and paradigms, came from *Narratives, Paradigms, and Change* by Gehard Fink and Maurice Yolles.

When in a given constellation of paradigms a plurality of them interact, their stories ring out to contribute to a concerto of meaning. Where there is little semantic harmony, paradigm conflicts and wars develop (Casti, 1989; Chari, Kehoe, & McGrattan, 2009; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; Kuhn, 1970). In such conditions the narratives are connected with a cacophony of sound that demands recognition of the antenarrative nature of the constellation (p. 242).

I envisioned this dissertation in part as an exploration of the “antenarrative nature of the constellation” and a documentation of the “cacophony of sound” including the voices and stories that are sometimes drowned out or obscured by more dominant voices and stories. Fink & Yolles (2011) described that “knowledge, paradigms, and values” influence and legitimate narratives, this produces stories; stories prompt reflection and provide feedback and adjustment to narratives, which in turn impact “knowledge, paradigms, and values” (p. 244). As discussed, Kuhn (1962) theorized that after a paradigmatic crisis, there is transformation and then a new normal period of science emerges where things are calm. Fink & Yelles (2011) wrote that after this normal period, there is a post-normal period that:

may be linked with antenarrative, where a constellation of different paradigms

exist in a an incoherent, disjointed, discordant space . . . goes beyond traditional assumptions that science is both certain and value free. In addition to the application of routine techniques, judgment also becomes necessary. . . the post normal mode is concerned with complexity. It has interests that relate to uncertainty, assigned values, and a plurality of legitimately argued perspectives. The attributes are antenarrative in nature. A plural collective construction of multiple voices develops, each with a narrative fragment and none with an overarching conception of the story that is becoming (Boje, 2001).

Fink & Yolles (2011) stated that the next stage of the cycle after post-normal is crisis and then transformation. Crisis does not necessarily mean that one paradigm wins and another loses, it can also mean the emergence of new paradigms, the re-emergence of old paradigms and/or the development of meta-theory that encompasses the previous paradigms without changing them. I believed that this range of options reflected more accurately how paradigms and meta-narratives actually transformed through time in the social sciences.

Paradigms may die, when the predominant narrative mode continuously tends to fail with its applications to radically changing societal domains, or at least need substantial transformation. Then, the emerging theories represent themselves through antenarrative in the constellation of paradigms that it exists within. In this sense, paradigmatic antenarrative constellations are concerned with complexity, and have interests in aspects which relate to uncertainty, assigned values, and a plurality of legitimately argued perspectives . . . In conclusion, we note that paradigms only exist through their holders who carry, define, and maintain them. Paradigms are maintained among others by the narratives and stories they produce. Durable paradigms may be seen as viable human-activity systems that are complex and adaptive and able to maintain a separate existence within the confines of their existential and other constraints (p. 251).

Through the methodology and analysis detailed in the next chapter highlighting my procedures, I attempted to present with rich description some of the holders of the paradigms within the debate, and identify the stories, narratives, paradigms, meta-narratives and antenarratives embedded in what they shared. I could find no examples in



the literature of someone using this type of contextually-situated narrative inquiry, rooted in organizational storytelling, and directly applying it to an examination of a scientific sub-field. This application was the solution I found to examining the problem I had of understanding in a deeper way the conflict in the field of IPV. I believed it was a fruitful solution and could be used as a method to more directly examine the influences that philosophy of science enacts in other scholarly communities.

## **Chapter 8:**

## **Procedures**

## **Design**

### **Elite interviewing**

Elite interviewing is a qualitative research practice wherein “elites” or well known/ powerful figures are interviewed about their perspective. Some of the unique features of elite interviewing as compared to other forms of qualitative interviewing are that the participant’s interpretation is stressed as the focus of importance, participants create the structure of how they tell the story and participants tell the interviewer what is relevant and what is not. In this form of interviewing, the participant is the teacher, the interviewer the student (Dexter, 1970). Challenges of this investigative approach include interviewing participants who may be inaccessible due to their positions of power and whose identities are well known. There are also important considerations about the role of power between the participant and the researcher that are unique to interviews with elites (Morris, 2009). When interviewing elite researchers, there are additional considerations because the participants are experts in the research process as well as the content area they are discussing (Bryman & Cassell, 2006). Because of its developing nature, the methodology in this area is open and evolving (Kezer, 2003; Odendahl & Shaw, 2002). Examples of other elite interview studies include those with professional athletes about their experiences with performance enhancing drugs (Kirby, Moran, & Guerin, 2011) and corporate healthcare CEO’s about management (Goldman & Swayze, 2012).

Elite interviewing has several potential risks to validity and reliability, elucidated by Berry (2002). Berry (2002) reported that “it is not the obligation of the subject to be

objective and to tell us the truth” (p. 680). Therefore the first potential risk to validity is that what participants share will not be “accurate” or will lead the researcher to have a distorted or biased representation. Because this is always a risk in qualitative research, Berry (2002) recommended some steps to both embrace this idea and to help build in some safety measures. These steps include interviewing multiple sources from across the spectrum of views and voices. It also includes accepting that interviews represent the personal perspective of the participant instead of attempting to turn the interview into a pathway to “the truth” of the phenomenon in question. Finally, asking participants to “critique their own case” can also be helpful in that many times they will be able to place themselves and their viewpoints within the spectrum of diverse opinions. Another threat to validity is that sometimes people in elite positions can “exaggerate their own roles” and present a distorted picture of the importance of themselves or their organizations, which can mislead the interviewer. To counteract this Berry (2002) recommended being as well informed as possible prior to the interview, asking participants about others in the field of study to gain a sense of perspective and finally to feel free to move away from impact questions if the conversation is going in an unproductive direction. The preparation phase built into the research process help guard against this particular threat.

### **Contextually-Situated Narrative Inquiry**

While elite interviewing was the name for the type of interviews I conducted, the interviews themselves fall more into the tradition of oral history and in particular, narrative inquiry. The focus of the interviews was how the participants interpreted and dynamically interacted with professional, historical and personal events. Because of the

deep connection to the context of history, science and politics, these interviews were a form of contextually-situated narrative inquiry. This method is ideal for studying social changes (Liamputtong, 2009). Oral history and narrative inquiry are rooted in sociology and anthropology, with a “renaissance of life history methods” occurring during the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Chase, 2005, p. 654). In interviewing participants, I was not interested in knowing simply what the facts were; I wanted to understand how the stories of their personal and professional perspective were interwoven with their meta-narratives, their disciplinary matrix and their exemplars as defined by Kuhn (1970).

...when researchers treat narration as actively creative and the narrator’s voice as particular, they move away from questions about the factual nature of the narrator’s statements. Instead, they highlight the versions of self, reality, and experience that the storyteller produces through the telling (Chase, 2005, p. 656).

This was important because one of my central goals for this dissertation was to create more room for people like myself in the divide, those with meta-narratives of science that allow the two perspectives to both flourish. Therefore it was critical to engage in a research process that focused on how participants shaped their stories versus whose truth was the “right” truth. In addition, narratives are co-constructions between participants, as tellers of stories, and the researcher as both a listener and also a teller of the narrative that is created when the data is interpreted. Because of my feminist, postmodern and postpositivist informed epistemology it was important to me to utilize a methodology where these points were overt. As my narrative voice was also a point of analysis, as much as possible I have sought to explore the “intersubjectivity” between my voice and the voices of the participants (Chase, 2005, p. 666; Liamputtong, 2009). The main way

this was accomplished was through the presentation of my interpretation of the interviews, back to participants for their reflection and feedback, and noting the differences in our perspectives and exploring them.

Reflexivity and voice are important topics in the conversation of contemporary feminist scholarship. Reflexivity is a central feature of feminist study and “goes beyond mere reflection on the conduct of the research and demands a steady, uncomfortable assessment of the interpersonal and interstitial knowledge-producing dynamics of qualitative research” (Olesen, 2005, p. 251). This connects to the practice and documentation of personal reflexivity, but also to dynamics of power in the interview process, a point of concern when conducting elite interviews. In addition to these elements, reflexivity is critical to how I engaged with the data and whose “truth” I presented and thereby elevated and supported. Voice is how I interpreted and represented the voices of the participants and to which audiences those voices were expressed. I saw it as critical that I was overt in my purpose and positioning with participants in order to be completely clear in my intentions. This was of particular importance given the political implications of scholarship in the partner violence field. Because of the potential political implications of this dissertation, I was also concerned about the misinterpretation or misappropriation of my work to support any efforts to dismantle protections for female victims of partner violence or to further the contentious debate between family violence and feminist based scholarship. While I have no answers at this point for how to avert these potential outcomes, my thoughtfulness on the issue of voice extended throughout the research process with these concerns in mind. I continuously met with my major

advisor to share the interviews as they happened, to debrief places where I felt my voice emerged too strongly or not strongly enough and how to use my voice to appropriately write about the interviews and give space for participants' voices in the narrative.

### **Developing a participant list, contact and recruitment**

Through my literature review I identified a list of names that I believed represented strong scholarly voices in the debate between feminist scholars and family conflict scholars in the field of IPV. I reached out through email to approximately twelve scholars with the goal of reaching a minimum of four participants, two affiliated with the family conflict area and two affiliated with the feminist scholars. In narrative inquiry, the focus is on the particular versus the general, and smaller samples of participants are more common (Chase, 2005). The goal is about gaining an in-depth sense from particular participants and not saturation of thematic concepts as is the case in other qualitative traditions such as grounded theory. I anticipated having to contact far more participants but I was pleasantly surprised that my initial emails were responded to by several scholars. Within a month I had made positive contact with six scholars, three associated with each particular perspective by the wider field. I made successful contact with a seventh scholar but our first interview did not record and I was unable to get in contact with him again in order to re-interview him and conduct our second interview. Contact started with a formal email. I attempted to meet Aberbach & Rockman's (2002) suggestion of proceeding with potential elite interview respondents with as many of the attributes of professionalism and formality as possible.

### **Interviews**

Once contact was made, I established a time for my first interview with each participant. My goal was to speak over the phone three times, eliminating the need for a third interview, if the breadth and depth of the previous interviews provided sufficient saturation. Initially I had planned to fly to each participant after we completed our interviews so I could discuss my work with them and get feedback on my interpretation of their words. I quickly realized that this was going to be difficult for me given personal considerations of the being a parent to an infant and financial limitations with respect to extensive travelling. Therefore, I eliminated the step of the in-person interview that was in my previous plan. The goal of repeated interviews is to increase the level of trust and rapport between myself and participants with hopefully the benefit of richer, more storied data (Liamputtong, 2009). It was this in mind that I designed the interview protocol to start with a topic that was less charged, namely the participant's professional growth and development. I wanted the conversation about their experience with the divide to happen after I had a greater understanding of them personally and they had a greater understanding of who I was and what I was hoping to accomplish. It was my hope in constructing the interviews in this way that I would be able to elicit more nuanced and vulnerable experiences of being a professional in the field.

A key piece of the interviewing process was the preparation phase. It requires preparation and knowledge when interviewing elites in order to encourage confidence in the interviewer. Prior to each interview I engaged in an extensive reading of the participant's body of work so that I was able to discuss their work in the field with



knowledge. As a developing researcher, I also felt that this was respectful of the passion and dedication that the participants placed on their work.

Aberbach & Rockman (2002) suggested utilizing three criteria when deciding how structured an interview protocol should be during an elite interview. The first criterion is the level of research in the area prior to ones study, with more research indicating a more structured, closed interviewing approach and less research indicating a less structured, open conversational style. The second criterion is what format will lead to the greatest response validity on the part of the respondents. The third and last criterion is the receptivity of the respondents with many highly educated elites preferring open ended questions so that they can “articulate their views, explaining what they think and why” (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002, p. 674). These criteria supported a more open, less structured interview format with participants. Table 1 is a presentation of my interview questions. Interview questions were developed to fit into a set of three interviews. The first interview was a focus on the participant’s professional socialization, the second interview was a focus on their experience with division in the field and the third interview was a focus on the future and any particular sub-areas I wanted to get their perspective on. As previously stated, I organized the interviews this way because I wanted to build trust before delving into the more sensitive topic area of the division, given how intensely acrimonious it has been at times. I also wanted to gain some understanding of how professional socialization influenced the participant’s journey without immediately tying that socialization to their position within the divide. As the interviews went on, ideas emerged that I had not previously thought of and these were

integrated into later interviews (see Table 2 for questions added as the interviews progressed). Because of that, I feel my later interviews have greater depth and richness because over time I asked better, more nuanced questions and I also became a better interviewer. Given my level of respect and admiration for the scholars I interviewed, I attempted to create one somewhat challenging or potentially critical question prior to each interview to try to weave into the conversation. I did this because I felt my participants stood above me hierarchically and I did not want that feeling to mean that I did not ask the ‘tough questions’ if they needed to be asked. Often I did this through referencing scholars’ critics by saying “Some have argued this about your work” or “Critics might take this position”. Also, if it became apparent to me that certain topics were redundant to discuss because of the clear position a participant took in the literature, I used discretion to not address those questions. Given the conversational nature of the interviews, while I attempted to ask all pertinent questions as close to the style I had written them in, they often shifted and changed to reflect the unique and dynamic conversation I was having with a participant.

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Table 1: Interview protocol

**Interview One:** Professional socialization into the field

Introduce myself and my work

**Question:** How did you get involved in the partner violence field?

**Prompts:** How did you get interested in the partner violence field?

**Question:** What experiences contributed to your growth as a researcher/academic/clinician in the area of partner violence?

**Question:** Who were the biggest influences in your professional journey?

**Question:** What professional experiences were turning points in your career?

**Question:** How would you describe the motivations behind your work? Have those motivations changed through the years?

**Question:** What would you describe as the contributions of your work to the field?

**Question:** What do you want the legacy of your work to be?

**Interview Two:** Experience with the divide in the field

Member check of previous interview and review of previous transcript.

**Question:** When and how did you become aware of the divide in the field between what some may call the family conflict camp and the feminist/gender camp?

**Question:** What experiences informed your perspective of the divide and your place within it?

**Question:** What professional and personal experiences have you had because of your particular perspective?

**Question:** Where would you position yourself if you were to imagine the field as a ruler with the most extreme perspectives of both positions on either end?

**Question:** What does the other side, if you position yourself in one camp, contribute to the conversation?

**Question:** What do you think about the state of dialogue about the divide in the field?

**Question:** What would you want to stay the same and what would you want to be different?

**Interview 3:** Focus on the future

Member check of previous interview and review of previous transcript.

**Question:** What do you see as the future of the divide?

**Question:** What do you see as the future of the field of IPV?

**Question:** If you could wave a magic wand, what would you want to see happen in regards to field and the divide?

**Question:** Content specific sub-topics only to be asked if their position is unclear:  
Thoughts regarding integrating behavioral health and substance abuse treatment into programs for perpetrators?  
Thoughts regarding couple and family therapy interventions for IPV?

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Table 2: Additional interview questions

**Question:** The role of politics in the divide, is there a political association to each perspective?

**Question:** At the university-system and federal grant level, is some scholarship rewarded and some marginalized? Is this related to politics or something else?

**Question:** Is there a difference between how this conversation emerges between the US, other countries and the international community?

**Question:** As you describe your experiences in the divide and your position, do you attribute that to a reflection of your personality, a reflection of your professional socialization or both? Or something else?

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Interviews were audio-recorded and conducted by phone. The interviews were transcribed by me within two to three weeks of the interview except for the final two

interviews, where I hired a professional transcription service because I was falling behind in my ability to keep up with my timeline. My plan was to conduct only one interview within a 24-48 hour period given the high level of preparation and mental and emotional demand such interviews require. However, it was critical to the elite interview process that interviews were scheduled based on the availability and convenience of the participants. Sometimes this meant conducting interviews with two participants in a 24 hour period. For the most part I was able to space the interviews out so that each participant had my focus exclusively for three weeks to a month. Once interviews were transcribed, they were returned back to the participants for feedback and editing. This part of the process was critical to creating the forum for intersubjectivity that I was attempting to explore. Feedback and edits were made whenever participants suggested them, in whatever form they suggested. If a participant asked for certain pieces of the transcript to be changed or for pieces not be included in the dissertation, it went unreported. It was important to me that the story told in this dissertation reflected the story that they wanted to be told, that it is a narrative they endorse. Following this, narratives of the interviews were written. Additionally, a preliminary thematic analysis was conducted guided by the central question of meta-narratives and ante-narratives. This was put into a visual coding model with the primary themes identified and an accompanying excel file that contained these thematic categories with accompanying supporting quotes from the interviews. These files, along with the narrative draft, were sent for review to the participants, with any feedback or suggested changes made. Aside

from minor changes, the participants were warmly responsive and expressed excitement to read the finalized dissertation.

### **Data management**

Transcripts, analysis, memos and notes were saved in multiple secure locations. All chapters written were reviewed by my primary advisor, including the individual chapters prior to being sent to participants for member checking. Throughout the process, I engaged in intensive and frequent consultation with my advisor. As needed, expert consultation was sought with various scholars as topics emerged that deserved more attention and with which I had little knowledge. These consultations were documented in note form and stored alongside other memos and records.

### **Study Limitations, Validity and Reliability**

Qualitative research is typically rooted in social constructionist assumptions rather than positivist assumptions of traditional quantitative research. The ideas of validity and reliability as they are used in quantitative methodology are replaced with the idea of rigor, which encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is a form of internal validity and is how close a researcher's interpretation is to a participant's account. Transferability is a form of external validity and is a reflection of other contexts to which the findings of the study can be applied. Dependability is related to reliability and is about how close the researcher's interpretation is to the original data and is determined through the use of an audit trail and an auditing process. Finally, confirmability is related to how much unexamined bias is influencing the researcher's interpretation (Liamputtong, 2009).

## **Ethical Considerations**

### **IRB**

Based on consultation with the University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board, this study fits within the definition of “Oral History.” The criteria for meeting the “Oral History” definition are 1) Is there a systematic investigation/hypothesis that will compare responses over time? 2) Is there the intention to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge? I asked participants about their expert opinions and observations. Therefore, based on the definition of “Oral History” this study did not meet the criteria for human subject’s research and it did not need approval from the IRB. This is documented in a series of emails with the University of Minnesota IRB.

### **Confidentiality**

Due to the public nature of the participants, their visibility in the field, and the intimate nature of the field, it would not be feasible to promise participants confidentiality. Therefore, as a part of agreeing to participate in the study, participants were made aware that they would be identified.

At the same time that participants were not promised confidentiality as a part of their agreeing to participate, I was clear about what communications were “on the record” versus “off the record.” Because confidentiality is not a part of this study, participants had complete control over what information went into the study and attached to their name and what did not. Several steps of member checking and approval from participants before the study is published were built into the research and analysis process.

### **Evolving consent**

While this study did not meet the standard of human subject research, it was still critical that the informed consent process was ongoing. Because of the public nature of the participants and the public nature of the data, it was discussed at various points with participants what I had permission to include in the study and what I did not. Participants were in control of the ultimate message they wanted to convey, despite my interpretation and presentation of that message.

### **Self of the Researcher**

It is important for me to place myself socio-politically as well as to engage in as much reflective practice as possible. I am a female, in my late 20s and early 30s, and I am a White European American born in the United States. I am deeply connected to family systems based scholarship as I have a Masters degree in Marriage and Family Therapy and am a doctoral candidate in Family Social Science. I am a contemporary feminist and would be considered to be a part of 3<sup>rd</sup> wave feminism (Budgeon, 2011). In reflecting on why I see the need for this dissertation I have come to the conclusion that some of the conflict between family systems and feminist based scholarship is also rooted in conflicts over interpretations and positions within feminism, post-modernism and philosophy of science. My personal perspective and positions are shared throughout the dissertation.

### **Analysis**

The methodology of this study was contextually situated narrative inquiry as described in detail in the previous chapter. Two analytic strategies were employed: writing the participants stories into thick descriptive narratives and a thematic analysis. Writing rich descriptions of participants' lives and thematic analysis are both used in

other methodological approaches. As transcription happened as close in time as possible to the interview, the analysis process started from the beginning of the first interview, and informed the unfolding interview process.

Examples of thick, narrative descriptions and thematic analysis within a narrative framework were identified and served as guides for how to proceed. Examples of oral histories analyzed through a narrative lens included a study of women's experiences of domestic violence (Reissman, 1992) and how academic professionals storied their experiences of career and home life (Gersick, Bartunek, & Dutton, 2000). The chapters in the edited volume *Storied Lives: the Cultural Politics of Self-Understanding* served as both guide and inspiration for how to construct my own rich description of the stories my participants told me. The narrative descriptions were used as a way to integrate the material of the interviews into large, single units of analysis that fit into a broader story of how they view their professional journey and their experiences with divisions in the field. I believe this allowed the participants' stories to be presented in a holistic way that reflected the depth of their perspective, both personal and professional. Each of the individual descriptions of my interviews with the participants represented a "stand-alone story as research representation" (Saldana, 2013, p. 134).

The narratives included my personal reactions to the participants and reflections. Mishler (1995) stated that many interviewers minimize their role in the co-creation of the interview process. Paget's work (1982, 1983a, 1983b) was cited as an exception to this with her analysis of her own interviewing technique built into the analysis of the data



itself. For example, Mishler (1995) commented about Paget's question and answer about a participant's age:

Paget argues that her question about the respondent's age and the extended reply cannot be understood if the question is viewed as identical in meaning to the typical age question in the list of social-background items appearing at the end of a standard survey interview schedule. Her question is embedded in and enters into the evolving discourse of the interview. To analyze its meaning and the meaning of the response, the question-answer exchange "cannot be severed from shared historical understandings" (Paget, 1983a, p. 79 as cited in Mishler, 1995, p. 98).

I utilized this analytical approach to understand my own role as interviewer and how my self-of-the-researcher dynamically engaged throughout the interview process with the participants' storytelling.

Thematic analysis was employed to explore in greater depth the aspects of the participants' stories that related to the larger divide. The themes specifically sought out in this stage of analysis were thematic in nature as described by Saldana (2013), including concepts such as "moral, life lesson, significant insight, theory etc (p.135)". In particular, ideas related to meta-narratives, ante-narratives, and paradigms (both exemplars and disciplinary matrixes) were sought out. Ante-narratives when identified were also grouped based on subtype (linear, cyclical, spiral, and rhizome) as described in chapter 7. The general thematic coding process followed the steps outlined by Auerbach & Silverstein (2003); a recommendation of Saldana (2013) as an appropriate guide to thematic analysis. The text from each set of interviews was read several times. A within-coding and analysis process was done with each participant first. Important and salient ideas from sub-sections of text were noted using memos. Concepts that seemed inter-related and that would be difficult to appreciate if they were disconnected, were inter-

connected, even if that meant that a more complex idea was the heading for a burgeoning code versus the short-form naming style typically used in qualitative analysis. Developing thematic ideas were kept in a Microsoft Excel file with the relevant, often large, blocks of text moved into rows beneath the subheading of the code. Once all the text was coded, the thematic ideas and coded text were re-read with an eye towards the research question of paradigm (both disciplinary matrix and exemplar), meta-narrative, and ante-narrative that would impact a participant's perspective and position within the larger divide in the field. Thematic ideas continued to be shifted and condensed until each theme seemed a vivid and rich representation of a different and unique angle of the participant's perspective. These themes were then captured in a visual way, using Microsoft Word. The visual representations were guided by Saldana's (2013) discussion of an analytic memo sketch of code weaving, which was a visual way of representing how I was interconnecting the themes of the participant's interview into a larger and broader narrative position within the divide. Sometimes these were broader ideas and sometimes they could only be depicted with more complexity, this depended on the participant and how they framed their story. When there were choices to make between simplicity and complexity of thematic representation, I always chose more complexity because of my conscious desire to highlight complexity over dichotomy. The visual representations and the Microsoft Excel files containing the thematic codes and their supporting texts were sent for auditing to my advisor. Following minor edits, they were then sent to each participant for member checking and quality control. Some participants chose to make changes to their thematic codes, some chose not to review

them. These codes were vividly represented in the narrative chapters designated to each participant's interviews; to eliminate redundancy, I chose to not report the findings for this individual analysis.

Following within analysis, across analysis thematic coding was then conducted through grouping the codes based on conceptual similarity as they related to meta-narratives, disciplinary matrixes, exemplars and ante-narratives. Visual representations were then used to indicate through closeness and distance on a continuum how close and how far apart particular participants' narratives were related to the different thematic areas. These positions and oppositions were described in the findings. This analysis was audited by my primary advisor. Further interpretation, questions left unanswered, and future research were placed in the discussion. The finalized dissertation will be sent to the participants for another stage of member checking and any feedback will be incorporated.

### **Method and presentation of results**

The next section presents each narrative in chronological sequence of when they were conducted. The order goes: Dr. Richard Felson, Dr. Walter DeKeseredy, Dr. Michael Johnson, Dr. Claire Renzetti, Dr. Linda Mills and Dr. Sandra Stith. Following the presentation of the rich description of the interviews, section IV presents the findings from the thematic analysis across the interviews and then my discussion and references.

**Section III:**  
**The Interviews**

**Chapter 9:**

**Dr. Richard Felson**

In September of 2013, I interviewed my first participant, Dr. Richard Felson. Dr. Felson is currently a Professor of Criminology and Sociology at Penn State University in the Sociology Department. He received a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Cincinnati in 1972, a M.A. in Sociology in 1973 and a Ph.D. in Sociology in 1977 from Indiana University. He joined the Sociology Department of the State University of New York at Albany in 1976. He left in 1999 as a Professor of Sociology when he obtained his current position at Penn State University. In addition to his academic credentials, Dr. Felson has written numerous articles and book chapters as well as two books *Violence, Aggression, and Coercive Actions* (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994) and *Violence and Gender Reexamined* (Felson, 2002) along with two edited volumes *Aggression and Violence: Social Interactionist Perspectives* (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993) and *Psychological Perspectives on Self and Identity* (Tesser, Felson, & Suls, 2000). In 2013 he was selected to be a Fellow of the American Society of Criminology.

When I first began investigating the controversy over different perspectives and approaches to the study of IPV, Dr. Felson immediately emerged as a key voice. In his 2011 article, Winstock used an exchange between Dr. Felson and another important voice, Dr. Walter DeKeseredy, as an example of the dialogue scholars of differing views in this area engage in. Dr. Felson is described as a “well-known sociologist who is strongly critical of gender- based approaches to partner violence” (Winstock, 2011, p. 304) and his critiques of feminist scholarship in the area of IPV can be provocative. For instance, in the conclusion to his 2002 book *Violence and Gender Reexamined*, Felson said:

One could argue that, overall, feminist influence has been positive because it drew attention to a social problem. Even if their methods were inadequate and their conclusions erroneous, they influenced the public to devote attention and resources to helping female victims. I do not agree that the end justifies the means in this instance for three reasons: (1) There is no evidence that the feminist approach has had any effect on reducing rates of violence against women, (2) bad research produces bad public policy, and (3) social scientists lose credibility when they generate information on social problems that is later revealed to be false.

Given Dr. Felson's position in the literature, I had some trepidation going into our first interview. I consider myself a feminist and that the feminist movement is a positive one in every arena. I recognize that like many human endeavors, it has certain problems and inadequacies. Before the first interview, I expected to be challenged, potentially criticized and I had some concern that I would be put in a position where I would need to defend myself. I had some fear that, even though Dr. Felson had agreed to be interviewed by me, that instead of an interview, I was walking into a battlefield; one in which I was ill prepared to fight. I reveal this because of the striking contrast between my expectations and what turned out to be a truly collegial conversation.

**“I'm a very open person so I'll tell you anything”**

Dr. Felson made this statement in the first 10 minutes of our conversation and it remained true throughout our three interviews. He was always direct and honest but also respectful of the idea that I may have a differing viewpoint. He was funny and sometimes punctuated a challenging or controversial statement with a joke that we would both laugh at. Despite my concerns prior to our first interview, I felt a rapport with him and his personality and style of interaction felt familiar. In learning more about his personal history, I started seeing some reasons for this affinity. Dr. Felson is from a liberal, Jewish family and he was born in 1950. My father is from a liberal, Jewish family and was born

in 1949; looking back on our conversations I saw similarities between my father and Dr. Felson's style of interaction. I share this reflection because I could see someone reacting more negatively to some of the things he said than I did. I attributed to him the same characteristics that I know to be true of my father; that they tend to state their views bluntly with intent to start a lively debate versus to be deliberately offensive. There were times when I certainly disagreed with Dr. Felson but I never felt offended or disturbed by his position and I believe it was this personal attribution that can partially explain it.

**“Tendency towards non-conformity in my family”**

Dr. Felson grew up in a family of sociologists and academicians, his mother was a social worker who majored in sociology, another brother majored in sociology, and his brother Dr. Marcus Felson, is a sociology professor in the Criminal Justice Department at Texas State University. In addition he has a sister, with a history of activism, who is a Professor of Classics. Dr. Felson informed me that “there is a tendency towards non-conformity in the family”, his “grandfather was Secretary of the Socialist Party in Kentucky” and his family was “active in the civil rights movement.” While Dr. Felson described a lack of sympathy with what he calls “academic feminism,” he made it clear that in his liberal, Jewish family “I never heard a non-feminist statement.” He also made clear that “I really don't think that women in this country are oppressed.” This is an important lens into understanding Dr. Felson's perspective on feminist-based scholarship.

**“I always straddled sociology and psychology”**

During his undergraduate education, Dr. Felson minored in Psychology and described “an interest in social psychology within sociology”; while working on his



Ph.D. he focused on the “self concept.” While interested in social psychology and studying human aggression and violence, his work did not become controversial until 1990, when he was at SUNY Albany moved into the field of criminology. When he first began, he applied a social psychology theory, symbolic interactionism to the study of aggression.

I didn't study intimate partner violence. I studied aggression and violence. I don't understand this whole thing about studying aggression against wives, its aggression. Start there. It might be special, but start by thinking about aggression and violence and, if it's special, you've got to establish it's special. So you know I'm coming from a different point of view.

He published several articles throughout the 1980s on various aspects of violence in human relationships including parental and sibling violence (e.g. Felson & Russo, 1988) and bar room brawls (Felson, Baccaglini, & Gmelch, 1986).

### **“I questioned the faith”**

In the 1980s Dr. Felson was studying the self concept and applied for a grant from the National Science Foundation about sex differences and the study of math. He described using a “feminist approach” and that “it turned out all wrong.”

The girls had more anxiety about math, but they had more anxiety about school generally but they just cared about school more. The boys didn't give a damn and then the girls do better in school as a result so it was more of a general thing. I was looking to find a feminist thing but I didn't. So that led me down a path of questioning feminist stuff, I think that was the first time I questioned the faith.

The next transition point was when he began writing about sexual assault as a sexually motivated crime versus one of power and his work became controversial (Felson & Krohn, 1990). In their analysis, Felson & Krohn (1990) used a socio-sexual model to say that sexual assault could have a variety of motives and that particularly with younger

victims, the motive tended to be sexual; violence was simply a strategy to achieve that outcome. Perpetrators used less violence with younger victims, and used greater physical violence and causing injury during sexual assaults with older victims and victims from estranged relationships. Therefore, the motivations of perpetrators toward these victims may have involved more of intent to punish them, than an exclusively sexual motivation.

Dr. Felson shared “that got me into trouble because I wrote about it as sexually motivated and that was not allowed.” At this time he also began writing about fights:

I wasn't thinking about fights being men and women, just fights and how fights develop. And somebody criticized it because they were thinking about fights being men and women. And they thought ‘women are innocent when they're in a fight, they're victims.’

In reaction to this criticism, Dr. Felson wrote an article called *Blame Analysis:*

*Accounting for the Behavior of Protected Groups*. In the piece he wrote:

I recognize the dilemma that social scientists face when their results are misinterpreted. When dealing with the public (including undergraduates), it may sometimes be necessary for us to play a protective role. At the least, we should emphasize that cause and blame are different, and that proximate variables are mediating variables.

In general, however, judgments of blame should be the province of agents of social control, not social scientists. We should avoid the polemic between those who wish to blame these groups, and those who wish to defend them. When sociologists and other social scientists participate in this ideological battle they sacrifice scientific principles and become propagandists for one side or another. More importantly, the threat of charges of prejudice, and the negative response of reviewers, discourage those who value these principles from working in some controversial areas of research. The result is the domination of blame analysis over scientific analysis in the examination of some of the most important issues of our day (Felson, 1991, p. 20).

This was a controversial position to take in the field.

From there Dr. Felson moved to examining how IPV related or did not relate to other forms of violence. In his exploration of this, he became exposed to the feminist perspective that places sexism and patriarchy as a central theme of the analysis of IPV. Dr. Felson reported reacting to this concept with disbelief because “I thought everybody believed ‘well you shouldn’t hit girls.’” For Dr. Felson, the idea of violence against women was so engrained that he did not understand the absence of research on concepts like chivalry that gave women protected status in society. He began researching the subject.

I did some studies about chivalry and basically they didn’t like you talking about that and they didn’t like you bringing it up. Any understanding of violence against women, you bring in the norm of protecting women, girls, everyone knows that, so why wouldn’t you talk about that? If you didn’t you were hiding something, so that I felt ‘well this field is corrupt.’ And to this day, that it is corrupt.

From this experience, Dr. Felson moved into more overt criticism of feminist scholarship in the field of IPV.

### **“Criticizing this is like shooting fish in a barrel”**

Dr. Felson stated that critiquing feminist scholarship in the area of IPV is easy because it’s “just slogans, and not done by scientists.” He also knows that he probably should be more circumspect in his language, speak more “between the lines” and not “openly criticize them” but that he has struggled with this and many times has spoken quite plainly about his perspective.

And there is a price to be paid when you do it. Because they will come after you, and they did come after me; lots of criticism.

Others in his life have advised him that “you’ve got to give them some space so that they can accept your stuff but still leave them space for them to feel good.” But Dr. Felson shared:

You know I don’t. I’m not good at that. It’s a dilemma, do you say it in an extreme way or do you say it in a diplomatic way? Its sometimes more interesting and fun, it gets more attention when you say it in a strong way, but on the other hand maybe that doesn’t work as well. And that’s an interesting sort of dilemma. I’ve used a lot of humor. And the humor can be cutting. You know like in the book ‘I’ve been to the intersection of race, class and gender and I can tell you that the bus doesn’t stop there’. I quoted from someone else. And I think it is an extremely clever line. But it is a clever line at somebody's expense. There are people who the intersection of race, class, and gender is a religious phrase for them and I’m making fun of it. How to present your ideas is something I’ve struggled with all the way through.

Taking such a stance, Dr. Felson has experienced professional consequences. He reported that he feels that the criticism from feminist scholars, delayed his confirmation as a Fellow in the American Criminological Association until last year. In addition, he informed me that there was an unsuccessful attempt to block his promotion in his previous department at SUNY Albany. But, perhaps even more meaningfully, he shared his feeling that his 2002 book has both been attacked but also largely ignored by many of the feminist scholars in the field of IPV because of its controversial view point.

#### **“I don’t have such a thick skin”**

Despite his willingness to engage in these critical and controversial dialogues, Dr. Felson shared that personally he does not seek this out. He does not want people to dislike him and he does not try to offend people. For him there has been a difference in some relationships between his personal interactions with other scholars and his scholarly interactions:

Some people will say that they like me personally. Because they don't want to say, that I actually believe this stuff, they like to say 'oh I just like to provoke people.' And so that's the way they explain it or at least some people do. And I'm not someone who just wants to provoke people, I want you to believe, I say it because I believe it and I want you to believe me, I'm not saying it just to be difficult. I want to be approved of just as much as the next person but you know you get people who like to interpret it as a personality flaw, rather than as something where somebody might legitimately might think something, different than you, and the other thing is that there's a lot of people who agree but don't say so.

Some individuals who were critics when his book came out, have shared privately that they admired his work, agreed with it at the time but remained quiet out of their own fear of being attacked. He said that, for the most part, the criticism that happens is behind his back so it's more difficult to say who is saying what, but that many people privately approach him and say positive things about his scholarship.

Dr. Felson described that much of his work in this area, critiquing feminist gender-based scholarship and promoting a more general analysis of violence, has been both cyclical and escalating:

And then you put it in your book and then you're down, and then they attack you and then you've got to defend yourself with this blame analysis piece. And then, it's like an escalating fight. And you're digging yourself deeper into the hole, so that's where I've sort of dug myself deeper and deeper. And then once, once you've got a bad reputation, 'what's the difference?' Although I've been told also, that it's died down over my book. That in criminology that I've sort of been forgiven a little bit.

**“I'm different in that...”**

In addition to tone of delivery, Dr. Felson distinguished himself from other scholars typically associated with him, such as Donald Dutton and John Arther. He clarified after seeing this chapter that “I am different in that I study all types of violence (and make comparisons) where they usually study IPV only, and make gender

comparisons” (Personal communication, March 2014). He is also not particularly concerned with male victims of IPV, a group some family conflict scholars are strong advocates for based on their interpretation of the research.

I think most of the violence against men is more minor and I’m not as concerned about it. Let me just give you an example, I was asked to speak on the telephone to a men’s group. And they were very upset about the feminists ignoring violence against men. And they were not very happy with me. Because I was not sympathetic with their cause enough and they were men who had been hit by women and felt they hadn’t been treated fairly. And maybe they hadn’t. I’m not denying that women do get hit, the violence against women is more injurious and when the family violence people measure violence they include everything and includes lots of minor stuff. . .including all the trivial stuff. And they catch a lot of female fish along with the male fish by casting this broad net and it has some significance but it probably doesn’t require arrest so I’m not as concerned about it as much as the family violence people. Now Murray Straus will say, very reasonably, that it’s not good for women to hit men because sometimes men will hit them back, with more force so it causes, provokes violence in men that can be more dangerous. And that’s a good point. But I’m just not as preoccupied with this as much as they are.

### **“I believed in science”**

Dr. Felson repeatedly discussed the idea of what science is and what it is not, and the opinion that some feminist scholarship is not what he would call science; “if you’re trained in scientific method, you’re not going to like some of what’s going on in women’s studies.” He also shared the idea that feminist scholarship is more radical and left-wing, while a more positivist, scientific orientation is more conservative.

I’m in sociology so everybody’s on the left. But in sociology I’m an Obama democrat, which is more conservative in a sociology department, it’s all the left, there are no republicans. So I would be considered of the right in sociology, particularly what I’m writing about here. Now on the other hand, I was hired here at Penn State after writing this stuff and this a very good department, now it is one of the more conservative, if not the most conservative sociology departments. When I say conservative I don’t mean really conservative. It is a sociology department. But it’s a more science oriented place.

One of the key points Dr. Felson made was the misplaced role of activism in the scientific endeavor and how that distorts the research process.

You know one of techniques you have with sexual assault and intimate partner violence, if you're an activist is you cast a broad net, count the minor stuff and give it a serious label . . . Not just feminists but, any kind of activist, you want to count the slaps and call them beatings, and this is the way activists work. This is not the scientist's technique but an activist's technique. And the media picks up on this, they like to call it a beating and a battered wife, and a battered husband and you want to get big numbers.

### **“You're really on your own”**

Dr. Felson described the powerful influence of Dr. Murray Straus as a support person who helped him remain engaged in his work despite the controversy. He shared an example of how during an author meets critics session for his 2002 book, someone in the audience accused him of setting up a straw man in his attack of feminist scholarship. Dr. Straus was in the audience and, in his defense, he repeatedly asked this person to point to where in the book this happened. Dr. Felson shared that “he stuck up for me, so every time I see him I always thank him for that.” In addition Dr. Felson shared the success he has had with publishing in high quality journals and in particular his four APA published books as sources of support. But overall, he reported the sense that “you're really on your own”.

### **“If I think of anything else, I'll email you”**

Overall, I enjoyed my conversations with Dr. Felson and found myself challenged by many ideas that I had never thought of before, though parts of me bristled at some of his statements.. My affiliation with post-positivism and affirmative post-modernism conflicted somewhat with Dr. Felson's commitment to a positivist perspective on the

nature of science and the extent to which scientists own biases can be managed in the scientific endeavor. I also struggled with some of what I saw as the therapeutic and political implications of Dr. Felson's perspectives. This was challenging to me because I had not really explored the idea that perhaps I avoid difficult ideas because of my fear of how they may be enacted by the larger society. For example, if we accept that rape is sexually motivated, is the next step to place biological controls on potential perpetrators to suppress their sex drive? Dr. Felson in a personal communication made it very clear that he does not see this as an implication of his work or that it would be effective strategy. But I could see how concern over how others would interpret or misuse his work could affect my ability to judge it fairly. In reflecting on my aversion to this line of thinking, I realized that I can at times avoid research that has implications that I find difficult or problematic. Another area of conflict for me was the removal of the lens of gender and other forms of power and privilege as a valuable and informative tool. My life experience is shaped by my gender. For example, my experience walking down a street is qualitatively different than my male partner. I feel less safe and I am more hyper-alert to the possibility of a rape or physical attack. I feel more vulnerable as a woman in our society. Is that oppression? I am not sure but it is certainly unwelcome, unfortunate and something I hope will change. Similarly, just as Dr. Felson's lived experiences have led him to question the absence of chivalry in the research in violence against women, my life experiences lead me to question the removal of gender from an analysis of violence. I was challenged by many of Dr. Felson's ideas. Some led me to question my own attitudes and perspectives that I had previously taken for granted. I also know that our interaction,



because it was one-on-one and respectful, created a format in which I was open to hearing his ideas. I found him to be an extremely likeable and kind person who is knowledgeable and passionate.

**Chapter 10:**  
**Dr. Walter DeKeseredy**

Dr. Walter DeKeseredy is a Canadian scholar who has deep international connections across Canada, the United States and Australia. Currently Dr. DeKeseredy is the Anna Deane Carlson Endowed Chair of Social Sciences in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at West Virginia University. This is a new position for Dr. DeKeseredy, having moved from Canada to the United States within the past year, a transition that was just about to occur when our interviews were conducted. Dr. DeKeseredy obtained his B.A, M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from York University, completing his doctorate in 1988. His first position upon graduating was at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia Canada as an Assistant Professor in the Sociology and Anthropology Department. After spending 1988 to 1989 there, he transitioned to the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Carlton University in Ontario Canada, where he stayed from 1989 to 2000. From 2000 to 2004 Dr. DeKeseredy was a Professor at Ohio University in the Sociology and Anthropology Department before spending the last decade from 2004 to 2014 as Professor in the Department of Social Science and Humanities at University of Ontario, Institute of Technology. He has produced an immense body of work, having authored and co-authored over 70 peer-reviewed articles, over 60 book chapters, and edited, co-edited, authored and co-authored 18 books. His most recent titles include *Critical Criminology* (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2014), *Rural Criminology* (Donnermeyer & DeKeseredy, 2014), and *Male Peer Support and Violence Against Women: the History and Verification of a Theory* (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013).

I entered my first personal interaction with Dr. DeKeseredy with some preconceptions that are important to share. Dr. DeKeseredy's voice in the literature about feminist research in the area of IPV is powerful. His arguments are charismatic and convincing. Often when I read his work, I find myself wholeheartedly convinced of the truth of his perspective. In both the emotional sense that what he writes is "honest, honorable, upright, virtuous, trustworthy, free from deceit, sincere, and unfeigned" and the intellectual sense that it is "consistent with fact; agreeing with the reality; representing the thing as it is" (OED, 2014). Commonly as I engage with his work, my internal monologue is filled with "Of course!" and "Why have I never heard/thought about that before?" It is, typically, only days later that I begin to deconstruct the particular points that I agree with and the ones that I may still question or want to explore further. There is something wonderful in reading and interacting with scholarship that is so powerfully persuasive, but, as a developing scholar, this can provoke some as anxiety as well. At this point in my professional development, I struggle with the idea of knowing anything enough to state it unilaterally and without qualification. There are not many concepts that I feel that I can state with confidence about IPV but I have a few that are hard won and the result of examination and study. It can be a disheartening experience to reach a place of some assurance about a particular fact or idea, and a willingness to stand beside it publically through presenting it either in a lecture or in a discourse with other professionals, only to read something by Dr. DeKeseredy that casts it all into doubt for me again.

Given this experience, I was slightly wary that I would get swept away by the force of his arguments and that I would struggle to represent myself honestly and coherently. Once again, my expectations, which were based on my reading of the literature, did not reflect the reality of the person I encountered. I knew from the literature that Dr. DeKeseredy was passionate and committed and so I was not surprised that those facets of his personality were present. But what did not come across in the literature, which was a pleasant surprise, was how those characteristics were balanced by his overwhelming gentleness and kindness. Throughout our conversations, he was extremely supportive of me and willingly provided me with ample space in our conversations to respectfully disagree with him or present an alternate perspective. He was encouraging and easy to talk to. I need to also add that I conducted Dr. DeKeseredy's interviews during the same period of time that I was interviewing Dr. Felson and so there are moments that I present comparisons that occurred to me as I interacted with both participants.

**“So I decided to look at that and it was really exciting”**

As we began our first conversation and I asked Dr. DeKeseredy how his professional journey began, he referred me to a recent publication of *Male Peer Support & Violence Against Women* (DeKeseredy & Shwartz, 2013) and gave me permission to refer to this text for additional material. Something I rapidly realized in our conversations is that the Male Peer Support Theory is some of the work Dr. DeKeseredy is most proud of and something he developed quite early in his professional career. As a Ph.D. student at York University, he attended a colloquium about family violence; “it covered wife

beating and child beating and I was astounded at the extent of the violence in the family.” Two people doing pioneering research at the time were Desmond Ellis and Michael D. Smith; Ellis was working on separation violence and Smith “was doing one of the best surveys ever done actually, the Toronto Woman Abuse Survey which was a representative sample survey of violence against cohabiting and married women and separated women too.” They both agreed to serve on his doctoral committee. Three key developments created the intersection for DeKeseredy’s work: (a) the research done by Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz (1981) that asserted the special role of marriage in putting women at risk; (b) the first study of dating violence in the United States by Makepeace (1981) that presented the risk of women in dating relationships; and (c) the (at the time) lack of data on Canadian dating couples. Dr. DeKeseredy was encouraged by Smith to develop a theory of dating violence in Canada, and began as a typical academic to conduct research in the library. But in this case, the existent literature was lacking and so he “toiled . . . his frustration . . . growing and growing with each passing day (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013, p. 46). Dr. DeKeseredy was in a unique position; he had the recent experience of “staying at York University in residence,” immersed in college dating culture. As he recounts in his book (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013), 1986 he was at a local college pub when:

. . . one of the most important events of his life transpired. At a nearby table was a group of six undergraduates, and DeKeseredy overheard them offering “solutions” to one group member’s dating problems. The recipient of advice was deeply disturbed because he took a woman out for dinner and she refused to have sex with him at the end of the evening. Some of this peers suggested that he stop seeing her, while others stated that he should have physically forced her to have sex with him (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013, p. 46).

From that moment, Dr. DeKeseredy (with the help of his mentors and committee members) began connecting the threads from several pieces of literature: (a) Group Theory (Kanin, 1967); (b) violent subculture hypothesis (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967), including Smith's work on the violent subculture hypothesis among hockey players (Smith, 1979, 1983); (d) Male Peer Support Theory, as developed by Bowker (1983) in his book *Beating Wife-Beating*; and (e) Social Support Theory (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013). For his doctoral dissertation work he collected exploratory data from 330 college age Canadian men and developed the Male Peer Support Theory.

I think probably the most important thing that ever happened to me was developing the male peer support theory. . . because, I've been working in that area for 25 years and I'm really proud of that. I think that's one of the most important things I've ever done for the field.

Afterwards:

I needed something new. So I moved into this area called left realism. And I . . . brought feminism into it with Martin Shwartz; we were looking at doing feminist critique of left realism. And how feminism can enhance left realism and then I came back to woman abuse full force in 1992. So I left it for a little bit. Not with any anger or tension, I just needed something different.

When he returned to the field of woman abuse, Dr. DeKeseredy went on to test the male peer support theory in a nationally representative Canadian sample and then moved into looking at the abuse of women in public housing and rural communities and "women and girls in conflict with the law."

**"There was a huge feminist backlash . . . I was only 30 years old"**

Early in his career, Dr. DeKeseredy conducted the Canadian National Survey Woman Abuse in University and College Dating, which was the first nationally representative study of its kind in Canada.

It hit newspapers, and there was a huge huge HUGE backlash . . . that was . . . tough. I'm over it now . . . But at that time I was fairly naive, I thought that . . . a good data set, following the traditional principles of scientific research, that would influence people and so on . . . That was tough. Getting pictures of aborted fetuses sent to my house, hate mail . . . we had to hire an armed security guard to Carleton University in the Sociology department, and the support staff were too scared to come in . . . those were the low points. . . I was bombarded after the Canadian National survey, just bombarded.

**“And it goes on and on”**

The reaction to the Canadian National Survey was only the first of many experiences in Dr. DeKesredy's career where he was exposed to threats because of his scholarship.

For example I had armed security guards, police officers...protect me in November in Edmonton, because there was a guy, a leader of a fathers' rights group in Alberta, who was convicted of beating his wife and a former leader of his organization is in prison for killing his ex-wife. And they were sending me...emails “I know you're coming” and so on and so forth. . . that was scary. Having to be escorted from my hotel room to the speaking area and to where I'm eating and all that. But I've had ongoing electronic harassment.

**“There wasn't this tension that exists today”**

In hearing about Dr. DeKesredy's experience following the Canadian National Survey, I wanted to know if the backlash was expected or unexpected given his experience with the divisions in the field as they were at that time in the 1980s. He described:

At that time in the mid to late 80's . . . there wasn't this tension between the 'feminist scholars' and the 'family violence researchers', that exists today. If you notice, people borrowed each other's methods and so on and so forth. No I didn't anticipate that. What I think happened, a very pivotal point . . . in 1989 at the American Society of Criminology in Reno Nevada, Murray Straus presented a paper based on the 2nd National Family Violence Survey and . . . he made this big claim that “we've come to the conclusion that women are as violent as men.” And the discussants were Angela Brown, Claire Renzetti, Dan Sanders and myself. And ...that's when it all really started.



Prior to that, he described that “the big divide prior to 1989 was between the Dobash’s and Straus and the New Hampshire School.” He reported that in the 1970s and 1980s the focus was more on researching how much violence was occurring. While there was a reaction to Steinmetz’s work on battered husbands, he described that it was “nowhere near what happened after 1989.” I asked him why he thought things heated up at that point and what other things might have contributed. Dr. DeKeseredy shared that “around that time the fathers’ rights movement started to get more political” and “then it had an impact, really had an impact on women’s lives because conservatives would try to use those data [family violence research] to try to justify closing shelters and denying funds.”

This coalescing in time between the growing fathers’ rights and men’s’ rights movement and the proliferation of gender symmetry in family violence scholarship is a crucial point. In Dr. DeKeseredy’s perspective, these political groups adopt family violence scholarship and use it make lives of women and children less safe. This is a problem because he is deeply concerned with the impact of research, “it’s really important to try to do research that has some impact on peoples’ lives” and he wants that impact to be a positive one.

I want to do something good for the community. That’s really my concern. I hope my research...my theoretical work and my policy analysis has impact, real impact. That’s what I’m really concerned about. I’m also concerned about the anti-feminist backlash. . . This is one of my biggest worries, I think there’s a concerted assault on the work, that people like me do, there’s a concerted assault on batterers programs, that are informed by the Duluth Model. I’m concerned about the assault on shelters, that try to empower women. VAWA- look at how long it took to be re-authorized. Look how the tea party people have tried to water it down and make it gender neutral. These are things that bother me and these are things I want to work on.

Dr. DeKeseredy acknowledges that, because of his concern with the political implications of his and others' research, that "the family violence researchers would call people like me ideological. But everything is political." This perspective creates implications for every area of scholarship, including language, what journals are out there and who and what work is getting published and therefore endorsed and supported by the academic community. This is exemplified in the recent development of the new journal *Partner Abuse* that is considered an outlet for family violence research, with 'family violence' research and 'partner abuse' obscuring what Dr. DeKeseredy sees as the gendered nature of violence:

. . . because it suggests that men and women are equally violent. But I call it anti-feminist work. Because if you look at the journal *Partner Abuse* and you read the editors mission statement, it's explicitly there to de-gender the problem. So family violence researchers are anti-feminist. That's how I define it.

It is anti-feminist in his view, in part, because by de-gendering IPV, it is politically supportive of groups that seek to dismantle feminist legislation that protects female victims of IPV.

**"The little Dutch boy putting his finger in the dyke and new holes emerge"**

As a clinician I was deeply curious about Dr. DeKesredy's perspective on clinical interventions with perpetrators. What was interesting was that, while not opposed to the idea of clinical intervention, he felt that it is reflective of a systemic focus in the US on the individual.

I'm sorry to sound cynical and I know you're doing clinical work but . . . it's like someone putting their finger, the little Dutch boy putting his finger in the dyke and new holes emerge. It's a failure, that's why therapy fails. I'm not opposed to therapy, and I don't say that just to be kind but therapy has to be done in the context of the ways in which the country's constructed. But the therapy that's in

the United States, is done to divert attention away from broader social forces. And therapy is a very convenient mechanism of individualizing the problem.

Dr. DeKeseredy makes it clear that in his perspective in order for therapy or any other intervention to be effective, it must address broader social forces and dynamics of power.

Critics of the Duluth model say that people like me just want arrest. That's not true. It's about what a woman wants and if there is a way of dealing with it through mediation, or reconciliation, or whatever, that's fine, but it has to address power.

This connected back to the idea of the gendered nature of violence because:

What happens is- it becomes de-gendered. It in many ways avoids accountability. That's why I like the Duluth model. The Duluth model has been misinterpreted, its not just about lets punish the guy and lock him away. No that's not what it's about. What I like about Duluth and London, Ontario is the community is involved. And what I like about native communities, is that, let's not ostracize the person, let's bring the person back in. It's called, in criminal justice, in criminological terms, re-integrative shaming. But the family violence researchers, they portray people like me as saying, 'oh lock them up,' I've never done that. If you go through all my writings....You'll never see that. So there's a myth . . . about feminists, and Dutton and Straus and others portray us as being staunch advocates of the punitive state.

#### **“I find that really unprofessional”**

In addition to threats against his physical safety and mischaracterizations about his positions on issues, Dr. DeKeseredy reported “in terms of my intellectual work . . . the sort of low points were character assassinations from right wing fathers' rights groups.” He also mentioned the critiques in the scholarly literature from some family violence researchers and particularly pointed to the figure of Donald Dutton in the field as a polarizing voice.

I would say there's been some very nasty things said about me by some of the quote “family violence researchers”. . . Like Donald Dutton's been after me. . . for a long time . . . And he completely ignores my work on how male social networks perpetuate and legitimate violence against women.

At this point I thought there were two interesting connections to the previous conversations with Dr. Felson: (a) How both scholars mentioned Donald Dutton as a strong voice in the field and (b) How both scholars described the experience of their work being ignored by whole groups of scholars and how that is worse in some ways than being heavily critiqued.

In describing the debate between the two camps, Dr. DeKeseredy made the point that he sees a difference in how the feminist scholars and the family violence scholars have engaged in critique. He described family violence scholars who:

Get away with these vitriolic pieces in so-called scientific journals And we are shocked at how these journals publish this stuff I find that really unprofessional. Yet the family violence researchers, if you will, are the first to talk about professionalism and ethics and objectivity and the canons of science. Yet the personal attacks are incredible. I couldn't possibly think of writing a journal article where I accuse Dutton of the "woozle" effect? Or misleading people or lying or hiding data? I mean those are very strong statements. I never hid anything. My data have been available for the public. That was very hurtful for me too; by the way, the fathers' rights groups claimed that I violated ethics. I was exonerated in five minutes by the Canadian Anthropology and Sociology Association. My work, my Canadian national survey went through 44 different ethical reviews. But this character assassination . . . . . how can you go and say that someone is a Maoist? That's pretty strong. Mao executed people.

Dr. DeKeseredy later made the point:

There's one thing that's important and that's there should be a clash of ideas and a debate. I'm all for that. I don't want to shut down one side to you know...at the expense of another. But when it gets to threatening people's careers, threatening their character, their reputation, that's a whole other thing. Academia has always had heated debates but when you're doing that type of thing, I think that crosses the line.

**“Feminism developed as a less of a marginal form of inquiry at that time”**

The position that family violence research is really anti-feminist research under a different name is a strong statement as well and makes it clear why his voice is typically identified with some of the most passionate feminist scholarship in this area. Dr.

DeKeseredy was clearly aware of that and said:

That's what it's all about because feminists are critical. They question the status quo, they question the epistemology. The family violence researchers claim that they are more scientific than feminist researchers.

Dr. DeKeseredy described how some of the divisions between the two camps are connected to the emergence of critical criminology and feminist perspectives in social science, which emerged in the 1980s and strongly influenced his development. In our interviews he reported:

And then I think what happened was around the mid to late 80's there was a group of young people like myself who started getting into the field. Because there is no doubt that Murray Straus and his colleagues were pioneers. And the research was very important. But you started getting a younger group of people coming in, also wanting to study and thinking critically about the issues. And I think that was a big change too. And feminism developed as less of a marginal form of inquiry at that time. And that had a major impact. Because feminism wasn't at the mainstream of social science. I'm not saying it is now . . . But we were doing different things and questioning the New Hampshire School's model.

Dr. DeKeseredy described what he saw as a connection between this emergence of how young, critically thinking sociologists were thinking about things in new and different ways and then the definitive statement made by Straus and the New Hampshire school at the 1989 conference that "women are as violent as men. Period."

Dr. DeKeseredy shared his perspective that there continues to be this battle in academia with an "overemphasis on positivism" and "research divorced from theory" and more critical approaches. He described that many scholars in field are driven by the

“grants or perish” model and his concern is for young scholars who are interested in “more critical thinking but they’re pursuing crass empiricism because that’s the model . . . I’m worried about the stifling of intellectual creativity”.

### **“It Really Is a Testament That All of Us in This Field Have Stayed Together”**

Throughout our conversations, Dr. DeKeseredy repeatedly described the strong and vibrant communities of social and professional support that have bolstered him through his self-described low points and celebrated his professional accomplishments.

I’ve always maintained strong ties to community groups but what was really wonderful was that these people came to my aid. . . So that was really important to me, the fact that the grassroots people who are out there trying to save lives were there supporting me as well as my academic colleagues. . . I couldn’t do the work I do without my friends and colleagues. I owe them everything and I don’t say that just trying to be humble or gracious. The things my friends and colleagues have done for me, I don’t even know how to pay back. I mean it’s gone beyond the call of duty and I think that the feminist community that does research on violence against women is very tight and they are very close.

### **Final thoughts**

There were two areas of these interviews in particular that created some profound shock-waves for me; (a) The connection between fathers’ rights and men’s’ rights groups and family violence scholars; and (b) family violence scholarship as a synonym for anti-feminism. The connection between the fathers’ rights movement and the work of family violence scholars like Murray Straus and Donald Dutton is something I was first exposed to when researching this dissertation and read the book *“Equality with a Vengeance: Men’s Rights Groups, Battered Women, and Antifeminist Backlash”* by Dr. Molly Dragiewicz (2011), a collaborator of Dr. DeKesredy’s. I am not an expert in the fathers’ rights movement or men’s’ rights groups. What I do know is that, while some groups

seem focused on things like advocating for fathers consideration during custody arrangements or more services for male victims of violence, others are focused on dismantling legislation that protects female victims of violence. Some use non-violent techniques that are similar to other activism groups; others seem to be more dominated by voices that advocate for violence, cyber-stalking and propaganda. Both kinds of groups tend to use pieces of family violence scholarship, particularly the role of female perpetrators and male victims, as a part of their activism. The question then becomes, how explicit a connection is there between some of the family violence scholars and the more dangerous fathers' rights groups? Is it simply a case of research being used and sometimes misappropriated or is it case of some scholars actively supporting certain groups through speaking engagements and testifying on their behalf in legal contexts? This would remain a question I would explore with my other participants. I realized for the first time during this conversation, that when I affiliate myself with family violence scholarship, others might view me as aligning myself with fathers' rights and men's' rights groups generally. Dr. DeKeseredy and other feminist scholars have been attacked by some of these groups in dangerous and frightening ways. I did not understand that I might need to make these associations explicit and to make clear what I believe about fathers' rights and men's' rights groups and what political agendas I am supportive of or neutral about and what agendas I am opposed to. I have learned that I may need to examine the responsibility of scholars when it comes to the dissemination and interpretation of their work. By remaining silent in some contexts, I could be leaving myself open to interpretation about my political beliefs; I could be seen as supporting the

types of groups that have threatened scholars like Dr. DeKeseredy. I could be seen as aligned with individuals who perpetuate violence and aggression.

While I have yet to examine and compare the quality of the discourse on either side, this made me think back to Dr. Felson's discussion of the question of how to present one's views and what language to use. Provocative and globally critical perspectives may have their place but it is clear that they also lead to personal feelings of hurt and add to divisions in the field. When Dr. DeKeseredy used the term anti-feminist to describe family violence scholars, I felt that could be perceived as similarly global and negative. I know that many scholars, if you were to call them anti-feminist, would take that as an attack on their character. For Dr. DeKeseredy, the term anti-feminist fits within a tradition of critical inquiry and feminist research and it has a specific meaning. For many scholars though, feminism is a more diffuse belief in the equality between men and women that should pervade every level of social life, including research. To them, feminism is more of a moral framework than a political agenda. I think for some, to be called an anti-feminist would mean something different from the way that Dr. DeKeseredy uses the term.

As someone who is a 30 year old developing scholar, I cannot help but try to put myself in Dr. DeKeseredy's shoes, experiencing the kind of backlash to my work that few are exposed to so early. I try to think about what this type of experience would have done to my growth and development, how it would have shaped me and influenced my work moving forward. Would it have pushed me out of the field? Or would it have been a 'test by fire' like it seems it was for Dr. DeKeseredy, helping to prepare me for a career



of potential conflict and pushback? It was at this point in our conversations that I thought back to what Dr. Felson had described in his interview about how he hesitates to encourage students to work in this field because of the controversy. I started to think about how many scholars began their work in the area of IPV, and, through experiences that resemble those of Dr. DeKeseredy, left out of preservation for their own emotional wellbeing and even physical safety. Perhaps those voices would have been the more moderate and nuanced perspectives that could have created more space for respectful disagreement and dialogue. This idea of what can create or diminish collaboration and collegiality is an area I also explored with later participants.

Finally, as a therapist trained in systems thinking and intervention, I completely agreed with Dr. DeKeseredy's critique of the behavioral health field's focus on the individual. I believe that sustainable prevention and intervention is rooted in relationships, families, communities, social and cultural infrastructures. But I am far more hopeful than he is about the potential for clinical interventions to support broad social change and in the capacity of individual men and women to change and grow through clinical encounters. I believe this is entirely reflective of my orientation and training in a behavioral health discipline versus a sociological one. However I think it is important that more behavioral health scholars participate in these conversations about clinical interventions in the field of IPV because it does seem as if sociologists are currently the dominate voices in the discussion versus clinicians. If behavioral health interventions are a part of what is happening on the ground with IPV, then it is critical that we inform the meta-conversation that is happening around this debate. This made me

reflect on the silos of different disciplines in this area and that this dissertation has presented me with a unique opportunity to engage with scholars who have different perspectives in this discussion.

**Chapter 11:**

**Dr. Michael Johnson**

Dr. Michael Johnson obtained his B.A. from Knox College in 1965, his M.A. from the University of Iowa in 1969 and his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1974 in the field of Sociology. He began working at Penn State University in 1972 and stayed there until 2005 when he retired and became an Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Women's Studies, and African and African American Studies. He was an Associate Head of the Department of Sociology from 1997 to 2001. Throughout his impressive career as both an educator and a scholar, Dr. Johnson has become best known for his highly influential and internationally recognized work on developing a typological approach to IPV. He has written numerous journal articles, book chapters, and books. He has served on editorial boards and leadership positions in the National Council of Family Relations and the American Sociological Association and has been a staunch advocate for a feminist approach to IPV. Dr. Johnson continues to give presentations all around the world about his typology of IPV. His work is one of the strongest influences on current clinical approaches to the assessment and treatment of IPV.

I was first introduced to Dr. Johnson's work in my Master's program. As described before, my advisor, Dr. Susan Horwitz practiced Dr. Sandra Stith's approach to couples-based treatment for couples that meet the definition of 'situational couple violence'. The terminology of 'situational couple violence' is a term that Dr. Johnson originated (briefly described in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, The Great Divide). While I understood at the time that a couples-based approach to treatment of IPV was controversial, I was unaware that the typological approach to categorizing IPV was not broadly accepted in the field of IPV. Because I learned about a typological approach at a formative stage in

my professional development, I believe it continues to act as a foundational understanding to my work with IPV. There is a practical and clinical utility for me in looking at couples' experiences of IPV through a typological lens. I have to be honest about the fact that I like Dr. Johnson's work; it makes sense to me (but, whether that utility and that sense of understanding are rooted in my professional socialization is unclear to me). When I entered my Ph.D. program I was surprised to find that not everyone uses his work to organize their understanding of IPV. It was my encounters with those professionals who were either less familiar or critical of a typological approach to IPV that contributed to the etiology of this dissertation. I was shocked to learn that, in fact, some scholars associated Johnson's typological approach with a promotion of a gender symmetrical understanding of IPV. Once again, I found myself in professional situations, talking about an area that I felt relatively confident about, and learning that others might be interpreting my position as being associated with an anti-feminist, gender neutral position on assessment and treatment of IPV. This experience of thinking I was doing one thing but finding I was unintentionally doing another was starting to become a familiar experience for me. Despite my now more nuanced understanding of both the strengths of Dr. Johnson's work and its potential implications and misuses, there is still a part of me that is a 23 year old Master's student in Couple and Family Therapy, learning about his work for the first time and feeling that wonderful moment of "aha! yes! this makes so much sense!" I say that to contextualize my state of mind before my first interview with Dr. Johnson. We all have scholars who strongly influenced our early thinking and who, because of that, hold a special place for us. Dr.

Johnson was one of those people for me. I was nervous and excited to talk to him but also wanted to create space to think critically through his responses and try to be balanced in my approach and not unilaterally positive.

**“I’ve been an activist on a wide range of social justice issues throughout my career”**

For Dr. Johnson, his journey towards working in the field of IPV began during his undergraduate education in the early 1960s “where the college I went to has a very progressive history on social justice matters.” Dr. Johnson described the following story as being a pivotal moment during his undergraduate time that influenced his later trajectory in the field.

. . . one of the people in my small circle in college was our class valedictorian, in the early 1960s. And she was told that she could not graduate because she had stayed out late, you may know this, that . . . even in the 1960s which doesn’t seem that long ago to me . . . college men had no hours, we could roam freely as we wished. College women had to be in the dormitory where I went to school at 11 o’clock at night. They had a curfew. . . and if you came in late there was a record kept of that, how many minutes you were late and . . . you had to make up your late minutes. She had late minutes still on her record and was told they weren’t going to let her graduate because she had broken curfew and hadn’t done the penalties for that. She was our class valedictorian. So, we were involved in organizing around that issue and that sort of galvanized my interest in women’s issues that became the focus of my social justice interests.

After he finished his undergraduate education he went on to the University of Michigan for his Ph.D. During his time there, a second pivotal moment of social justice activism happened.

I happened to have an assistantship in the institute for conflict resolution and there were a couple of women there who were doing an underground illegitimate, secret project. They had managed to get access to the university salary database illegitimately, and they asked me to do the data analysis for them, so there it is again, just an accident. I worked with them and it was just inspiring work, that report went to the university, it led to action that made a difference. And I loved that.

While studying at the University of Michigan, Dr. Johnson also had a mentor named Dr. Howard Schuman, who “works on race matters and is a brilliant man so I learned a lot about sociology from him and his Quaker commitment to social justice, which just helped to solidify my interests in those issues.” In part because of these pivotal experiences, Dr. Johnson began to teach and organize his courses “around gender issues as much as possible.”

**“And I’ve done nothing but work on partner violence since then”**

While at Penn State, Dr. Johnson continued to teach interdisciplinary classes that centered on intersections of gender and race. He taught classes on IPV from the 1970s on but it was not an area of his research. This all changed in the early 1990s.

I had a good friend here at Penn State in Family Studies who was organizing a trip, a group of feminist scholars to go to Vietnam. . . . To go on and work with women’s groups in the government, and in academic settings . . . each of us was asked to pick an area to focus on to do presentations on in Vietnam and work with the government on these issues. And the topic that I chose was intimate partner violence. I had been doing research on commitment to relationships. But I thought to myself, ‘separation, divorce, stable relationships, is that the most important thing I can really contribute to the women of Vietnam?’ And I said ‘no. How about doing intimate partner violence?’ . . . , so for the year leading up to that, I took it upon myself to become familiar, deeply familiar with the literature on intimate partner violence. And that just completely turned my research focus around. And I’ve done nothing but work on intimate partner violence since then.

It was during his year of research for that seminal trip that Dr. Johnson developed a profound insight into the literature that would transform the rest of his career.

. . . There’s been this 20 year gender debate in the field which always was puzzling to anybody who works uh on the front lines in domestic violence . . . as I said in my first article that I wrote on it, how could we not know who the perpetrators were, how could we be arguing about whether or not men or women were equally culpable in this area? And when I went over the literature . . . I saw this pattern and so there was sort of a compelling intellectual development, and I

thought ‘my God the answer to this is so simple.’ And I pursued that then in the literature and became convinced that there was, that we’d been making a horrible mistake by treating it as if it is a unitary phenomenon and not recognizing the huge difference between what I came to call intimate terrorism and situational couple violence. . . . That paper was published. And then I mean it just took off, and how could I not continue to work on it? It was shaping the way work in intimate partner violence was being done. And, ultimately, the way practice and intervention were happening so it was very fulfilling work to have this tremendous practical impact after decades of dare I say, “merely academic” influence.

### **“Thinking across disciplines”**

Throughout our conversations it was clear how important Dr. Johnson’s interdisciplinary focus was to his work. During his time at the University of Iowa, he was strongly influenced by his advisor, Dr. Howard Ehrlich, a social psychologist who studied race matters.

At the University of Michigan, there was a joint program in social psychology, so every core course in social psychology at the University of Michigan was team taught by someone from the psych faculty and by somebody from the sociology faculty. So interdisciplinarity was built into that. And symbolic interactionism is a particularly interdisciplinary type of social psychology, you just simply can’t think in a symbolic interactionist mode without thinking across disciplines.

Throughout his scholarly career he has had strong collegial relationships with professors in women’s studies and feminist scholars, while also working in women studies himself. “Women's studies is an inherently deeply interdisciplinary program. So that led me to have connections to people in humanities, arts, and social sciences. And a little bit the physical sciences.” During his entire career at Penn State in the department of Sociology he was the only feminist scholar and was “an outsider in that program . . . my intellectual, emotional home at Penn State was in women’s studies.” He also had strong



relationships with the Family Studies Program as well, which was geographically just down the hill from the Sociology Department.

Dr. Johnson shared how he chaired and co-chaired several dissertations for students in Family Studies and how he is connected to many of them through NCFR. “We sort of form . . . part of the core of the feminism and family studies section of NCFR.” Though deeply connected to several other fields and sub-fields of sociology, Dr. Johnson as a feminist, remained an outsider in his program.

Because of his outsider status in the department, Dr. Johnson shared that his intellectual influence has been more connected to his published work than in his direct connection with students in his department. “So I’m not sure if I’m going to have a lot of influence in sociology, but I don’t care.” This lack of concern is related to how much impact Dr. Johnson’s work is having in the area of direct practice.

### **“I learn things from the practitioners”**

I asked Dr. Johnson why he thought his work has had such an impact in the area of direct practice.

It has the impact it has because it’s the truth. That’s one piece of it. The second is that it involves differentiating among types of intimate partner violence that have completely different dynamics and therefore require different kinds of intervention. So because it involves differentiating among things that had not been differentiated before, it has huge practical implications. There may be many other truths out there in intimate partner violence that don’t have obvious implications for practice but the recognition that there are dramatically different kinds of intimate partner violence . . . has implications for every aspect of prevention and intervention and treatment support for victims.

Dr. Johnson continues to be informed by the work of practitioners.

Every time I do a workshop, I learn things from the practitioners who are asking me questions and taking me out to meals and we’re talking. They work in the

trenches so they've got stories . . . they can tell me what the practical issues are that they face when they are trying to follow through on differentiating among the types. Those are things I wouldn't know about if I weren't out there doing workshops with people who work in very different settings.

This immersion in the practical application of his work and his openness to the feedback of practitioners was something that deeply appealed to the practitioner in me. It also seemed somewhat different from the professional approach that others in the field of sociology hold, particularly those more distant from the branch of applied sociology. I asked Dr. Johnson about his connection to practice and what he attributed it to.

There is a personality aspect to it but there's also a professional aspect to it. I think we're all, in all of the social sciences, we're trained to be open to critical feedback. So it's there in our training. It probably takes a certain kind of personality to, to really do that, to really live that, and women's studies in particular being the critical discipline that it is, it is very much open to feedback and so the discipline itself encourages debate and discussion and constantly shaping and changing one's thinking as information comes in. So I think there's that and then there's the matter of the settings in which I happen to work. Where I'm getting not only academic feedback but also working closely with practitioners. And that's unusual for a social scientist who works at a research university to be . . . spending a considerable amount of time with practitioners themselves.

**“So I was as much, in a sense duped, taken in by this whole thing as anyone else”**

In our second interview, I asked Dr. Johnson directly about his initial exposure to and his experience with the divide in the field.

Well it's kind of strange to say but it didn't hit me very hard, I mean I was teaching about domestic violence from a feminist perspective. And pretty much using the survey data [National Family Violence Surveys] to make the point that there was a lot more violence in families than people thought there was.

Because Dr. Johnson taught throughout the 1970s and 1980s from a feminist-based interpretation of the National Family Violence survey data, I was curious if he experienced that to be the dominant framework during those years.

No I don't think it was the dominant discourse in sociology . . . I was influenced more by my reading of feminists . . . than my reading of mainstream sociologists on this topic . . . I think Straus and his colleagues really dominated this discussion in sociology, where domestic violence was seen . . . as a part of the study of family conflict, and would be taught that way, that conflict was a fundamental part of family life and families handled conflicts in different ways and that in some families conflict led to violence. And a culture that treated that as, a private problem versus a social problem. Straus and his colleagues dominated and were very important in . . . convincing not only sociologists but to some extent the public at large, that domestic violence was a more widespread social problem than people realized that needed to be addressed.

**“The debate had become really nasty”**

Though Dr. Johnson taught individual classes in IPV and classes that integrated IPV as a topic, his initial exposure to the divide was as someone who read the literature and not someone who helped define it, which is similar to how most of us get into the field.

Digging into it and reading widely in terms of what was happening, and what Straus was saying was happening to him and Steinmetz, the threats and the terrible things they endured as feminists see them as enemies . . . my impression of this, is that that . . . the real conflict, the nastiness between the feminists and the family conflict people came about as a result of Steinmetz's article which argued that there are as many battered husbands as there are battered wives and that was seen as a tremendous threat to the battered women's movement. So the feminists reacted very strongly to that. And you know once you start reviewing that literature seriously, and in 1991 as I did, you were going to see that . . . it's a deep conflict, and if you're going to understand domestic violence. Or the conflict, you're going to have to understand it not just as a conflict between personalities. . . who are attacking each other but as contradictions in the data . . . that's what's striking about it is that both camps could marshal reasonable evidence for their positions and yet their positions are clearly contradictory. And so that just became a puzzle . . . that I felt to understand domestic violence, you had to dig into and try to make sense out of it . . . its central, I guess I think of it as the central question, in terms of developing a theory of domestic violence, the central question that had to be resolved.

What I found so interesting about Dr. Johnson's position is that it reminded me of Dr.

Renzetti's in the sense that he is clearly a feminist scholar who also respects the work of

Dr. Straus and colleagues and their work in the area of family conflict. It is also interesting to me that, while Dr. Johnson affiliates himself with the feminist camp and has done so strongly in the literature, others in the field would position him as advancing the interests or perspective of the family violence camp. I asked Dr. Johnson if he ever felt pulled by ties of loyalty to the feminist camp.

No. For me it's not an issue of loyalty, your goal as a feminist scholar is to do research that . . . that improves women's lives. And in this area the way that you improve women's lives is by understanding the true nature of domestic violence so that you can prevent it and intervene appropriately when it happens. So it's not loyalty to one side or another, it's more a matter of a firm belief that a feminist perspective on domestic violence is correct. Based upon the research and the theorizing about it.

**“Some people get entrenched in their political position”**

I asked Dr. Johnson why the debate continues, in his opinion, given his firm belief that his typological approach is an appropriate explanatory framework.

...so I'd say they're both correct and to argue that because we're right, the other one must be wrong, is ignoring the data in my opinion. In my opinion, people on both sides who continue to totally reject the other side, they can't do that without ignoring the data.... And I think what happens in the politics is that some people get entrenched in their political position that they . . . I don't know what to say other than that I have to assume they're ignoring the data and there are people on both sides that do that . . . much to my chagrin when people on either side do it, who I think are willfully ignoring the data, who have made a career . . . either being an anti-feminist or anti-family conflict person, just doggedly stick to their position and take the most extreme possible position, because it works for them, it's become who they are.

Despite Dr. Johnson's open respect for the work of Dr. Straus and his National Family Violence Survey data, he also had some clear points of critique for Straus's political and theoretical position in the field.

Straus for example, just slowly disappointed me over the years . . . seemed in the beginning to be wedded to good scientific analysis and following the data where it

took him. But in recent years it seems to me has chosen to . . . really . . . tie himself closely to the . . . women are as violent as men . . . to talk about his data in ways that aren't appropriate in order to support that position. But he seems to have moved that way slowly, where there were others who from the beginning . . . seemed to me . . . who were more politically and perhaps personally motivated . . . and not motivated as a scientist should be.

In a name that keeps emerging, along with Dr. Straus, as a lightning rod for controversy in this area, Dr. Dutton was named as one of these more politically and personally motivated scholars in the field who has attacked Dr. Johnson's work and, to whom Dr. Johnson has repeatedly responded to in the literature.

Certainly Dutton and his crowd have continued to publish attacks on my work but they're totally bogus . . . So I've written responses to him . . . they twist the data, they misrepresent things, they lie about things and that's not going to change my mind. I worry that it might change people who don't know the literature well enough to recognize they're misrepresentations. So I write responses to it, when they publish these things . . . Dutton sends me private e-mails that are very nasty. I just don't respond to them. It is and it isn't personal. It's personal because it's aimed at me but it's not personal because they'll attack anybody on the other side. . . . it's not like Dutton's only attacking me . . . his stuff is an attack on the whole feminist perspective. Anybody who says that domestic violence is about men's control over women is a target of his . . . attacks . . . so, in a sense, it's not personal. I just happen to be, I'm writing from a perspective that he chooses to attack.

The other thing Dr. Johnson addressed, in addition to his ability to respond to Dr. Dutton's critiques of his work, while maintaining a professional tone, was an interesting question about how intertwined a professional piece is with a scholar's personal opinion. The following response of Dr. Johnson's reminded me of what Dr. Felson shared in our interviews about taking a more provocative stance in the literature because it is more interesting to the reader and generates more attention.

I've tried to write professionally . . . I just don't have the strong personal feelings about it. . . . It's hard to know . . . what people really believe . . . I read Dutton's work and some of Straus's most recent work and I just shake my head and say

‘how can they really believe that? They must be lying to us.’ I read it and just find it unbelievable. I just don’t understand, what else can I say? . . . certainly Dutton seems much more active in the anti- feminist movement in general. Not just as a scholar but politically as well. Straus still likes to call himself a feminist and yet in his more recent work . . . Murray’s a very personable guy and I . . . find myself always defending him. There’s . . . other feminists who loathe him . . . I’ve stopped defending him. I can’t in good conscience say that he’s being an honest scholar at this point. He knows about the typology. He claims to believe it in private and yet . . . he continues to write articles where he . . . says in general, without any qualifications . . . that women are as violent as men.

Dr. Johnson voiced the opinion that Dr. Straus has almost passively become associated with an anti-feminist position in the literature and that, while it is difficult to associate that with what he knows of him personally, it is hard to ignore. Dr. Dutton is labeled as an extremely polarizing figure on one end of the spectrum associated with a highly confrontational anti-feminist family conflict position while Dr. DeKeseredy is considered an extremely feminist scholar, polarizing in his own way, on the other end of the spectrum. Dr. Johnson is also interesting and not easily classified because he shared that John Hamel, the editor of the new journal *Partner Abuse* (mentioned in previous chapters as considered a vanguard of gender neutral approaches to IPV), is a proponent of a typological approach.

Hamel who’s one of the major figures in this group [family conflict] really argues for differentiated approaches if you read his work. The good part of his work is that there are multiple causes for violence in families and that you have to treat violence that has different roots differently and intervene in different ways so he’s always recognized that the typological approach is useful. So even within the group there are some people who accept parts of it, they’re still sort of caught up with the idea of are women as violent as men but within that, the people who really view his work seriously recognize that cases differ, along important dimensions and that needs to be taken into account.

It is clear that Dr. Johnson has a nuanced perspective of the debate and, as such, has been simultaneously critiqued and embraced by people on both sides.

One of the feminist criticisms about Dr. Johnson's work is one he identified himself: his use of secondary data to support his typologies and, in particular, his use of secondary data that is somewhat outdated. From an empirical perspective, Johnson's typologies could be viewed as lacking a wealth of evidence. Coupled with concerns related to how his work can be misused by people advocating for a gender symmetrical policy approach to IPV, and the potential for mediators and couples therapists to jump into clinical interventions based on his work, this suggests that caution to the implementation of his approach is understandable.

Given this context, I asked Dr. Johnson about the feminist critiques of his work.

He responded:

Well, who are they? I mean there are informal ones of course. The primary concern I hear from feminists about this is that can be used by men, to excuse their violence against women. 'It's only situational couple violence.' . . . they're not really saying you're wrong, at least I'm not reading people who say you're wrong. 'All the violence really is intimate terrorism' . . . reasonable feminists wouldn't say a thing like that. What they're saying is, 'the implications of this on the can ground can be nasty. We're seeing it in the courts. We're seeing men coming in with their lawyers now and they're actually using your terminology in courts. And saying, this is just situational couples violence, she's as much involved in it as I am, I deserve joint custody for example. But my response to that is, they've always done that. That's always been men's arguments, 'we just have fights', or 'she's more violent than I am'. It's too bad it gets used that way but we need to be prepared with an answer for that, 'well here's the evidence that it's not situational couple violence. And if you understand these differences or court personnel understand it then they know what to watch for

This balancing between what Dr. Johnson believes is an appropriate concern of feminist scholars and his continued advancement of what he sees as the truth about IPV is grounded in the belief that, ultimately, ignoring his work is bad for feminist scholarship and bad for women.

My feeling is that if you take a dogmatic position that all violence in families can be understood through that feminist coercive control model, you're going to get caught, it's not true. So you're going to shoot yourself in the foot by sticking doggedly to that position. Because the other side is going to be able to continue to do survey after survey after survey that seems to contradict your perspective. So it seems to me that in the long run its better for women and the feminist perspective if you embrace the explanation that explains not only the fact that . . . the vast majority of the cases that show up in a hospital emergency rooms, in the courts, in shelters . . . involve men abusing women, in a way that fits that coercive control model but also that there are large numbers of families in which there is violence that doesn't fit that model. So this perspective in the long run is good . . . for the, for the feminist side of things. And I guess, they're the ones who are most involved in direct intervention and trying to help people who are coming out of abusive relationships. So that's why I emphasize that family conflict scholars are more pure scholars than most feminist scholars are. Feminist research and scholarship is built around the idea that the practical implications of what we do, are why we do it.

There are two points from Dr. Johnson's statements about this topic that are (in my opinion) not widely circulated about his work: a) Dr. Johnson says most intimate terrorists are men and b) Situational couple violence can be serious and lethal. When I shared this chapter with Dr. Johnson, he responded in comment "I'm surprised you would say this. That is one of my most basic points and the central focus of much of the critique from Dutton and his ilk." What I find fascinating about his comment is that it is true; he overtly and repeatedly makes this point in the literature and has repeatedly challenged its misrepresentation by other scholars. I believe what has happened is that, instead of reading closely his original work, scholars form opinions based upon how others interpret his words; particularly those who staunchly advocate for gender symmetrical approaches.

**"I'm embedded in a network of feminist colleagues who accept my work"**



In the previous section when I asked Dr. Johnson about his feminist critiques and he responded with “Well who are they?”, I was caught off guard. But upon further reflection, I do not think I necessarily should have been. One of the things that every participant up to this point had talked about in various ways is this idea that scholars associate with like-minded scholars and tend to not associate with those with whom they disagree. While this is a natural tendency, it tends to be amplified in this arena given the personally-charged nature of the debate. That is why it is so valuable for those rare occasions to occur when diverse scholars are brought to the table to discuss their work, like the somewhat recent Haifa conference that resulted in a special issue in *Aggression and Violent Behavior*. Dr. Johnson expressed an awareness of this.

I feel a need to respond to Dutton. I’ll probably stop responding now, I’m getting tired of it. But I just don’t know how much impact that has. And I get, my perspective is of course very narrow because I’m embedded in a network of feminist colleagues who accept my work . . . I go to places where people are inviting me because they like my work.

**“I don’t think this anti-feminist group is going to be very successful”**

Another piece that Dr. Johnson shared, that I believe informs his somewhat unique position in the divide, is his stance on the ability of an anti-feminist position, to actually promote their cause. .

I don’t think this anti-feminist group is going to be very successful in the long run in reducing funding and so on. They try, they actually go to legislatures and to the courts and so on and try to make the case that women-oriented services are gender biased and illegal. And they haven’t been successful with that as far as I know.

The other area that Dr. Johnson discussed that I believe also adds to his nuanced point of view and, that is not immediately grasped by a quick reading of the literature, is his support for feminist-informed treatment like the Duluth model.

Keeping in mind that the Duluth model is much more eclectic than its opposition likes to recognize. You know they portray that model as all about patriarchy, when in fact it's quite a mix of looking at gender privilege, conditioned, to look conflict resolution tactics, communication issues and so on . . . the evidence on the efficacy of the Duluth model . . . shows that it's least effective with intimate terrorists and most effective with situational couple violence. So if you make the mistake of putting people who are involved in situational couple violence into a Duluth model program, you're still going to have success with that. For a variety of reasons but partially because it's such an eclectic approach that you're addressing those communication and anger management issues in addition to the gender privilege issues.

### **Final thoughts**

My conversations with Dr. Johnson were deeply enriching but they also made it clear to me, once again that to ignore the political implications of the research in this area is a mistake. It is obvious that Dr. Johnson's work on situational couple violence is used by anti-feminist groups to show evidence for a gender neutral approach to social and clinical interventions with IPV. But his work is also widely used by clinicians in understanding their clients when they present with experiences of violence, but do not seem to be using or experiencing coercive control. There is also the fact that his typology needs more empirical study with larger and newer datasets. To ignore that would be a mistake as well. I was also left with the idea that, while Dr. Johnson names himself firmly as a feminist scholar, there are those who would call his work anti-feminist (even if only in private and not in the literature). I began my interviews with Dr. Johnson with the question of whether we can as scholars; both represent ourselves accurately and

appreciate at any given moment how those representations will be interpreted? Where does our responsibility begin and end around the interpretations of our work from other scholars and the larger public?

**Chapter 12:**

**Dr. Claire Renzetti**

Dr. Claire Renzetti obtained her Bachelor of Arts and Sciences, her Master of Arts and her Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology from the University of Delaware. She defended her dissertation in 1981 and went to St. Joseph's University Department of Sociology, where she worked for over 20 years until 2006. From 1993 until 2003 she was the Chairperson of the Department. In 2006 she transitioned to the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work at the University of Dayton where she remained until 2010. In August 2010 she began her work as the Judi Conway Patton Endowed Chair for Studies of Violence Against Women, in the Center for Research on Violence Against Women and a Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology at the University of Kentucky, where she works today. Dr. Renzetti is an exemplary scholar, her prolific work spans (both editing and writing) across major journals and books. She also conducted several significant programs of research that cross the methodological spectrum. She currently edits *Violence Against Women*, a prestigious international journal in the field of violence research. She also edits the University of California Press: the Gender and Justice book series and co-edits the Oxford University Press Series on Interpersonal Violence. She contributed as editor or author to at least 13 textbooks in an example of her abundant contributions to the intellectual foundations of the field.

Dr. Renzetti is widely known for her groundbreaking work on women's experiences of violence in lesbian relationships. She went on to explore a diverse range of topics, but overall her work "has primarily focused on marginalized groups, so women who are very poor in particular." She studied "violence against women living in public

housing developments” and, while working in Australia, did work with “aboriginal communities.” Currently, along with another of the endowed chairs in her department at the University of Kentucky, Dr. Renzetti is conducting an evaluation of a local domestic violence shelter and some of the unique practices they employ in their work. During her recent ethnographic study of “a faith based anti-trafficking group,” she became interested in the “relationship between . . . religiousness . . . and intimate partner violence perpetration and victimization.” She is currently working on manuscripts based on work from her religiosity research.

While each of the individuals I asked to participate was what I defined as an elite within the field of IPV and the academic community generally, in many ways Dr. Renzetti is distinct among the group. Her role as an editor of a major journal and two academic series has a different set of implications for our relationship than my interactions with the other participants. I was slightly more hesitant to even ask her to participate and to conduct our conversations because of this difference. I was a little worried that I would represent myself poorly as a scholar and that in doing so I could potentially impact my ability to publish in some of the best publishing outlets in the field of violence. What I realized fairly quickly in our first conversation is that Dr. Renzetti deeply embodies her roles as an educator and as a mentor and she made me feel comfortable and respected the way any excellent educator can.

To contextualize my conversations with Dr. Renzetti, they occurred directly after my interviews with Dr. Felson and Dr. DeKeseredy were completed. Therefore, my questions to her were informed by things I learned from the previous interviews and there

were times when I interpreted or made comparisons between my conversations with her and those with Dr. Felson and Dr. DeKeseredy.

**“No one had done it before”**

As a doctoral student in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Dr. Renzetti petitioned the graduate school of University of Delaware to allow her to take one of her comprehensive exams in the sociology of gender; “no one had done it before . . . it was a new kind of emerging specialty area.” As she described:

During that time there was a lot of stuff going on in this field. My Ph.D. is in sociology and one of my areas of specialization was criminology and my second area was gender and at that time . . . in the ‘70s gender was actually kind of a new area, of specialization in sociology. Which nowadays sounds kinds of funny, sounds very old fashioned.

**“Doing interdisciplinary work even then”**

Her interest in violence against women grew out of the intersection of various disciplines, particularly the sociology of gender and criminology. On her gender comprehensive exam, she had scholars from various disciplines including sociology, psychology, anthropology and philosophy. In fact, Sandra Harding, a preeminent feminist philosopher served on her committee, which is awe-inspiring for those familiar with feminist epistemology. Along with her chair Margaret Andersen, her committee also included Lindsey Geis, from Psychology, and Margaret Hamilton, from Anthropology.

I was sort of doing interdisciplinary work even then. And one of the things I like about the field of violence against women is that it is interdisciplinary. But as I was studying for my comps and I was . . . just learning about the sociology of gender but simultaneously focused on criminology, and in particular I was always interested in violence, the two just kind of came together.

She described later in the interview how important interdisciplinary work has been for her professional journey, in terms of allowing her to “understand a problem from a variety of different interdisciplinary perspectives” and how fruitful collaborations with a diverse range of professionals have been for her.

Though her dissertation did not focus on violence against women because the person she was going to work with was no longer available, her master’s thesis was about campus rape crisis centers. As she prepared for her comprehensive exams, she became:

More and more interested in . . . the problem of violence against women . . . I was struck by the inequality and the way the way victims were treated and I was . . . learning about feminism and I was learning to challenge other methodologies and epistemologies and so it just kind of came together with my criminology focus. It just really grabbed my attention as something that needed more research and research done differently than . . . had traditionally been done, and that kind of set me on this path.

In terms of major influences, Dr. Renzetti mentioned her thesis chair Margaret Andersen as well as Frank Scarpitti, who influenced her decision to specialize in criminology, and several peers including Susan Miller, Walter DeKeseredy and Jeff Eddleson, with whom she is still close friends.

**“I couldn’t go into that project and be the expert because I wasn’t”**

During the late 1980s while she was at St. Josephs University, Dr. Renzetti was teaching a class in the Sociology of Gender:

I was talking about . . . gay and lesbian relationships and the dynamics of gay and lesbian relationships and . . . talking about the differences in power dynamics compared to heterosexual relationships and a student in the class came up to me and gave me a copy of the Philadelphia Gay News, and says ‘you know you should look at this . . . there’s this advertisement that I think you might be interested in’ and it was an advertisement for a speak out on lesbian battering. And what I thought that meant was hate crimes . . . I had no idea there was violence in lesbian relationships. So when I saw that I thought it was about hate



crimes and at the time I was co-chairing a committee looking at hate crimes and teaching about hate crimes and so I thought . . . I should call and I should see if I should go to this thing and so I called and I was talking to this person and . . . I said something about hate crimes and she said ‘oh that’s not what this is about at all . . . it’s about violence between lesbian partners. And I said ‘Really? That happens?’ . . . And she said ‘yeah, you should come to this.’ So I went and I started talking to a group . . . of women who were there who were forming a support group for lesbian victims of partner abuse and they were very interested in someone doing some research on that topic.

Dr. Renzetti began meeting with them to develop a research study about lesbian battering, the first national study of its kind. It opened up an important area of research and started a conversation about lesbian victims of IPV, creating opportunities for addressing the service needs of this community when very few resources existed before.

In addition, for Dr. Renzetti it was a critical moment in her professional development:

That whole thing was probably a major turning point for me because I approached that study using a . . . participatory action research model, which is different than how I was trained methodologically. I mean I was trained as a . . . positivist researcher so using a participatory model was really different for me . . . We developed the survey together so it was really interesting thing because even though I was responsible for all the methodology and design issues . . . the support group really educated me with regard to, for example language issues. And . . . and things that would be relevant for . . . a lesbian sample in particular . . . And so we really, we really did work on it quite jointly, it was really very much a joint effort. And it was a great experience and in fact one of the women . . . just came to visit me with her daughter here . . . So, we did that project in 1992, and we all kind of stayed in touch with one another and . . . we sort of became friends which is very different than many research projects so, it really showed me the value of a participatory approach to research and the idea of reciprocity . . . it’s not just taking data from people and not giving anything back.

I was curious about how Dr. Renzetti saw the trajectory from her graduate training to using a Participatory Action Research approach. She said “As a feminist researcher, I was familiar with alternative epistemologies and feminist epistemologies so I was aware . . . of other ways of doing things.” This “other way of doing things” was important because:

I simply didn't know very much . . . I couldn't go into that project and be the expert because . . . I wasn't a part of the community . . . the only thing I knew about lesbian relationships was what I had read . . . It was clear to me that I had a lot to learn . . . it was really a joint venture but it was very clear that the only way it was going to happen successfully was if it was a partnership

### **“I got push back”**

When the study of lesbian battering was published, Dr. Renzetti received some negative feedback and criticism for her work, similar to the reactions experienced by previous participants. Some voiced that “this wasn't a topic worth studying” and that it was “almost like a novelty.” Others who came from the LGBTQ community were concerned that it “could just feed already negative attitudes about lesbian relationships.” There were those who were worried that “because it involved two women that it could be used to argue that women do this; ‘See women are as violent as men’; it could fuel the whole women are as violent as men argument”. Dr. Renzetti shared an important idea that:

The findings were important but to get to the findings was sometimes difficult because people . . . didn't want the work to be done because of how it could be used and so I had to build trust there because I had to get people to trust that I would use it in an appropriate way . . . and that I would respond to negative stereotyping and I would address those . . . issues.

This connected to an idea that Dr. Renzetti explored in the book she co-edited with Ray Lee, *Researching Sensitive Topics*, and that is especially pertinent in my mind for this dissertation. They defined a sensitive topic as:

One that potentially poses for those involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the researcher and/or the researched the collection, holding, and/or dissemination of research data (Lee & Renzetti, 1993, p. 5).

In that volume, Joan Sieber discussed the inevitable connection between politics, the ethics of conducting sensitive research, and the responsibility of the individual researcher. She wrote in a powerful statement:

The dignity of science and its ability to exert an enlightened influence on public policy are affected by the way scientists respond to the attack. It is best to speak wisely and with good counsel, or to say nothing (Sieber, 1993, p. 25).

Based on her description of her reaction to critiques of her work, it seemed that Dr. Renzetti embraced her responsibility and attempted to directly respond to critics in a way that was measured and carefully thought out. She said:

I was just really surprised . . . that was picked up that way and people tried to sort of co-opt it, to support a particular perspective . . . so it became kind of . . . a mission of mine to clarify, what I was talking about and that . . . women use violence too but that, violent behavior is gendered.

The idea that the public, media, politicians and special interest groups use research to support their positions was natural to Dr. Renzetti, which means that:

Researchers have a professional responsibility, an ethical responsibility to make sure our work is used as we intend it to be used . . . hopefully that work is used not to harm anyone.

Later in the interview Dr. Renzetti described:

And what sometimes happens is that . . . you're talking about an anti-feminist men's group like the men's' rights groups who are . . . often really out to get women. Some of these are very angry men who . . . have gone through pretty nasty divorces and so there's a lot of personal bitterness and that gets mixed up in the whole thing. And so it becomes really emotionally charged . . . if there was a . . . anti feminist men's' rights group using my work or they were criticizing my work and it sounded like they were criticizing me personally, which often those criticisms have that tone. That I would get pretty emotional about it . . . when something is made personal . . . you feel personally attacked. So I think some of that has contributed to it too.

Dr. Renzetti talked about how her experience with push back from her study on lesbian battering highlighted personally the powerful nature of the different perspectives in the field though she was previously aware they existed. Prior to this she approached the division as closer to a theoretical debate but soon realized “how strong the divisions were.” I asked her what made it different from other types of academic debate and she said:

There’s a lot at stake . . . one position can be used against victims and can be . . . co-opted and . . . that’s to the detriment of victims who really need services . . . it can be very political. I think that what bothers me most about it is that it sometimes gets real personal . . . people attack other people as opposed to sticking to the theoretical arguments and what the differences are and what the empirical evidence suggests. Over the years there have been attempts by various people to sort of bridge the gap and to point out ‘well you know, both perspectives or both divisions have merit, they’re looking at difference things or different kinds of data. The real hardcore adherent to either perspective though really doesn’t want to hear that. So I’ve kind of resigned myself to the fact that I don’t think that gap is ever going to be bridged and it just is what it is. It’s unfortunate because . . . I don’t see it as being very productive. You would think that by now we would have gotten beyond it but it’s just really fundamental to so many people . . . that it’s the starting point for everything that they do so I guess you can’t really get beyond that if it’s foundational to you.

In our third interview, Dr. Renzetti shared how she experienced push back more recently in response to a controversial article she published in *Violence Against Women*. It was controversial because it discussed a couple’s therapy program for couples who experienced IPV in their relationship.

I thought it was really important because one of the things that the women and the men say about the program is that, if they did not agree to do this program, they wouldn’t get to see each other. And they actually wanted to be able to see each other. And I think one of things that we have to remember and I think we’re getting better at acknowledging this. Although we still say we want women to leave. That’s the best thing to have happen, the best outcome, is the relationship to end. And I think in many cases that’s true. But what many women say is, ‘look, he’s not abusive to me all the time. In fact he can be quite wonderful and I’m in

love with him. And what I want, is not for relationship to end, I want for the abuse to end.' They still want to be with this person and . . . we can call it whatever we want, we can call it traumatic bonding, we can call it false consciousness, we can call it any kind of thing. But the fact is that these two people might be highly motivated to stay together and we have to try to honor that and try to figure out a way to make that work if that's what she wants and he wants and he's willing to work and she's willing to work.

As someone who is clearly a feminist scholar, this type nuanced perspective may surprise some people who assume all feminist scholars agree that couples therapy is never appropriate as an intervention when IPV is present. I was surprised to hear Dr. Renzetti share her line of thinking about this and the way she wove between perspectives, while also firmly maintaining her own footing in feminism, is something I believe is a hallmark of Dr. Renzetti's professional and relational style.

**“I have tried assiduously to avoid being drawn in”**

As a researcher in the thick of divisions in the field due to her work on lesbian battering, women's use of violence and the gendered nature of IPV, Dr. Renzetti has observed how strong the pull is to align firmly with one side or another.

If you are associated with certain people than you are also a bad guy . . . its true on both sides . . . And when you try to stay out of that, or stay away from that, both sides try to draw you in, it's very hard to stay out of it. So I have tried assiduously to avoid being drawn in. I clearly identify with the feminist camp . . . but I consider [a prominent family violence researcher] a friend. And while we don't agree, about how much violence women perpetrate and in what context . . . I don't hold it against him personally.

Dr. Renzetti talked about this idea of guilt by association and scholars being categorized and stereotyped because of who they have worked with the field. Her major point was that when scholars engage in this behavior, they tend to not critically think about and examine what the person is actually saying. This is counter to what sociologists are

trained to do because “we’re not supposed to stereotype, we’re not supposed to automatically place labels on people. We’re supposed to study that sort of thing.”

After learning about Dr. Renzetti’s position on the divide, I wanted to know what experiences influenced her positioning within it. She told two stories, one during graduate school and one more related to her personal growth and development that I thought were powerful. When she was in graduate school:

There were people in the department who were divided along ideological lines . . . in terms of criminological research. It was a big division in my department between . . . the radical, Marxist criminologists and the non-Marxist criminologists . . . the graduate students were sort of expected to take sides and you worked with people who . . . you decided you wanted to be on their side. And and you weren’t going to work with the other side. It turned out, it was kind of funny, there was one particular person on the opposing side that I was supposedly against, who was really very nice to me and . . . he was sort viewed as the enemy . . . he was not a radical criminologist and in fact, was very vocally critical of radical criminology . . . but he was very kind to me and . . . tried to actually provide me with some mentoring . . . And I just have tremendous respect for someone like that who can look beyond ideology or politics and see value in an individual. And I guess that was a formative experience.

In addition to this experience during her years as a developing scholar, Dr. Renzetti also shared that part of her positioning has to do with her personality, she shared:

I really like to get to along with people . . . for the most part, I tend to like harmony more than disharmony. I tend to try to find ways of mediating conflict, its just the way I’ve been since I was a kid . . . as I was growing up, I was always one who would try to mediate conflict in my family. So if somebody was arguing with somebody else, I would be the one who would try to intervene get them to compromise somehow . . . it’s not that I’m conflict avoidant, because I have my share of conflict but I just always feel like, there has to be some way around, there has to be some way we can talk about this and there has to be some common ground.

**“I think that has done a lot of damage”**

I asked Dr. Renzetti her opinion about what things make the divisions better and what make them worse. She discussed that professionally organized meetings where people are asked to sit down together to share and discuss their work in a moderated context that lessens the chances for things to “get real heated” are helpful opportunities. She shared her belief that the increase in anti-feminist men’s’ rights groups and their use of the internet in form of list serves and blogs has been problematic and made things worse.

I think there have been battles pitched on the internet that have become very personal and very hurtful but they’re just straight out attacks on people. . . I do know that some of the . . . anti-feminist men’s’ rights, fathers’ rights groups . . . have gone after particular people in a very vicious way . . . to the point where there are a couple people I know who have felt physically in danger, they felt that they could be physically harmed. Or they’ll show up at a place where they know a person’s speaking and heckle them . . . I mean it goes beyond non productive. It’s just really harmful. It stifles communication. It squelches knowledge production. . . it shuts it down. There’s no room for discussion at that point.

I asked Dr. Renzetti what it would take to move the division forward to a place that was more constructive. She described:

[A prominent family violence researcher] has often said one of the reasons why he emphasizes women using violence against their partners is because it escalates violence in the relationship. That if women use violence they are much more likely to experience retaliation and so his argument is, ‘look, violence no matter whose doing it is really a bad thing. And women are likely to be at greater risk of injury and even death if they are also perpetrating violence.’ So you know to me, those are very real consequences. If you ignore that, then women are at risk so I think we all need to acknowledge that our positions have serious consequences and I do think that at least some major players on both sides of the spectrum could acknowledge that the other side has something value to contribute.

**“I don’t agree with that at all”**

Because my interview with Dr. Renzetti came after my interview with Dr. DeKeseredy, I wanted to know if she felt similarly about the idea that feminist based

scholarship and gendered approaches to the study of IPV were marginalized in the US.

To my surprise, she rather categorically disagreed with that notion.

Some of the very best institutions are very cutting edge and like getting people who think outside the box and are very edgy and . . . I don't agree with that at all. . . . look at the University of Kentucky . . . it's a Research 1 institution . . . we have a center for research on violence against women . . . I'm one of three endowed chairs in the center so . . . and there are a number of really leading universities that have these kinds of programs.

In that same set of questions I asked her about this idea that the preponderance of de-gendered language in the US is reflective of a more conservative political climate. What she responded helped clarify some major points that I was struggling with after my conversation with Dr. DeKeseredy.

In regards to calling it intimate partner violence . . . the reason that that happened to some extent was the fact that people were calling it wife beating- or wife abuse. And that eliminates everyone who's not married. And in a heterosexual relationship. So the idea to call it intimate partner violence was to signify, not gender symmetry at all, that wasn't the goal but to emphasize that it covers a variety of intimate relationships but to distinguish from let's say parents and children. So if you say intimate partner it could be a boyfriend or a girlfriend. It could be referring to a same sex relationship you know, it was to broaden the scope, to have a bigger umbrella, to encompass more types of relationships . . .

### **“Women's use of violence in intimate relationships”**

As Dr. Renzetti points out “people were starting to explore, the issue of women's use of violence in intimate relationships, if we get into the later 90's” and her work became a foundational piece of that exploration. In *The Challenge to Feminism Posed by Women's Use of Violence in Intimate Relationships* (Renzetti, 1999), she described the importance of feminist researchers being the ones to drive the research about women's use of violence. As a feminist advocate of researching women's perpetration, Dr. Renzetti has contributed extensively to the body of work about the “gendered nature of



violence in terms of both perpetration and victimization” along with taking a look at the intersections of violence in terms of gender, sexuality, race and social class.

### **“Purpose driven research”**

In terms of the PAR model and mixed methods approach she used in the study on lesbian battering, she did get some push back from other sociologists that it was not “scientific enough”, which was expected because so many feminist researchers were critiqued in that way “especially back then.” Additionally there were the anticipated attacks of the qualitative aspect of the study as being “too soft and too subjective.”

In counter to the push back, Dr. Renzetti was supported by the women in the support group and:

Interestingly the women who participated in the study . . . I was very upfront with everyone about the fact that I am not a lesbian. Most of the women said to me, I don’t care what you are . . . because no one is listening to me . . . And I want to be able to tell my story and I want to be believed and I want help and I want resources and I want other victims to have resources so . . . I really felt that I had a responsibility to the women who participated in study to . . . help them with that. Because they were giving me-it goes back to that idea of reciprocity.

Additionally, many people within the “criminology and sociology professional communities . . . primarily feminist researchers” offered significant support.

I was interested to know what Dr. Renzetti described as the motivation behind her work and if that motivation has changed. She said that it has stayed essentially stable through the years and that:

I think that we have a responsibility to produce usable knowledge and that’s what motivates me. I don’t want to do a project that just satisfies my curiosity or is intellectually interesting. I talk about purpose driven research . . . I did not coin that term so I don’t want credit for the term purpose driven research but I feel like it’s a good way to describe the work that I feel committed to doing, that it has to have some sort of applied potential and that that’s what really motivates me.

This connects to two ideas that Dr. Renzetti later discussed, (1) divisions in the field of sociology; and (2) her distancing herself from the postmodernist and post structuralist movements. To the first point she described that some sociologists can be asked “what’s applied sociology? And they won’t know . . . Or they see it as a lesser . . . it’s not scientific”. When I asked her explain this to me in more detail, she talked about how this was related to the history of the field and a need to establish sociology as scientific in comparison to other disciplines.

Some of this conversation of what science is and qualitative versus quantitative, reminded me of the clashes between positivism and postmodernism. I expressed my surprise at the lack of acceptance of some of the more qualitative, postmodern approaches to science because of how widely they are discussed across so many disciplines. In response Dr.Renzetti expressed:

No I don’t think there’s been an acceptance of this at all. I mean I don’t do postmodern work myself. . . it’s just not what I do . . . but I would say that in sociology, in psychology, in criminology there’s still a huge divide just in terms of qualitative versus quantitative.

She was clear “I don’t do post-modern, post structuralist work.” I wanted to know why she was so definitive about that fact because of my impression that many qualitative methodologies are connected to post-modern epistemologies.

I don’t know how to say this tactfully . . . But I find it to be almost nihilistic . . . it’s like anything goes. Or you can’t really know the truth, you can’t really get at truth. And . . . that’s very different from saying well the way I get at truth is qualitative versus quantitative right? . . . I do think it’s possible to get accurate data about something and come to an understanding of something. I think that one of the benefits of an intersectional framework is that it allows you to recognize that not everyone’s truth is the same . . . and people are going to have different truths depending on their social locations. And on how those locations intersect. .

. . . So I do quantitative and qualitative work. . . And I think there is real value in using mixed methods . . . It's like turning a prism, you can turn the prism and see the problem differently.

### **Final thoughts**

My interviews with Dr. Renzetti, juxtaposed with Dr. Felson's and Dr. DeKeseredy, gave me the opportunity to explore some of the ideas I had about divisions in the field that were currently in flux. The question of the use of the term IPV was one that was particularly profound for me. When I first learned about the term, I had the same association with it as Dr. Renzetti described, that it was with the intent of being inclusive of multiple types of relationships. Until I started exploring the literature for this dissertation and read much of Dr. DeKeseredy's writing, I had never realized that I could be implicating myself as an anti-feminist scholar, advocating for a gender neutral position in my use of the term. I thought back to the numerous guest lectures I have given on the topic and conversations with other scholars and was filled with a sense of embarrassment. This was balanced with an experience I had of a male victim of IPV approaching me through email following a guest lecture, asking for connections to resources. I was in this somewhat chaotic state when I asked Dr. Renzetti for her perspective and I was bracing myself for confirmation of my unintentional but ultimately misguided use of the terminology. Her explanation of the source of the term was extremely helpful for me in contextualizing my use of the term. I came to a place as a result of this conversation that I could still use the term IPV as long as I am open about what I mean and what I do not mean by it. I can say that I use it because: a) It is a commonly recognized term in the U.S; b) It is inclusive of LGBTQ and non-marital relationships; c) That I do not mean to imply

that violence between partners is a gender-neutral or gender-symmetrical event; d) That I believe women can perpetrate violence and women's use of violence needs to be acknowledged, studied and offered appropriate treatment options; e) That I believe men can be victims; f) That I believe male and female perpetration and victimization are different, have different etiologies and have different impacts; g) That sexism, patriarchy and misogyny play a role in the structural supports of both male perpetration and victimization; and h) That globally male physical and sexual violence against women and other men is of epidemic proportions. It was through my conversations with Dr. Renzetti that I was able to reach this clarification of what I mean and do not mean when I use the term.

The other piece that impacted me deeply from these interviews is the idea that the professional can be separated from the personal but under what conditions that is both possible and not possible. I admired how Dr. Renzetti described her ability to maintain friendships and connections with scholars affiliated with the family violence camp despite her primary affiliation with feminism. As she discussed, this is reflective of her personality and some important professional socialization experiences. But I also wondered if it was also supported by her interdisciplinary work, for though she works heavily in the field of IPV, she must associate with people who are primarily not sociologists and who I assume are not closely identified with the divisions. The other point she made that was similar to Dr. DeKeseredy's and that has stayed with me since, is the idea that while separating the personal from professional is important, it can be impossible under some conditions. Those conditions are: a) when other scholars are

personally attacking and mocking your credibility as a scholar versus engaging in an appropriate professional debate; and b) when you are being cyber-stalked and threatened by various interest groups and the researchers and scholars whose work is being used by those groups, seem to be standing passively by and allowing it to happen.

**Chapter 13:**

**Dr. Linda Mills**

Dr. Linda Mills obtained her B.A. in History and Social Thought from the University of California, Irvine campus in 1979. After which she went on to the University of California, Hastings College of Law and achieved her Juris Doctor (J.D.) in 1983. She is the only participant I interviewed who has a law degree in addition to her doctorate. In 1986, Dr. Mills graduated with a Masters in Social Work (MSW) with a focus in community organizing from San Francisco State University. She along with Dr. Sandra Stith, are also the only participants I interviewed who are clinicians, with experience in direct practice. In 1994, Dr. Mills received her Ph.D. in Health Policy from Brandeis University as a Pew Fellow. Because of the diversity of her academic achievements, Dr. Mills's professional journey is slightly different from the other participants in that she was already an engaged researcher, scholar and practitioner prior to her doctorate, even before launching her professional career post graduation. In 1986, after finishing her MSW, Dr. Mills founded The Hawkins Center of Law and Services for People with Disabilities in Richmond, California where she worked until 1991 before beginning her studies at Brandeis. While at Brandeis she worked in a variety of positions, for example in 1992 she was a consultant to the United States General Accounting Office on examining how gender differences affected disability decisions. After graduating with her doctorate in 1994, Dr. Mills became an assistant professor at the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research in the Department of Social Welfare, where she became an associate professor with tenure in 1998. In 1999 Dr. Mills transitioned to the NYU Silver School of Social Work where she remains to this day, having moved through multiple professional roles. In 2004 she became the Executive Director of the NYU

Center on Violence and Recovery and a Professor of Social Work, Public Policy and Law. Currently she also operates in administrative roles as Vice Chancellor of Global Programs and University Life, NYU and Associate Vice Chancellor for Admissions and Financial Support, NYU Abu Dhabi. She also serves as the inaugural Lisa Ellen Goldberg Professor at NYU. Throughout her career, Mills has published several articles and book chapters including four books, of which her 2003, *Insult to Injury: Rethinking Our Responses to Intimate Abuse* has inspired intense conversation and debate in the field.

Prior to my first interview with Dr. Mills, I was excited to finally speak to someone who has the unique blend of practice-based expertise and research that matched more fully my experience. My orientation to research is that while I appreciate answering scientific questions for the sake of increasing knowledge, I like to see a connection between the questions I ask and the eventual practical implementation of the answers I find. One observation I made up to this point in my interviews is that the focus on practice is unique to certain disciplines in the social sciences. While this may seem like a fairly obvious point to some, I have primarily been exposed to people in my professional socialization who are practice-oriented, sometimes to the exclusion of an interest in research. Until this dissertation, I had rarely encountered scholars who saw practice as a distant conclusion of their work. I headed into my first interview with Dr. Mills wanting to know how she integrated these aspects of her professional self, both her empirical research and her focus on practice and intervention. There were also personal connections that made me feel more personally connected to Dr. Mills though we had



never met. She is a Jewish woman, who lives in New York City, and I am from upstate New York, born to a Jewish father who grew up in New York City and I am living far away in the mid-west. She has done significant writing about 9/11, an experience that continues to deeply shape me and most of my generation. In addition, she is a lawyer and both my parents are lawyers as well as several aunts and uncles. Looking back, I believe I went into our first interview a little homesick, both for the cultural connections I was missing but also anticipating a rich conversation about practice-based frameworks for research. Despite these positive feelings before our first conversation, I was also a little nervous. In print, Dr. Mills is passionate about her position of the limitations of the criminal justice system due to the intimate nature of abuse between partners and the fact that mainstream feminists may have been misguided in aggressively pursuing punishment as the exclusive solution for addressing perpetration by men. I was concerned that I would say something that would put me into the box of a “mainstream feminist,” similar to my interview with Dr. DeKeseredy where I was concerned I would fit his definition of an “anti-feminist.” My worry continued to be that if I were to find myself labeled in that way, dialogue would be stifled and unproductive. I say this because it was important for me to notice these attitudes and feelings in order to understand and bracket if necessary, how these impressions shaped my experience with Dr. Mills. Though from the beginning of our conversation, it became clear how highly interpersonal and collaborative she is in her work, which made for an interesting and challenging dialogue that was deeply enjoyable for me. I did not feel stifled by Dr. Mills in any way, during this conversation or any other interaction that came after and I felt we had a highly productive dialogue.

**“I also identified with it as a woman . . .”**

My first question to Dr. Mills was how she became involved in the field of intimate partner violence.

As I started my career at UCLA, I thought seriously about . . . what I wanted to spend the bulk of or certainly the initial part of my academic career on, what topic, . . . and because I myself had experienced intimate abuse and had been deeply affected by the . . . treatment options that were not available to me . . . I turned my sights to that area of study. In other words, I knew I wanted to make an impact in whatever field I worked in . . . and the field of intimate abuse was an obvious one where there was a kind of dominant perspective that clearly prevented me from getting the kind of help I thought I needed. . . I wanted to understand that dilemma better.

What was powerful to me about this statement was that Dr. Mills was the first participant to disclose that her interest in IPV stemmed in part from personal experiences. Every other person I interviewed up until this point reported that they came into this field from a more distant position, even if that position was one of a deep passion for social justice. I resonated with this strongly because as someone affiliated more with post-positivism and affirmative post-modernism, I believe as scientists our personal experiences and biases are things that should be openly highlighted and explored as they relate to the research endeavor. I believe personal experience with the social phenomena we study can become an important strength for a researcher (or a clinician for that matter) but also that we can only bracket that which we acknowledge and openly explore. But I am also aware that not everyone in the sciences takes this position and as Dr. Mills related in a later section, this openness to sharing some of her personal experience has become a point of strength and of vulnerability that others have used to critique her scholarly work.

I’ve met many women and men who themselves have been victims and have appreciated the value of theoretical work that I’ve done as well as the therapeutic

work that I've done. But for the most part my mentors have not been people who have helped define the field as a victim. I'm probably one of the only people who is a victim who has . . . taken this other perspective. And on more than one occasion, my own victimization has been questioned, as if to say: if I had been a victim how could I possibly believe that an alternative to the criminal justice system was the right approach?

Dr. Mills' experience in the 1980s, practicing as an MSW and an attorney, informed the eventual position she would take within the field.

. . . before I went on to get my PhD, I had practiced law in Richmond, California which was predominantly an African American community (I am white). My legal practice revolved around helping women, in particular, to qualify for Social Security disability benefits. Because I was also a therapist (as well as a lawyer), I often found myself talking with clients about debilitating abuse they had experienced – this was, at times, the basis for their disability claims.... I think listening to people who were very different from me, but who felt equally stigmatized about the violence in their lives, was an important lesson. And although I lived a very different life to the clients I was representing, we shared a great deal in terms of our desire to get help related to a violent situation, but not the kind of help that was available. And so I knew there was a need that moved beyond my own experience that I wanted to explore.

Dr. Mills went on to describe how the criminal justice system intersected in the lives of women, men and families from diverse backgrounds experiencing IPV, which in turn began to shape her research. One of her key mentors is Larry Sherman, whose work with his colleague Richard Berk on how the justice system responds to IPV, continues to shape and inform those responses to this very day.

We observe that in the Sherman and Berk study, Larry Sherman, who I would say is one of my mentors, made some important observations about the African American community. Many have now written about the protective instinct some women felt about advancing a response to domestic violence that simply increased the number of African American men going into the prison industrial complex. And very few people were talking about the protective instinct that women might have when men are violent towards them. I became interested in this issue both because I was experiencing this quite directly in my professional encounters in Richmond, California as a lawyer but I also identified with it as a woman whose abusive partner had a great deal to lose as a result of being

exposed. He wasn't necessarily going to prison for what he did but he would have lost his job, he would have lost his stature in the community and I think many women who are in violent relationships – regardless of their class status – feel this way.

Dr. Mills went on to say that Larry Sherman became “a really obvious colleague” as she moved towards thinking about the use of more restorative justice approaches in domestic violence. For a more in-depth exploration of Sherman and Berk's work, see the chapter on Critical Justice in Section I.

**“My radical thinking was really rooted in radical tenets of feminism”**

Dr. Mills occupied an interesting position in the divide in that she positions herself as a feminist but also experiences intense criticism from some feminist scholars about her work. This is similar to Dr. Michael Johnson but the criticism that Dr. Mills has faced is far more intense and confrontational. In another connection between the two scholars, I should also note that Dr. Mills often relies on Johnson's work to help frame her own arguments. In *Insult to Injury* she wrote “It is important however, to distinguish between that end of the spectrum that sociologist Michael Johnson dubs ‘patriarchal terrorism,’ and ‘common couple violence,’ which reflects the more common dynamic I describe throughout this book (Mills, 2003, p. 7).”

Going back to the original point, Dr. Mills's remained confidently rooted in a feminist belief system despite opposition by some feminist scholars. This emerged early in our conversations when I asked her what experiences encouraged her work to take the direction it did.

I am a very old fashioned feminist insofar as I believe that women are capable of doing anything. I was very much raised in a family . . . that encouraged me to stretch the boundaries, to believe in myself. My father was a successful physician

who taught me that I could do anything. Feminism, of the old style, was very much my personal orientation to the world and eventually became my professional identify. I not only believed this about myself but I believed that together as women, we could make a difference in the world, a profound difference, as we have over many centuries. It was this confidence that gave me, interestingly and almost ironically, the skills I needed to think differently about the field of intimate violence. So my path to my alternative thinking, what I might call my radical thinking, was really rooted in the radical tenets of feminism – feminism as a liberating notion. It's the idea that people can work to overcome nearly anything, that we are not limited by our victimization. Our lives yes, in certain cases might be forever influenced by whatever we have suffered, but in other really profound ways, our lives are opened up as a result of those things that happen to us.

**“It feels very emotional and not about you”**

Dr. Mills has experienced intense criticism almost from the beginning of her work in the field of IPV. She highlighted three profound professional experiences that shaped her future journey.

The first one was when I challenged the relevance or usefulness of the criminal justice system intervention (altogether) in domestic violence. Eventually I became slightly less adamant about this position. But it started by being a simple challenge, in large part growing out of the research that children who were abused often grow up to become abusers and the misguided belief that criminalizing domestic violence would somehow solve the problem. And so my first public interaction regarding this issue was at UCLA when I faced a panel of people who said ‘you’re out of your mind, the only way to address domestic violence is through the criminal justice system, otherwise you’re supporting domestic violence.’ ...I started to read around to look for other people who were thinking differently and that’s when I discovered Murray Straus and Richard Gelles. And they became important colleagues because I started to do research in the field, as well as develop theoretically, and there weren’t a lot of people who were writing in this alternative voice. They were also important because one of their co-authors, Suzanne Steinmetz, had left the field in large part because of the threats she had received while she was writing in the field. And Murray and Richard . . . had a larger perspective, a kind of capacity, to be able to tolerate the criticism . . . and so . . . I started with them.

The piece in the UCLA Women's Law Journal that Dr. Mills referred to was titled *Intuition and Insight: A New Job Description for the Battered Woman's Prosecutor and Other More Modest Proposals* (Mills, 1997). In that piece she wrote:

Statistics aside, I too have been a victim. I never reported these incidents to the police, nor would I have prosecuted the two men who were abusive to me. If I had, I would have wanted the choice to proceed, or not to proceed, as I wished. Indeed, had anyone forced me to bring charges, I would have resisted them. When I shared my resistance to criminal intervention with other women, professional and non-professional, poor and middle class, of color and white, inside prison and out, far too many had never considered involving law enforcement, although they too had been stalked, struck, and even sexually tortured. These invisible faces compel me to take this controversial stand in their (our) defense (Mills, 1997, p. 186).

She wrote as a footnote to that section:

Many battered women's advocates believe this topic is taboo and should not be the subject of public discourse. Like abortion advocates, they fear that any expression of doubt or misgiving will empower our opponents to advocate for political indifference. I believe these conversations are necessary to ensure the safety of those battered women whose lives are literally threatened by the intensified intervention of law enforcement (Mills, 1997, p. 186-187).

Throughout the article Dr. Mills described the realities of mandatory arrest policies in the lives of women and families and argues for why different approaches should be attempted. She explained how the article grew out of the incident she described above:

I am one of a few feminists who have spoken out against mandatory policies. In the 1996 UCLA School of Law Legislative Forum held on September 27, 1996, at the UCLA School of Law, which sparked this Essay, support for mandatory prosecution was well articulated by the Los Angeles County District and City Attorneys' Offices and by California Assembly member Sheila Kuehl. I was the sole voice advocating for a more tempered response (Mills, 1997, p. 1990).

I followed up with asking Dr. Mills about her experience of criticism and when she became aware that by taking such a different position, she would sometimes encounter intense critique.

It started with that time at UCLA . . . and that was first of many painful experiences. Initially I would fight back, I would challenge, and slowly but surely in various settings, it became clear to me that the right approach, because people would stand up for 10-15 minutes and berate me, was for me to be silent. Interestingly, when I remained silent, people could see the craziness of, and the abusiveness of the kind of attack that I was encountering. There are two key events that stand out. One was when I gave a talk to several hundred people who were experts in the field. And I was the keynote speaker. They had invited a counter-perspective, which was, of course, fine. And the speaker stood up after me and he said ‘well I’m here to present several articles that have been written criticizing Linda’s work, and while I haven’t shown her these articles yet because they are about to be published, I am sure Linda can respond accordingly.’ And he presented them, went on for about 45 minutes and the interesting thing is, the conference participants came up to me, several of them, and said, ‘that was awful, I can’t believe you had to put up with that, it was completely unprofessional that he didn’t send you the articles ahead of time when they were written, and that you weren’t prepared for them and could have been.’ After he presented, I stood up and said ‘Look this is a lot to take in, I’m certainly prepared to address arguments but they’re being thrown at me, when in fact this material was prepared many months ago and I could have had time to prepare a response and to think about a response.’ As I said, the participants were quite horrified and said ‘I don’t entirely agree with you but I certainly understand why now, you feel under attack and how from my point of view, some of it is warranted but a lot of it isn’t and it feels very emotional and not about you.’ So that was interesting and helpful for me in realizing that this work is both deeply personal and also not about me.

After the UCLA incident and the related article that was published, Dr. Mills went on to publish a controversial piece of peer-reviewed literature, *Killing Her Softly: Intimate Abuse and the Violence of State Intervention*, which was published in the *Harvard Law Review* in 1999. In that piece she describes how mandatory arrest policies and the criminal justice system replicates for battered women the trauma of the IPV they have experienced (Mills, 1999).

Dr. Mills next highlighted her second profound experience with criticism that shaped her journey as a result of 9/11.

So I will never forget the moment when I was in the committee that had selected me to present to this conference and there were about 15 people around the room, and I said ‘well you wanted me to do the Harvard Law Review work but in fact my position has changed a lot and my position has changed a lot because of 9/11. The silence in the room was palpable and people said ‘well if you’re going to say all that, we may not want to have you, maybe we’ll disinvite you’ and then other people said ‘you can’t disinvite her’ In the end, it was decided that several people would join me on the stage after my remarks. I just sat there and I didn’t have the opportunity to respond . . . I would say those are the two events that come to mind that were very personally difficult and comprising.

In an article for the NY Times Magazine, journalist Deborah Sontag wrote a piece about Dr. Mills work. Sontag focused on presentation at the conference and the problem of relationship violence where women report their own perpetration and their desire to be with their perpetrator and not see them arrested or serve jail time. This problem becomes specifically difficult when discussing policies such as mandatory arrest. In the piece Sontag writes:

Linda Mills took the podium at a New York City- sponsored domestic violence conference this fall to give a keynote speech that she knew would rankle many. Her voice rang out with an accusation and a dare: ‘Mainstream feminism has maintained a stranglehold on our explanations of, and responses to, domestic violence, and it is time to take our voices back.’ Some veteran advocates see Mills as an ivory tower pontificator whose views are dangerous, capable of inspiring a backlash. They don’t want to waste their energy engaging in an internal debate, not at a time when some government officials are asking them to justify devotion of scarce resources to domestic violence. ‘Where’s the bang for the buck in terms of public safety?’ a senior New York police official asked advocates earlier this year (p. 55).

Dr. Mills then shared an experience of being on a talk show and the repetition of the experience of being asked to appear and then experiencing a critique without either time for preparation or to respond.



It was an awful experience for me . . . and that's because I was told by the show's producer that the show would present and support my work. And then I arrived the day before the show was taped and it felt like the opposite was the case. I was told that the host doesn't agree with me and they had invited an alternative perspective, so that both sides would be represented. The problem wasn't the actual show, it was simply that no one had prepared me for any of what was going to happen. I'm fine if people tell me what's going to happen. So they didn't and at that point I thought . . . 'why am I doing this? It was like, 'what is this about? Do I need to be doing this? Why am I under the gun all the time? Do I have to be in the line of fire?' After this show, I did a soul-searching exercise with a coach in which I came to realize that I really did have an important voice in the field. I had an important perspective because I had been a victim. I had an important voice because I am articulate and well educated across many professional fields, that I have something different to contribute and that I need to continue to talk about it. So that's kind of, I mean I need to go through a process, a very deliberate process where I had to think about, whether or not I wanted to keep putting myself in the line of fire. I made that decision and I did.

As Dr. Mills described throughout these three experiences was the repetition of being invited to share her work and then a confrontation of her work in a way that was unexpected and unexplained prior to the situation. This type of ambush and at times emotional and personal critique of her work and herself I believe is unproductive and inappropriate. The anecdotes Mills shared, together, with the stories of other participants, continued to crystallize for me that regardless of where someone stands in this debate, the rules and boundaries of respectful discourse, both professionally and personally, are even more essential in such a charged landscape.

**“I started to focus on solutions”**

Dr. Mills published her seminal book, *Insult to Injury: Rethinking Our Responses to Intimate Abuse* in 2003. She wrote:

The problem is that mainstream feminists' goal of reforming criminal justice practice at the systemic level was overly ambitious. By changing the actions of police officers, prosecutors, medical personnel, and judges, they wanted to change the discriminatory attitudes that led to the collusion with batterers to which they

objected. In doing so, mainstream feminists lost sight of their initial goal of incorporating the voice of the battered woman into the criminal justice system. Instead . . . they began replacing individual battered women's desires with their own (Mills, 2003, p. 36).

In addition to challenging the mainstream feminist approach to prosecution and arrest of perpetrators, she also highlighted women's use of violence, particularly emotional and psychological abuse. She described the mainstream feminist position on the appropriateness of criminal prosecution and the focus on male violence as "projection."

Currently, when feminists or professionals are faced with someone who seeks their help and who needs to discuss the abuse or aggression, they deny women these opportunities because, as projection teaches us, those conversations remind mainstream feminists or helping professionals of the abuse they themselves have not addressed (Mills, 2003, p. 79).

While Dr. Mills wrote about this in her book and we did not discuss it in depth in our interviews, I have a strong response to this idea. As a clinician, who has gotten into several heated debates with other clinicians throughout the years, this is a space that feels unproductive and dangerous to enter. That space is connecting someone's perspective or disagreement with you to a psychological or behavioral health construct. On the other hand though, as a clinician I do believe our personal experiences and state of mind certainly influence our perspective; I simply do not know how to talk about this in a way that does not leave someone feeling defensive. Just as I had a strong negative reaction to Dr. DeKeseredy sharing that anyone who was a family conflict scholar was an anti-feminist, I have a similarly strong negative reaction to this concept. At the same time, Dr. Mills (just as Dr. DeKeseredy), were exposed to the most intense and destructive forms of critique and attack of any of those scholars I interviewed. They each were insulted, their personal character maligned, their political beliefs and scholarly work

misrepresented and their professional and personal welfare threatened. Therefore, their interpretation of their opponents' perspectives must be taken into account within the personal experiences they and no one else have shared, including me. The other part of my negative response I feel is entirely self-focused; I do not want to be labeled an anti-feminist by anyone and I do not want my psychological and emotional well-being exposed and open to analysis by other scholars who disagree with me.

In the final chapters of *Insult to Injury*, Dr. Mills described the Intimate Abuse Circle (IAC) process, a restorative justice approach to addressing IPV involving the perpetrator, the couple, the family and the community in healing, while at the same time holding people accountable. Dr. Mills described her movement towards restorative justice and couple and family based approaches to intervening and treating IPV.

I started to focus on solutions and in thinking about ways in which . . . we could help resolve the tension in the field which was so deeply marked by the divide, between what I think was what the victims wanted, namely treatment with their partners, the fact that it was prohibited, in a sense, that it was judged as not okay. So I wanted to ask a question from an empirical point of view, could people actually do treatment with their partner, if that's what they wanted or were there moments when treatment with a partner because they have children together even if they had decided to separate, could be helpful?

This shift connected to the impact that 9/11 had on her work in that:

. . . in order to understand violence completely and the dynamics of domestic violence, we needed to open our hearts and minds to all aspects of the problem and that that was what 9/11 did for me . . . that then encouraged me to not only think in different ways about how the problem has been set up or structured as a social issue but also what we might expect from the solution.

**“You put a problem in a context”**

Dr. Mills described the powerful influence of her social work training and

education. This influence of practice and pragmatics on theory development and intervention closely aligned with my own perspective.

Social work [is about] making the world a better place and the belief that people can change . . . The social work piece was always that you put a problem in a context. And you have to keep re-examining that problem in a context in order to fully understand it. You can't just stop at 'well this is the paradigm, this is how we define it and this is the answer.' You have to keep pushing, how you think about the contextual boundaries, that is how the field has grown, and that is how good work happens in the context of what I would call the best of social work practices.

Later in the interview, Dr. Mills shared how her social work training, her legal training and her interaction with practice influenced her ability to both continue to ask complex questions but also to withstand some of the intensely negative experiences she had in the field.

As a social worker the solution is often the most creative one. So, you are not going to easily come up with a solution to whatever somebody is experiencing, given the complexity of influences that got them to that difficult situation in the first place, without a lot of creative thinking, a lot of listening, and a lot of openness. So I think it is, to your point, the profession itself that facilitated for me that "open" mindset. I think the other more important influence is the restorative work itself. And I think this is an important point . . . which is that the actual work of restorative justice is about listening to multiple points of view.

**“There are profound divisions in how we address violence in this country”**

I asked Dr. Mills if the divisions in the field of IPV are unique and if so, why would that be the case. She shared her perspective of how deeply connected the domestic violence movement is with the feminist movement and how the role of women in society has shifted so dramatically.

I think that's a great question. I'd say that there are profound divisions in how we address violence in this country and how we organize our criminal justice system. Violence seems to be one of the key areas where people find themselves at odds,

and how to address it. So what I would say is yes, there are these divides in other aspects of criminal justice, theory and policymaking . . . I would add that domestic violence is also tied up in and linked to a relatively new, last 30 maybe 40 years, conceptualization of the role of women in society. In that regard domestic violence is one of the defining issues for the feminist movement. And in some respects, domestic violence has garnered the most attention for feminism, because it was the most awful, right? It was women dying . . . But in a sense, domestic violence was the backlash. It represented the issue that symbolized how men took advantage of women . . . in a way that was so egregious that everybody could agree on. And I think that's one of the reasons it has so much resonance and has had such resonance for so long. In addition . . . the analysis of domestic violence “stuck” in terms of the original description or definition, namely that men hurt women. And we haven't been able to find our way, as a culture, beyond that original notion. . . . And what I think that society hasn't caught up to is that as women have increasingly become more powerful, that things have changed – particularly in Western cultures. The old definition of, now 40, 50 years ago, of domestic violence as one dimensional abuse . . . is relevant but not entirely relevant . . . it's relevant in some cases, but it's far from the whole story.

### **“I think it's changed”**

I asked Dr. Mills the same question that I asked the other participants about where the divide is now and where it is going. Dr. Mills' response was by far the most optimistic.

I think the divisions, I'd say in the last four years, I've started to see a pretty dramatic shift, where even the staunchest, traditional feminist is saying, ‘Well, maybe we didn't have it quite right. Maybe batterers' treatment isn't quite right.’ . . . the questions are being asked. Many of the ‘old feminist guard’ are coming to ask the questions amongst themselves, which may make sense. Maybe that's the kind of safe environment they need, but the questions are being asked in new ways. So I'd say in the last four years, I've seen a real change where people are willing to ask the question. Some in safer settings. Some in more open settings. So I think it's changed, but it's really only been in the last few years . . . I just think we're all changing a lot and becoming more tolerant . . . I do see us getting to a much better place.

I asked her what she attributed to the reasons for the change.

I'd say there are a few strands or influences. The first one is that the research is pretty overwhelming . . . the old definition of domestic violence, it's all 'men, hurting women' with no nuance has been made more complicated by empirical research that is very compelling – such as Murray Straus's data across several nations. I think the second thing is that male victims have finally found their voice. And I, for whatever reason, given my own work, get access to their stories. There was a lot, initially, by male victims, of quietly trying to find their way to their voice. And scared that they would be re-victimized if they asked for their needs to be met. And I think they have finally said, 'We're fed up with people not seeing us as victims.' So I think that their voices are finally being heard. And it's ironically deeply connected to the development of the criminal justice system, where two things are also happening. Women are getting arrested, so men do have a legitimate claim now to say they are victims. . . You've got judges, thousands of them, across the country seeing a whole lot of women who are offenders. What do they do about them? They have a mindset about IPV, and then all of a sudden the situation that is coming into the courtroom doesn't look like what they were taught or told. So, they have to adjust.

In terms of changes in treatment approaches, Dr. Mills discussed the impact of new research.

We have . . . national studies funded by the most important agencies, NSF and NIJ, asking the core questions, which are, Can victims and perpetrators be treated together?' And preliminary results suggest 'yes.' So I think we will broaden treatment options for people.

I asked Dr. Mills how she would change the field if she could.

I think it is taking in the data . . . and I'm now prepared to do these things as well. Take in the data, know that the data sometimes conflicts; take in the hard conversations, and find a path that's a compromise . . . Ok, so you're not willing yet, to give up your analysis that there is always a gender dimension to battering. OK? But how do you reconcile that perspective with the research? Especially when it doesn't comport with what's happening in the criminal justice system and it doesn't comport with a lot of facts, but OK. If you're not willing to accept that there may be a dynamic of abuse, can you at least recognize that victims would like to participate in some way or another in the treatment of the perpetrator? And that the research may suggest that it would be OK and not life threatening, even let's say, for the lowest level violence for victims and perpetrators to come together for treatment. So, it's finding a path of compromise, I guess, is the best way of responding to your question.

## **“Their silence will be interpreted as where they stand on an issue”**

Finally, I addressed a question to Dr. Mills that I had been curious about from the beginning. In this area, research that is considered to be more in the family conflict camp (like Dr. Mills) is also typically associated with the Men’s Rights Movement and an anti-feminist political agenda. One of the concepts that had emerged from previous interviews was the idea that if your research was taken up by a political group you disagreed with, if you do not openly counter their use of your work, you could be interpreted as supporting their cause. This is in specific reference to family conflict scholars work being used by men’s rights groups and not doing enough to counter their position and in turn, being affiliated with them politically.

I look at it over 30 years. And what I'd say along the continuum, is there has always been some version of this perspective (that women abuse men), whether you were a researcher or you were an advocate . . . And I think it has been difficult on a few of us to decide . . . for example, I sit on a board of a more inclusive domestic violence journal (one that publishes work related to male victims). What does that mean? Does that mean that I support every article that gets published? Does that mean that I support the reference to a radical fringe group? So I can understand why that's an issue. But I'm not sure that this isn't just a new version of an old issue, I guess, is what I'm saying. Which is, for many years, people have either had to declare where they stand on an issue or their silence will be interpreted as where they stand on an issue. And I think . . . those people who are in a contentious field are always having to ask and answer that question

## **Final thoughts**

Throughout our conversations, Dr. Mills integrated her work across multiple disciplines in seamless and thought-provoking ways. One of the most impactful things from our conversations was the harmful way in which critics have approached Dr. Mills

throughout her career. Her ability to process those experiences and place them within a larger context brought home to me how those professionals who remain in this divisive field are not the faint of heart. This is particularly true for those scholars who take more controversial positions. Dr. Mills' thoughts about expanding options for women, couples and families matches well with my impression of what the domestic violence system needs. I believe this would also match what most feminist scholars working in the field would say as well. What I find so interesting is just as Dr. Mills is advocating for a restorative justice approach to IPV, so too are many feminist scholars. In particular, Dr. DeKeseredy and I shared a part of our conversation of the strengths of such approaches for women. Therefore there are strong similarities between some of these viewpoints, though 10 years ago that may have been a different case. The differences perhaps lie more in opinions of how levels of oppression of contemporary US and Western based context. Dr. Mills and Dr. Felson both shared a similar observation that the status of women has dramatically changed and that IPV interventions need to reflect that, which is something I do not believe many feminist scholars would agree with, though I am not sure. The other point that Dr. Mills brought up that other participants repeated was once again this idea of data and that proponents of the 'other side,' in this case a mainstream feminist approach, are not reading the data correctly or are not being informed by the data in making their decisions. This is compelling to me because at this point, each of the participants I have interviewed used this argument. Finally, I deeply appreciated the level of self-reflection that Dr. Mills engaged in throughout our conversation. There is something about a clinical background that creates fertile ground for these types of



conversations and accompanies typically some self-disclosure. I felt supremely comfortable throughout our conversations due to the peppering of self-disclosure and reflection and it reminded me of many conversations I have had throughout my graduate training.

**Chapter 14:**

**Dr. Sandra Stith**

Dr. Sandra Stith earned her B.S. in Education from Oklahoma State University in 1970. Similar to Dr. Linda Mills, Dr. Stith had another professional life, one as a teacher, before obtaining her Ph.D. She taught in preschool, elementary and middle schools throughout the 1970s and from 1973 to 1975 she was a Peace Corps volunteer in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, where she taught and developed educational programming for disadvantaged children. In 1982 she obtained her M.S. in Life Span Human Development from Kansas State University. At Kansas State University she went on to earn her Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy in 1986. Following graduation she became an Assistant Professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's Department of Family and Child Development where she remained until 2007, becoming an Associate Professor in 1992 and a full Professor of Human Development in 1999. From 1991 until 1992 she served as the Director of the Center for Family Services and was Program Director of the Marriage and Family Therapy program from 1991 until her departure. In 2007 she transitioned to Kansas State University's Marriage and Family Therapy Program in the School of Family Studies and Human Services where she remains today, serving in the capacity of Program Director. Throughout her professional career she has taught several courses, published numerous articles, book chapters and books, presented at national and international conferences and has also practiced as a clinician. What she is best known for in the context of this dissertation is her development and advancement of a couples-based treatment for IPV (along with colleagues Eric McCollum and Karen Rosen).

It seemed fitting that my final interviews would be with Dr. Stith I started this journey with her work. As I shared throughout this narrative, my mentor and advisor in

my Masters program, Dr. Susan Horwitz, introduced me to Dr. Stith's work. She was a strong advocate of doing relational clinical interventions with couples experiencing IPV that fit Dr. Johnson's typology of situational couple violence and were appropriate in a variety of other ways. Establishing criteria for receiving couples treatment was determined by a minimum of a three session screening process that involved both written questionnaires and clinical interviewing before a couple was determined to be appropriate. Dr. Horwitz was a gifted clinician and watching her work with couples was a powerful, positive and transformative experience. She deeply appreciated Dr. Stith's work and passed that appreciation on to me, profoundly shaping my professional socialization. In the first few months of my doctoral studies after graduating from my Masters program I received a phone call that Dr. Horwitz had passed away. She had been diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor over the summer and her disease rapidly progressed. I share this because I cannot help but think of Dr. Horwitz when I think about Dr. Stith; their work is inextricably interconnected for me. Throughout my dissertation I have wanted to talk with Dr. Horwitz and ask her opinion about various things but never more so than before and after my conversations with Dr. Stith. I believe she would have enjoyed talking with me about my experience of interviewing Dr. Stith and the reflections I came to. In addition, Dr. Stith and I share similar professional backgrounds, our Ph.D.'s are both in Couple and Family Therapy, we are Couple and Family Therapists, and members of the same professional organization called American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). Therefore there is logically a similarity to our professional outlook that others from different disciplines might not share. This is an

important context because I knew prior to our first interview that my ability to bracket these thoughts and feelings would be challenging at best and impossible at worst. In qualitative work when we find ourselves so close to the subject of our inquiry that removing ourselves is a Herculean task, I believe it is best to practice what my qualitative research professor Dr. Paul Rosenblatt advised, “Confess!” I certainly tried to be appropriately critical of my conversations with Dr. Stith but I leave it up to the reader to determine how successful I ultimately was.

**“I’ve never really wavered”**

I asked Dr. Stith about how her professional journey started and she shared how her roots in this area began with an interest in child abuse research.

My masters was in . . . lifespan human development, I was interested in child abuse and understanding factors related to child abuse and it very quickly became clear to me that that is really hard research to do because you’ve got to get so many approvals and I didn’t really have anyone doing child abuse research . . . I started working at that shelter and . . .there’s such an overlap. There’s a lot of stuff being written lately about how we’re domestic violence researchers, we’re child abuse researchers, we’re elder abuse researchers and we don’t read each other’s literature and we don’t look at overlaps between those issues so we’re all kind of in a way inventing our own wheels, versus what are we are learning about how moms deal with their own anger and control and so that they aren’t violent towards their child. What they learned in that research might really help us with an adult partner who has problems with violence but we’re all separate. So I really went from child abuse to partner abuse and I’ve never really wavered. I’ve worked with doctoral students or masters students and published with them on their areas of interest but . . . sticking with one area . . . just keeping up with the literature and keeping up with what’s being written, it’s a daunting task in one area.

I asked Dr. Stith about her key mentors, which tied directly in with the funding support she received early on in her work on couples-based interventions. One of the biggest

influences for her was Murray Straus who is considered a major proponent of the family conflict perspective.

A number one mentor was Dan O'Leary. I met him also through that domestic violence conference [International Family Violence Conference] and he was on the review committee at NIMH when we got funded. It was pretty shocking, really that we got funded because it was so controversial and working with couples and violence but he had done a paper and I had cited his work widely and he was really supportive and he came out to Virginia Tech and sat down with Eric and Karen and I and talked about what he was doing and what we were doing and was just really encouraging and supportive. And then another mentor was Murray Straus who I also know from the domestic violence conference [International Family Violence Conference], he and I co-edited a book, we spent hours up in New Hampshire . . . We would just talk about his experiences in gender symmetry versus not and how he's changed over the years in understanding domestic violence and he's a very generous and really loves to mentor people new in the field, wonderful support for me.

Other mentors Dr. Stith mentioned included Candy Russell who was her major professor, David Olson and Virginia Goldner. She discussed the importance the International Family Violence Conference in New Hampshire but also highlighted the powerful role of both the American Family Therapy Academy Conference and the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy in her professional development.

In addition to mentors, Dr. Stith shared how wonderful it was to work in collaboration with Karen Rosen and Eric McCollum.

There were three full time faculty and all of us worked together, on the treatment program, on the NIMH grant, all of us worked together, looking at issues of domestic violence and that is a wonderful gift . . . a place where there was a community of people who want to study the same thing, that's wonderfully supportive.

Receiving the NIMH was incredibly important in terms of the visibility of Dr. Stith's work and her ability to influence the wider conversation and affect the treatment people received.

NIH funding that has made all the difference in the work and respect or visibility. It's a lot of work to get federal funding. You write, and you re-write and a lot of people wonder is it really worth it? But it made a huge difference . . . I'm invited to speak all the time, I was in Norway and Finland in November and I'm going to Belfast in March and part of that is I could have just quietly kept doing the work we were doing with couples when there was violence and made a difference with those particular couples and made a difference with the students that I was helping learn how to do this work but once we got federal funding and we wrote a book and lots of articles in the meantime and lots of data, lots of qualitative interviews, lots of quantitative data. That then gives you the kind of an amazing opportunity to have an influence broader than just the clients that you're working with or the students that you're preparing to work with clients.

### **“That Just Seemed Wrong to Me”**

I asked Dr. Stith the same question I asked every other participant, which was how she found herself in the field of IPV.

I did a dissertation looking at risk factors for domestic violence and I only looked at males as perpetrators, I never even thought of looking at females as perpetrators. Then I started directing a Marriage and Family Therapy graduate program and being a professor at Virginia Tech and because that was my area of research people kept coming to me with cases, students and in my own clinical work. I just kept seeing women who were primary aggressors, couples where both people were shoving, and recognizing that we do not have really any training in how do we work, we refer them all to batterers program, well they're not going to batterers programs, if they're clients that come to us at clinic, and they want couples therapy and there's violence, what are we supposed to do? And I felt that we were really lacking in our field in regards to what to do except from what we had read in sociological work etc. That you don't do couples treatment. . . . And then I kept finding in communities that I was familiar with, a woman gets arrested for domestic violence and they don't have a batterer program for her because the program is only for men because there's not enough women being arrested because there's probably not enough . . . so they're sending them to the victim services, so they're getting victim services whereas men are getting treatment and intervention for domestic violence. That just seemed wrong to me because how empowering is that to a woman who struggles with anger, to only perceive herself as a victim, as opposed to there's something she can do about her anger, even if he's also angry. It feels very disempowering to women to have a preconceived idea that you're a victim even when you're the one who's arrested. Or a preconceived idea that you shouldn't be in couples treatment because it's not safe, even though a woman comes in and says 'I would like couples treatment. I want to try to save this relationship.'

### **“Not all one size fits all”**

One of things I had reflected on before my interview with Dr. Stith is that in my observation couple and family therapists are more consistently associated with a family conflict perspective than other clinical disciplines. As I outlined in Chapter 2: The Great Divide, when Murray Straus applied a General Systems Theory analysis to domestic violence in the 1970s that was viewed by many feminist scholars as making the power dynamics within the family invisible; dynamics that were upheld and enforced by the greater society. Couple and family therapists are trained in systems thinking and ecological theory from the first day of professional socialization. From personal experience I know that many feminist scholars and feminist clinicians still have a concern that couple and family therapists will not address power in their work, or will place a priority on saving relationships to the exclusion of safety and will make equivalence between a man’s use of violence and a woman’s use of violence. Therefore the first question I asked Dr. Stith was if there was something unique about the professional socialization of couple and family therapists that puts us in the midst of the divide. She responded:

I don’t really think it’s only couple and family therapists who might take different positions based on the individual client. To me part of the challenge is the larger infrastructure that looks at domestic violence, violence against women, in particular the Office of Violence Against Women and the shelter movement, which I’m supportive of . . . there are people in administrative positions who take a strong stance about what’s right and what’s wrong, people who develop state standards etc. But when you look at the individual clinician, and I do a lot of talking to clinicians, I do a lot of training and people who are in the front line with the client recognize that it’s not all one size fits all.



Following up on that question, I asked Dr. Stith about why so much of this conversation is between sociologists, with other sociologists, at sociological conferences and professional organizations. At this point I had developed a preliminary opinion that more clinicians needed to understand the historical nature of this larger conversation, to read the research and theory behind each position and also to share their own voices and professional experiences. I wanted to hear from her as one of the few couple and family therapists in the larger conversation.

I go to the International Family Violence Conference every summer . . . But almost all the people there I would say are sociologists, and some psychologists, Sherry Hamby is a big coordinator of the conference and she is the editor of the *Psychology of Violence* but there's no family therapists except me. Its research. So it's a research conference, it's not a treatment conference so its people doing research about these issues . . . So I think family therapists tend to go to conferences which do treatment, not research.

Dr. Stith repeatedly shared the important influence the International Family Violence Conference had on her professional story.

That conference has been a resource . . . Back in the 80's and we'd go to that conference, there were people who would stomp out in droves because you'd talk about women as perpetrators, now I wasn't at that point talking about that, there was a huge divide about these issues that now there's not at the conference. I don't know if that's because the divide is less or because the people who don't support this approach wouldn't be at the conference anymore. I think some of the people stopped going to that conference because they felt that it was too much of a family violence versus a violence against women conference.

Dr. Stith raised the point that while the conference has had a huge influence on her development, it is also representative of a particular silo within the debate that perhaps many scholars intentionally choose to not attend. She did share that Jackie Campbell and prominent feminist researchers in this area attend the conference regularly. Typically, these types of conferences seem to create the phenomenon that other scholars shared

about presenting ones work to others of like mind and so perhaps creating lack of opportunities for constructive dialogue with those who disagree. Though given what I have read and heard about the types of dialogue that have occurred in this area (highlighted in Chapter 2: The Great Divide), I must share the opinion that I cannot blame anyone for seeking to avoid such opportunities given how negative and unproductive such exchanges have been in the past.

I followed up this question by asking Dr. Stith if there was a mismatch between a sociological approach and a clinical approach. Dr. Stith responded with the point that much of this is connected to being isolated within professional silos; family therapists do not publish in sociological journals for the most part. Therefore family therapists are not widely influencing the work of sociologists though many sociologists publish in family journals that are widely read by family therapists. This made me think about how much influence therapists could have on the work being done by sociologists working in similar areas and what those types of professional collaborations might look like.

#### **“More of a focus on practicalities”**

Dr. Stith shared what professional experiences influenced the direction she took in her career. Interestingly this connected back into a clinical orientation, both direct practice and the use of observation as data, along with her personality.

It is the clinical experiences but . . . you have a conceptual idea about what is, what you’re going to find in this dissertation or in whatever field you’re studying, but then . . . you just keep seeing it isn’t what you thought it was. From the research that you’re doing, from the analysis that you’re doing, from the qualitative interviews that you’ve done. And I guess I just really value science over ideology. So to me science is what I’m observing, what I’m learning from talking to clients, what I’m learning from my own research, from my own analysis, from reading other peoples analysis and so I might think women are not

perpetrators, they're always victims. Then I keep seeing this, and I keep reading other peoples research and . . . so I guess it's less of a focus on ideology and more of a focus on practicalities and what I'm really seeing and what I recognize from my research and from other peoples research.

Dr. Stith emphasized her value of data, which I observed with fascination that each of the participants I interviewed shared this idea. This made me think about how these interviews exemplify the elements of social construction in science. Each scholar I interviewed discussed how their position reflects the reality of the world they see and how they interact with it as both a researcher and as a human being.

The other important point that Dr. Stith made was in regard to ideology. My immediate thought when she mentioned ideology and in light of the example she offered about the role of female perpetration, was that she was implying that feminist scholars or feminist policies tend to be ideological versus informed by evidence. As my interviews suggest, many feminist scholars, if not most, would reject that statement. This connects into this larger implication that the family conflict scholars are more connected to science, which other participants discussed. As I thought more about what Dr. Stith said I realized that I was assuming she was saying that feminist scholars are ideological; she did not actually say that. In light of the whole of both our conversations, I believe she would say that she has an issue with ideology on either end of the spectrum when it interferes with what you are observing. Initially, I put Dr. Stith into a box as a family conflict scholar and read into one small statement she made without putting it into the broader context of the rest of our conversation.

Another concept I believe is important to highlight is the difference between sociology and clinical programs in the function of sub-disciplines as it relates to this idea

of ideological influence that was raised by Dr. Stith. Couple and Family Therapy (CFT) is its own area, but is considered a sub-discipline within the broader field of behavioral health. There are strong and intense divisions between CFTs, psychologists, clinical social workers, counselors and psychiatrists. We have different professional organizations, different training programs and different philosophical and theoretical orientations to our work. We have professional battles that sometimes cross the line into attacking the very core of the other professions, questioning people's integrity, intellect and professional capacities. From the outside, I could see other professionals viewing this as a battle of ideology and where people stand in the professional hierarchy. Because we do not typically interact with other professionals in our training programs, the evidence of our ideological or philosophical influence seems to be more diffuse. When everyone shares your perspective, it feels less like ideology and more like truth. Also, because of the lack of opportunity, for the most part we can avoid battles with each other except at the political level where our professional organizations act as proxies and leave us disconnected from the personal fray. This is different than the field of sociology where there are several sub-disciplines with different philosophical and theoretical approaches; in one program there may be several paths to choose, rife with debate and division. From the earliest days of professional socialization, a sociologist may have to argue and defend his or her choice, clarifying the lines of what he or she believes and why. I am still exploring what this difference in professional socialization practices means, and I will highlight it further in the findings and discussion session.

### **“Credibility”**

Dr. Stith shared how one of the key features of her ability to navigate the waters of the divide and forge diverse collaborations was her experience with victims of serious IPV in a shelter-based context.

I get a lot of credibility because I worked at a shelter for several years. I worked with women who were on the brink of being killed by their husbands. I worked with women who had broken bones, had miscarriages after miscarriages, who lived in terror. I worked with women where we had to help them go into hiding and change their identity and so I think sometimes family therapists who only work with clients who show up at the clinic, they have a hard time of getting the credibility of someone who's actually worked with real victims of violence and so you might look at those couples who come where she shoves him, and he pushes her as the whole picture. And then of course . . . people who do research on homicides or femicides, they wouldn't give you much credit for what you're trying to propose because they don't think you really understand it. So really it was a gift to me to have spent that time working at shelter, I highly recommend that to students and people who want to do work with domestic violence, to understand that side of the story to.

The type of experiences Dr. Stith discussed in the above quote touches on the exact reason so many advocates and feminist scholars feel they are fighting for women's lives. Her direct exposure to that lived reality has been a key factor in her ability to move forward with the development, implementation and advancement of her intervention and clinical approach.

Dr. Stith shared a similar idea as Dr. Johnson and Dr. Renzetti about connecting to the local domestic violence community.

I've always been involved in the local domestic violence coalitions, and I feel like that's a really important part and I feel like that's where some family therapists, where we miss the boat. We do therapy and it's not understood what we're doing and we're not part of that coalition that every community has where we look at the batterer treatment programs and victim programs and clinicians get involved in and so when they, when you, when we as family therapists get involved in those coalitions and they recognize us as people who have concerns about domestic violence, concerns about victim safety, that we're not assuming everything is . . . people still think, that as family therapists we're systems

thinkers which means in some ways as ‘what did she do to cause him to hit her.’ And so that systems thinking idea that is way outdated is a big concern by a lot of people who don’t understand family therapy who think that we might be looking at it as . . . that if he’s the offender, she’s co-responsible. So getting to know family therapists who are really knowledgeable about domestic violence and recognize that each individual situation is different and there’s no reason to assume that she’s co-responsible for his violence. He’s responsible for his violence, she’s responsible for hers. But having a place at the table but also being supported. I had a situation, where somebody said something and the domestic violence people heard that I had done something in treatment. And they said ‘we absolutely knew, we knew that would not have happened’ and you have respect and credibility in the community. Otherwise if you do this work without credibility in the domestic violence community, there’s concern that you aren’t taking victim safety seriously.

Dr. Stith’s statement resonated with me. Clinicians tend not to focus on the political and public relations elements of their work. This idea has been repeatedly discussed throughout my interviews with questions of who sees our work, who interprets our work, and how our work is implemented. I had not thought up until this point in any coherent fashion that this may be quite similar for clinicians. Perhaps the continued impression that couple and family therapists are potential agents of danger for victims of family violence may be deeply connected to the field’s lack of political awareness and emphasis on relational connections to local advocacy communities and political entities.

**“I actually always thought I was a feminist who studied family violence”**

I asked Dr. Stith to share with me about her experiences of criticism and what was interesting to me was how similar her experience has been to Dr. Johnson in that she had little exposure to the type of aggressive attack that Dr. DeKeseredy and Dr. Mills shared. What seemed more harmful for Dr. Stith was being defined by the lines of the divide instead of being able to establish her own unique position. In a positive way, Dr. Stith shared how most of time when she connects with other professionals, she can dialogue

with them and at least have them listen to her perspective. Early on in her career she shared an experience of when:

My master's thesis was not on violence, but it was on . . . at home mothers and working mothers and daycare centers. I was doing an observational study and looking at mother infant interactions, and also infant development. . . I had a baby, little ones, and they were in daycare. So, I was interested in those issues, and I was invited to speak at the Women's Center on campus about that research because it had to do with women. And I was just really roundly criticized because some of these folks at the women center said 'You should never do research that asks the question that might put the Women's Movement back.' So, if for instance, my studies found that babies did so much better when raised by at home mothers than they did at the home daycare, then the implication from that would be 'We ought to be staying home.' So they said I should never do research where the implication of the research could . . . suggest something that would be putting women back. And it was shocking to me because as a mother, who has my baby in daycare, and as a daycare provider, I thought if we found there was a problem with what was going on in home daycare or, mother-infant interactions then we need to enhance that. As mothers, we would need to know that so that we could do a better job of interacting when we are around, we might need better training as daycare providers . . . Whereas lack of information, I don't see how that would be helpful to women.

In terms of criticism of her work in the IPV field, much of it has been more indirect, while occupying a role in a professional context. She shared some examples, one was indirect in terms of hearing from another professional their experience and in another, she was sitting in a room while someone critiqued her perspective without directing the comment towards her.

Oh I've gotten a lot of criticism! . . . I was on a panel . . . and people were talking about this conference that was going to be going on . . . and 'those people were anti-feminists using to science to destroy everything that we know about domestic violence.' This was a direct statement and I was a keynote speaker at that conference. But I didn't even say that because . . . it wasn't the kind of thing that I was going to have a conversation about, an argument about . . . me talking about couples treatment, people talking about gender symmetry . . . nobody was really trying to destroy anything, just trying to broaden the lens and open up new ideas and new options to support and end violence. The whole issue is totally about

ending violence. Whether you're whatever camp. And then that conference that you heard about that . . . we did at Haifa where DeKeseredy and me and Michael Johnson and Murray Straus and a variety of other people were there from Israel. Anyway, they said 'on the right side of the table we have the family violence researchers and on the left side of the table we have the feminist researchers' and that was . . . I mean that was a wonderful, wonderful event but I was on the family violence side . . . I thought I was a feminist, but I had to either be a family violence researcher or a feminist researcher, you couldn't be a feminist researcher who looks at women as offenders or couples . . . that was really disturbing to me. . . I actually always thought I was a feminist who studied family violence.

This last statement by Dr. Stith affected me because it reflected some of the experiences that I have had and in fact, started me on the journey to this dissertation.

The other experience of direct criticism that Dr. Stith shared was highly emotional and occurred when she was at Virginia Tech.

This person who was a coordinator of domestic violence in the county, a new person came in town, and I wanted her to come and to meet us and a variety of other people and learn about what we were doing and she couldn't come so she came alone. And she was screaming at me. And my colleague Eric was in the room next door and he wondered if he needed to come in and rescue me. She was screaming at me. She wasn't even listening. She wouldn't listen to me. Most people, when I give talks, there's always a group of angry people who are going to pounce on, maybe that I'm not concerned about victim safety or something. But when they hear what I'm saying, and I talk about my work with victims and I talk about what I've seen. Then they recognize that there's a variety of different options and opportunities and possibilities within treatment, that I can understand both sides . . . that one woman was screaming at me . . . but I didn't take offense at it . . . she was just talking about the idea that 'you would ever work with couples was just wrong, I don't think you understand violence, have you ever had any experience?' She was just yelling at me and not listening to me talk about my own experiences and I wasn't offended by it. I was thinking this is kind of sad in a way that that people can't be open to listening to new ideas.

Dr. Stith shared that during that conference at Haifa, she and the other scholars:

Sat around in the evening a lot and people that came with one idea about couple's treatment in particular, left with recognizing well maybe there is some value in that for some people. When you listen to each other, people open up and really read some of the work that people have written.



Dr. Stith's experience with criticism surprised me given how controversial her work is. I wanted to know if her experience was related in her opinion to an aspect of her professional socialization or a feature of her personality and interpersonal manner.

I'm actually a middle child and I'm really good at negotiating. I don't like conflict, people think that's so funny that I study domestic violence and I don't like conflict. I'm able to see both sides of issues. I'm able to help people come to consensus. I'm a good listener. And I hear other people's perspectives. And I typically think that the work that DeKeseredy and others are doing, Jackie Campbell, are wonderful, important contributors to the field and I'm just adding something different. But I'm not in a battle against anybody so I think there is something about the style. There are a lot of people that come across so aggressively angry.

#### **“Society likes sound-bites”**

Dr. Stith described how both researchers and political groups use scholarly work at times in inflammatory ways. Particularly by taking the position that family conflict scholars are anti-feminists and feminist scholars are anti-science.

It seems like we're trying to become inflammatory and take a hugely strong position on one side or the other and what I think is . . . clear, thoughtful use of research to see, 'What can we learn.' And if you don't agree, there's research finding you have a problem with, let's think of ways to do the research in a different way so that you can be more comfortable with the findings, and so improve research rather than throw out research. I think we need to recognize that all of us that are in this field are doing this because we really want to end violence in families.

Dr. Stith expressed how much she appreciates the work of many feminist scholars. She discussed how nuanced most scholars work are in this area and how that nuance is overlooked in favor of sound bites and inflammatory responses.

Edward Gondolf had a new book that was printed . . . The Future of Batterer Programs Reassessing Evidence Based Practice. And while I don't agree with everything he says, he's really . . . looking at all the data, a little more carefully, and not, he's not throwing out the better programs but he's certainly got lots of reasons why most of the research has problems . . . but he's really saying we need

to move the field forward, looking at motivational interviewing, phases of change. Lots of different things that I wouldn't have expected him to be doing 10 years ago. And Don Dutton, in his review of this book says, "Too little, too late." But that's another one of those inflammatory responses . . . And I do think there are voices [with] more nuanced perspectives . . . You can take a sentence out of context that's said by one person but if you looked at their work in a larger perspective, you'd recognize they also are not saying that women are never violent, nor are they saying, they should be let off the hook. But we do like sound bites. Society likes sound bites. And so what is the sound bite that's going to be, 'Give us money for the shelter.' That would be that sound bite. So, that's the sound bite I'm pushing, even though I recognize it's broader than that, but that's where we get money.

### **“I have had my work taken out of context”**

The other aspect to this lack of nuance is related to political misuse of researchers work. Dr. Stith told me how she is contacted by anti-feminist men's rights groups who are deeply reactionary and conservative, asking for her support. Their political aims are highly contradictory to her own position and so the association of her work with their cause is concerning.

Oh, just the other day I got a phone call. 'Hi . . . I'm from the Tea Party movement and we are familiar with your article and I'd like to talk with you in more depth about that work.' I'm like, 'I don't think I'm responding to that phone call.' Then, I've also had emails come to me that my one statement out of one of my works is used out of context to basically justify ending the funding for the violence against women [movement] . . . I got my start in a shelter . . . shelters save lives. And so I'm totally supportive of the violence against women movement, even though I have research that says that women are also violent . . . I want to work with families so that both people end violence. But that has nothing to do with 'Don't fund the shelters.' That's a totally different issue. And I have had my work taken out of context and used by Father's rights groups, but I don't know who those people are.

In terms of correcting misrepresentations about her position, Dr. Stith shared:

And nobody is pro decriminalizing violence, saying it's not a crime to hit your wife, or saying if we have a shelter in Manhattan Kansas, with female victims, we need to have equal money spent on a male shelter . . . Right now, if there's a male victim in our community, the shelter does help him get support for housing, put them in a hotel, stuff like that. But we don't have enough male victims . . . it

would be a waste of the limited resources that we have to equalize it . . . Even though there's some data that, with situational violence, both men and women are fairly equal. But those aren't the people that need the services of the shelter. So, I think it's taking things out of context, using whatever you want to use. You know, like people say, 'Well, research can support everything, anything.' Especially if you take one sentence of a whole complex paper, you might think that supports something that is totally not accurate.

I asked Dr. Stith about how affiliations with publishing outlets and particular journals get become embedded in the divide, particularly with the recent development of the new journal *Partner Abuse*.

I am on the editorial board for John Hamel's journal, along with lots of other journals. I've been told that you really don't want to have your name on his editorial board. Because it labels you as being in one camp or the other, but I think he's got some good papers in that journal, and I publish in that journal, I've also published in *Violence Against Women and Family Violence* and *Interpersonal Violence*. . .they do tend to have more issues about male victims and so forth, there needs to be a place for those, for those papers also, is how I look at it.

#### **“We’re seeing some changes”**

I asked Dr. Stith about the state of the divide and where it is going, what needs to change and what does not along with the policies she would like to see implemented.

I think there're places where nothing has changed, and the division is still really strong. I think there are also places where maybe it's swung too far. . . I'm also very interested in the state standards for batterer intervention and in a 2008 paper I read that 85 percent say that you can't use couples treatment . . . there's some standards that haven't really changed much, but there are standards that are changing, and they're increasingly requiring risk assessments, they're increasingly looking at the work of people like Michael Johnson, and seeing that there are different types of violence, suggesting that possibly, offenders when they get in a group they might need to be carefully screened, and what kind of group they need. . . .So, we're seeing some changes.

Dr. Stith also critiqued some of the limitations of the Duluth Model and categorized it as limited to focusing on patriarchy, which is something I believe would be roundly

critiqued by the feminist scholars I interviewed as a misunderstanding of how the Duluth Model has changed and the complexity of its current conceptualization and delivery. However, given what Dr. Stith shared about her experience with being unfairly defined by sound-bites and willingness to listen, I believe she would be open to other scholars sharing the newest literature on the Duluth model and engaging in a conversation with her about it.

Dr. Stith described the need for more federal funding on the effectiveness of batterer intervention programs and process research, particularly if states are going to mandate particular programs. She also expressed the need for federal funding for domestic violence research generally and the importance of collaboration among scholars across the field.

I really think that it's a huge issue that we don't have more funding for domestic violence research. Because when I got funded for this NIH bid, there was a violence and traumatic stress branch at NIH and that's no longer there anymore. . . . And so, I would love to see researchers, empirical researchers, which is what I consider myself, working with folks in the community; much more collaborative research, where we're really trying to determine what are interventions that can make a difference . . . we really need some good research. And we really need it to be not isolated . . . [within] two camps of work, and we need to be working collaboratively. This department might be looking at qualitative and understanding the process, and maybe you'd be looking at quantitative research and a different kind of paradigm. But why aren't we just working together? What would help you to feel like this made a difference, and what will help you? We need a fairly significant amount of funding and collaborative work.

**“I feel so blessed that the work I’m doing can make a difference”**

Dr. Stith told me how doing research with an impact on peoples' lives has been deeply impactful for her and has been a source of support in continuing her work. This has connected back to her ultimate motivation for doing work from the very beginning.

I was in Queretaro Mexico, doing a training for a bunch of people about how to use the treatment model I've developed and then I got invited to go back. And I sat in on a group during one of their last sessions. And I speak Spanish enough to understand and they were talking about the changes in their relationships after having been in the program and I just had tears in my eyes because it was like, you could do research that might be of interest, or might learn something that might be of value, but I love that the research that I'm doing could directly help people figure out ways to not be in violent relationships, or to reduce violence in their own relationships or respond differently to their partner . . . I started off at the crisis center working with victims but I really wanted to do it in a broader way, looking, understanding more about the causes, looking at risk factors and intervention and make a difference.

### **Final thoughts**

In conclusion of my interviews with Dr. Stith I reflected on how her voice added an important and differentiated thread to my understanding of the debate as a whole. She is a feminist who researches family conflict. She sits on the board of a journal that is known for promoting a gender-symmetrical approach to IPV while also asserting her support for the shelter-movement and her position that while there perpetrators who are women, most victims of chronic and severe IPV in need of shelters are women. Dr. Stith dislikes the boundaries of the divide because it defines her in ways that are inaccurate and unfair. Her work is broken into sound-bites and used out of context to support highly conservative political groups that have strong reactionary and patriarchal elements with which she deeply disagrees. However, she clearly has opinions about the limited value of the Duluth model and experiences of being critiqued by feminist scholars that positioned her as working against the gains of the battered women's movement and feminist

scholarship. I believe I most strongly resonated with Dr. Stith when she shared her unqualified appreciation for the work of noted feminist scholars and a vision of a field where each scholar's work adds to a more holistic scientific understanding of IPV. I also found it so interesting that once again Murray Straus's name came up, which simply reflected to me the profound influence he has had in this area, for both those who agree and those who disagree with him. As I move into the next section of analyzing more fully the findings from my interviews, I leave these chapters capturing the stories of my participants with a profound appreciation for who they are, what they contribute and their willingness to guide me in my professional journey.

## Section IV

## **Chapter 15:**

### **Findings**



Given the richness and depth of the interviews, there was an overwhelming amount of material that I could have analyzed and compared across participants. The focused nature of my dissertation gave some direction as to the types of comparisons that would be most helpful, interesting or compelling. As discussed in the chapter on protocol, following a within-participant analysis, I then took the thematic codes I created for each participant and compared them against one another. I searched for ideas that matched my interpretations of the disciplinary matrix and exemplars of paradigms, meta-narratives and the different types of ante-narratives. As I have attempted to make explicit, the goal of this dissertation was not to fuel division. Whether this was because of my own experience of the division as unproductive or that I wanted to avoid inciting political, personal and professional controversy, or a bit of both, is unclear. I made choices in the material that I chose to present here and place in contrast with one another; choices that I believed represented a version of the division that most clearly reflected my perspective. I avoided placing participants in contrast to one another in ways that might be seen or felt as setting people up to feel attacked. Once again, I remind the reader that this presentation of the findings is my interpretation of the participants' voices, and while they hopefully represent some aspect of their reality, my aim is to not to achieve a full, true and accurate reflection of the dynamic and changing complexity of their perspectives. I hope to honor the voices of the participants who shared their stories with me but I do not mean to pretend that my presentation reflects in totality the fullness and richness of their perspective.

## **Disciplinary Matrix**

As previously discussed, Kuhn (1970) redefined his ideas of paradigm and divided it into disciplinary matrixes, which are the beliefs, values, and theories that define a scholarly community, and exemplars, which are the methods by which people become socialized into the disciplinary matrix (e.g. textbooks). Two themes that emerged related to the disciplinary matrix were: *Feminism, Activism & Politics* and *Stifling Innovation and Unproductive Dialogue*.

### **Feminism, activism, & politics.**

There was a range of beliefs about feminism, activism and politics across the participants. On one end, Dr. DeKeseredy shared his passion for the applied nature of his work:

I want to do something good for the community. That's really my concern. I hope my research, my theoretical work and my policy analysis has impact, real impact. And that's what I'm concerned about now. That's what I'm really concerned about.

For Dr. DeKeseredy, the applied nature of his work was connected to his conceptualization of feminism, feminist research and being a feminist scholar. This goes beyond an interpretation of feminism that means "equal men and equal women" to something bigger; using the privilege of research and scholarship to make women's lives better. Dr. Renzetti shared this idea of the importance of research having a real impact and the responsibility of researchers to actively engage with how their research is used. She said "I think that we have a responsibility to produce usable knowledge and that's what motivates me" and that "I think our work can make a real difference." With this impact comes the need for researchers to engage with communities, clarify their

intentions and build trust; an example of this was when her research on lesbian battering came out and some people misinterpreted and misrepresented that data. I saw both of these perspectives on one end of a spectrum about the role of research and the researcher in feminist scholarship.

In more the middle range views I saw Dr. Stith, Dr. Johnson and Dr. Mills. Both Dr. Stith and Dr. Johnson shared the idea that to not ask a research question or to disseminate a research result because of its potential misinterpretation is unproductive. Dr. Stith discussed in her interview being criticized for comparing the experience of children in daycare to children who stayed at home with their mothers, because of the potential backlash if evidence indicated that children of stay at home mothers did better. Dr. Johnson went further to say that when feminist scholars “take a dogmatic position that all violence in families can be understood through that feminist coercive control model, you’re going to get caught, it’s not true”, such positions are ultimately negative for feminist scholarship. Both Dr. Stith and Dr. Johnson talked about how family violence scholarship could be used to threaten funding for shelters, but they also both shared their belief that many of those threats were disconnected from reality and would be unsuccessful. Dr. Stith described the example of how any requests for equal funding for male victims of IPV in her college community would be met with first a lack of resources to meet that need and second, a lack of equivalent rates of male victims looking for such services. Dr. Johnson said “There are these occasional blips from the anti-feminist side, I don’t have a good handle on how seriously they’re taken.” In a connected idea, Dr. Stith talked about being telephoned and emailed by men’s rights groups with

reactionary, patriarchal political goals who seemed to think that she would be supportive of such efforts, when in reality, she is deeply supportive of the shelter movement and funding for victims.

Dr. Mills was similarly in that middle –range with Dr. Stith and Dr. Johnson in that she shared the idea that broadening scholarship, research and intervention to embrace a wider variety of etiologies and solutions to IPV, including family violence research, was more helpful for women. She was a little further away from Dr. Stith and Johnson in that she takes a radical feminist position and is more openly critical of feminist approaches that continue to place patriarchy as a central feature of IPV and focus exclusively on male perpetrators and female victims. The motivation behind her work is consistent with that shared by Dr. DeKeseredy, Dr. Renzetti, Dr. Stith and Dr. Johnson: To make a positive impact. I believe it was this belief and intention that sustained Dr. Mills in taking such a divergent position in the field, based on her belief and experience of the options available to IPV victims, in the face of often intense criticism. I would offer that I believe a similar belief has sustained Dr. DeKeseredy despite his experiences of being professionally and personally threatened. I believe it is also important to note that each of these scholars were forthcoming about claiming the title of feminist, and were passionate about creating research and scholarship that would positively impact the lives of women.

Dr. Felson is on the other end of the spectrum but not so far as perhaps some might believe. It is important to highlight the beliefs and values that Dr. Felson shared about equality and egalitarianism for women and men. It was clear that he held some

feminist beliefs while at the same time critiquing some feminist scholarship; as he termed it, “everyone is a feminist.” Dr. Felson was primarily concerned with what he termed activism, and “caring about the image of women” in spite of what the data is saying. I believe that Dr. Felson, Dr. Stith and Dr. Johnson would be in agreement that it is not productive to limit asking certain questions or disseminating certain results because of their potential misinterpretation. Dr. Felson went further though and labeled that practice as “corrupt.” I do not mean to imply that Dr. Renzetti or that Dr. DeKeseredy or other feminist scholars have committed this practice. I think it is a belief of those who are critical of feminist scholarship that scholar’s self-limit producing research that could negatively impact the lives of women. It is important to contextualize Dr. Felson’s position though; he explicitly stated that his is not an applied researcher. Unlike the other scholars, that is not the primary purpose of his work. Additionally, I believe many of his disagreements and differences with the other scholars are as much related to divisions in the field of sociology as they are particular to this divide. Each of the sociologists in this study (Dr. Felson, Dr. DeKeseredy, Dr. Renzetti and Dr. Johnson) talked about the emergence of more applied, critical, post-positivist, post-modern and mixed method research and theory in the field and large divisions between these new methods of scholarship and more traditional form of an empirical, positivist approach. It was clear to me from our conversations that this was a large part of his critique of feminism. He also had a similar experience to Dr. Stith about being approached by some men’s rights groups:

I was asked to speak on the telephone to a men’s group. And they were very upset about the feminists ignoring violence against men. And they were not very

happy with me. Because I was not sympathetic with their cause enough and they were men who had been hit by women and . . . felt they hadn't been treated fairly. And maybe they hadn't, I'm not denying that . . . women do get hit, the violence against women is more injurious and when the family violence people measure violence they include everything and includes lots of minor stuff that's probably, including all the trivial stuff. And they catch a lot of female fish along with the male fish by casting this broad net . . . it has some significance but it probably doesn't require arrest. And so I'm not as concerned about it as much as the family violence people.

While I shared this quote in the individual chapter about Dr. Felson, I believe it is important to highlight it again to point out that while Dr. Felson and Dr. DeKeseredy have some viewpoints that stand in direct contrast to one another, on other perspectives, they have strong similarities. The other point that Dr. Felson made that I believe is important to this section is his opinion that women in the United States are not oppressed and that the vision of historical patriarchal oppression presented by feminists, does not match his experience of his childhood and family and his impressions of society.

Embedded in some of the differences these scholars have, is what I view as a linear ante-narratives about how powerful and successful anti-feminist men's rights groups are and will be and how oppressed women in United States and in the Western world are; I discuss these further towards the end of this chapter when I share my analysis about ante-narratives.

### **Stifling innovation and unproductive dialogue**

The other aspect of the disciplinary matrix that I found in my analysis was related to how the participants conceptualized innovation and dialogue in the field. All participants agreed that historically there has been a stifling of productive dialogue and scholarly innovation. There were differences of opinion in how things stand today, with

some believing that things are worse, some that things are stagnate and some that things have gotten much better in recent years. What I thought was interesting was that there was also a spectrum of perspectives on what was the major pressure behind this negative state of affairs. From Dr. DeKeseredy's point-of-view, it was the family violence scholars, both their heavy focus on positivism and their use of personal attacks in the literature that had a strong influence. On the other side, Dr. Mills and Dr. Felson both discussed how academic and mainstream feminist scholars have stifled creativity through intense personal attacks and lack of openness to discordant or divergent opinion. In the middle were Dr. Stith, Dr. Johnson and Dr. Renzetti, who all shared their belief that it was the dichotomy itself, the either/ or nature of the divide that led to this state of unproductive dialogue and stifled innovation. This became particularly negative when attacks were personal.

I chose these two aspects of the disciplinary matrix to highlight in particular because I believe they reflect the spectrum of beliefs scholars have in the field well, even those who are labeled "family violence" or "feminist." In order for a group to be established as a paradigm, they must have their own unique disciplinary matrix. Given the diversity of opinion within and across the debate, I struggle with placing "family violence" and "feminist" scholars within their own disciplinary matrix. In my opinion, they remain, albeit often uncomfortably so, within the same disciplinary matrix. Based on my interpretation of Kuhn's work, if the struggle between these two perspectives was a paradigmatic one, the divisions in disciplinary matrix would be far more distinct versus the spectrum than they currently are.

## **Meta-narratives**

The next type of analysis I did was related to meta-narratives of the participants. I looked for themes that related to the participant's view of reality. In my analysis, there were three groups, those that felt that feminist theory reflected reality, those that felt that both perspectives reflected reality, and those that felt that mainstream or academic feminism did not reflect reality. Dr. DeKeseredy and Dr. Renzetti fell into the first group of feminist theory and feminist methodology as being the best match for accurately reflecting the world and its intersecting influences of power and privilege. As Dr. Renzetti stated: "people are going to have different truths depending on their social locations. And on how those locations intersect." Dr. Renzetti also described finding value and important information from certain types of family violence scholarship and so I believe her perspective remains firmly feminist, but that she found a way to use some family violence scholarship by viewing it through a feminist, intersectional prism. Dr. Stith and Dr. Johnson were more in the middle, finding truths from both feminist and family violence scholarship that were not accurately captured by any one perspective exclusively. Both were clear that anyone that stated that men were in need of equivalent shelter service as women for severe violence, were not seeing the world the same way that they were. Dr. Mills and Dr. Felson both stated that because of their personal experiences and scholarly exploration, mainstream and academic feminism did not reflect the reality of the world they experienced. They also both viewed mainstream and academic feminism as, at times, oppressive versus expansive, empowering, and



supportive, which is how I believe Dr. DeKeseredy, Dr. Renzetti and Dr. Johnson would describe it and how it has informed their lives.

### **Linear ante-narratives**

As mentioned in the findings about the disciplinary matrix, there were two linear ante-narratives that seem to have a powerful influence on the disciplinary matrix and the meta-narratives of the participants. Ante-narratives as Boje (2001, 2011) describe them, are narratives that create a bet on an anticipated future outcome. Linear ante-narratives are straightforward, A happens, and then B. What I found in my analysis were really four ante-narratives, but two of each that were in opposition to each other. The first set was the linear ante-narrative that *women, in the Western world, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are oppressed* versus the ante-narrative that *women, but in particular privileged women, are not oppressed*. The second set was the linear ante-narrative that *anti-feminist men's rights groups are a real and growing threat* versus *anti-feminist men's rights groups represent a mostly negligible threat and will be ultimately unsuccessful*. In the first set, Dr. Felson reported his belief that current conditions of women in North American do not reflect the oppressive conditions that gave rise to the feminist movement in the 1960s. He added that gender relations during the 1940s and 1950s are not represented accurately in his opinion by feminist analysis. In his experience, women were teachers, social workers, academics and held significant power in the household. Dr. Mills shared her perspective that the feminist movement was shaped by the context of the 1960s, and that context has dramatically shifted, particularly for some women, but mainstream feminism has not shifted with it. However, she would agree with a statement that women *are* oppressed in

the United States, but that oppression looks differently depending on social-location. On the other side, is the perspective that there is still much work to be done to help women combat oppression in the U.S., which I believe would be the position most reflected by Dr. DeKeseredy, Dr. Renzetti, and Dr. Johnson. If the linear ante-narrative is, '*women are not oppressed*' (with the caveats of privileged women in the United States and other Western countries), that creates a bet on the future that women (particularly those with privilege) do not need help combating oppression in the form of broad-based social policy. If the ante-narrative is '*women are still oppressed*' then that creates a bet on the future that women need more and different action to help create the conditions for more equality, opportunity, egalitarianism and choice. This may include a demand for greater social intervention to accomplish that goal. Having these two ante-narratives in opposition creates tension and connects directly to interpretations of the role of oppression in IPV. I initially interpreted that Dr. Mills shared Dr. Felson's perspective but she corrected me to say that she in fact is far closer to a middle-range perspective, that some privileged women in Western countries experience IPV differently due to their privilege. I believe she would join Dr. Stith in a third ante-narrative that provides a compromise, i.e., *some women are oppressed*. I say this because of Dr. Stith's perspective on anti-essentialist forms of feminism while also supporting the shelter movement and supports for victims. This type of ante-narrative would create a bet on the future that demands some broad social action while also creating opportunities for flexible responses and micro-level interventions. I also believe that this tension goes far beyond the divide in the field, to controversies between what many describe as second

wave feminism and contemporary or third wave feminism (as I discussed in a previous chapter). The state of oppression for privileged women in the West is a subject of intense debate in the broader culture. The influence of that broader controversy as it relates to the divide is unsurprising, but in my perspective, clarifying and informative.

The other set of linear ante-narratives relates to how powerful and how effective anti-feminist men's rights groups will be. This would be reflected in one linear ante-narrative that says *anti-feminist men's rights groups are a real threat to the gains of the battered women's movement and women's safety* while an opposing linear ante-narrative would say *anti-feminist men's rights groups are not a serious or credible threat to the gains of the battered women's movement and women's safety*. I believe this difference in linear ante-narrative captures some of the reasons for the discrepancy in position between Dr. DeKeseredy and Dr. Johnson. Dr. DeKeseredy's does believe that anti-feminist backlash is a real threat, while I do not believe that Dr. Johnson does. If one has the ante-narrative that these groups pose an important threat, then that creates a mandate in the future to try to work against these groups. This position puts more pressure on the family violence scholars to dispel and correct myths about their work. If one has the ante-narrative that these groups do not pose a real or credible threat, and then there is less of a mandate to try to work against them; they are not worth the time or attention because their impact will be negligible. If family violence scholars choose to work against them politically or not becomes less important because these groups are not to be taken seriously. There is also a foundational idea to both these linear ante-narratives about how vulnerable the gains of the feminist movement are to this backlash. Is feminism, rights for

victims, and funding for shelters such an ubiquitous part of our culture that there is no going back, or are these ideas that are still so new, fragile and vulnerable that with enough pressure, we would return to the privatization of IPV within the home? If you have a linear ante-narrative that these gains are vulnerable, then these groups are more powerful and serious, if your linear ante-narrative is that these gains are here-to-stay, than these groups are less credible.

### **Spiral ante-narratives**

The final area of analysis that I conducted related to what I viewed as spiral ante-narratives. This type of ante-narrative was difficult for me to conceptualize except to picture it as a spiral, with ante-narratives that are more limiting closer to the funnel of the spiral, with ante-narratives that are more open, closer to the spiral's rim. At the funnel of the spiral are the narratives of Dr. Felson and Dr. DeKeseredy. Dr. Felson represents narratives that say academic feminism is in opposition to science, while Dr. DeKeseredy represents narratives that say family violence scholars are anti-feminist and do anti-feminist research. When I look at only these two narratives, the spiral can start to look more like a vortex. As Boje (2001, 2011) describes, a spiral ante-narrative can turn into a vortex when the range of narratives becomes extremely limited. When you look at these two narratives side by side, the idea of a clash of paradigms as described by Winstock (2011, 2013) begins to look like an accurate representation of what is happening in the divide. In many ways these narratives fuel and drive each other because they are in opposition. If all I look at are these two perspectives together, I feel that I must choose one. I feel am limited to only choosing between these two perspectives, which is what a

vortex is all about. However, that is only part of the story. Add back into the spiral the narrative of Dr. Renzetti that accurately reflecting women's lives requires a variety of intersectional, interdisciplinary approaches. Add back in the narrative of Dr. Mills that it is a radical feminist perspective that asks demanding and critical questions of mainstream feminism and not anti-feminist rhetoric. Add back in the narrative of Dr. Johnson that to say either side is wrong is to ignore the data. Finally, add back in the narrative of Dr. Stith that both sides have value. Once the diversity of voices are put back into the conversation, the ante-narrative looks and feels more like a spiral and no longer looks and feels like a vortex. With a spiral that represents a greater diversity of voices, I feel that I have choices along a continuum of what perspective to take or to define as my own. I feel I can make a choice of narrative that adds to the spiral, widening the rim, expanding the options of what the future could be in the field of IPV. I believe that exclusively focusing on the more intensely dichotomous narratives in the debate creates an ante-narrative vortex. Such a vortex creates a vision of the field that is divided by paradigm, leading to a crisis and one perspective to win and the other to lose. A field that looks more like a spiral of narratives, with a range of potential positions, creates a future where debate and conversation continues.

## **Chapter 16:**

### **Discussion**

Central to any debate is how we view what is real and what we view as important. In reflection of my post-modern perspective, I typically believe that I can co-exist with others who share different perspectives from me. Many times these multiple realities can peacefully co-exist; these ontological differences have little impact on our ability to move forward in the shared human experience. In the field of IPV, these differences can and do have an impact and create difficulty in finding consensus on how exactly we should move forward.

I deeply disagree with anyone who asserts that gender is not a central and defining characteristic of our experience in the world. As Budig (2004) described:

In the world's wealthiest nation, the US, the vast majority of the poor are women and children. Divorce leaves American women and children with severely reduced standards of living. In contrast to other Westernized nations like France, Sweden, or Denmark, the majority of working women in the US are without maternity leave and many women's jobs lack health insurance for themselves or their families (Clawson and Gerstel, 2002). Unlike many European countries, child-care is expensive and quality care is difficult to find in the US. Furthermore, child-care workers, mostly women, are among the lowest paid-workers in the American economy. One important cause of these problems is the continued devaluation of work traditionally assigned to women. . . In addition to being paid poorly for their work, women often find their employers also do not value women's commitments to their families . . . It is not sufficient to grant women equal access to the male playing fields of paid work and politics. For real gender equality, individual men must play a greater role in the domestic sphere, just as women share in the burden of financially supporting the family. Workplaces must change to accommodate the family obligations of employees. No longer can firms assume each worker has a wife at home to free the worker from these obligations (431-432).

I believe this is an accurate reflection of the tensions that some women experience in the United States. I want to emphasize that I use the word *some* and not *all*. While the above quote coincides with my experience of the world, many women and men experience it differently and would not agree with that perspective. Many feminists (including myself)

continue to repeat the phrase that men are equally marginalized by oppressive gender socialization and expectations but this is something overlooked by many critics of feminism. I believe that both women and men are oppressed by restrictive gender ideology, just as all of us are oppressed by racist, classist and heterosexist/ homophobic structures and systems. However, those impacts are experienced differently depending on a person's socio-political-position, those who are more vulnerable are typically those who are the oppressed group and tend to experience more of the overtly violent, dangerous and otherwise detrimental effects of oppressive systems. I believe gender, sexism and patriarchy are important factors to consider when addressing the health and well-being of both women and men. In my opinion, perpetrator treatment programs and interventions for IPV should go beyond ending violence and move toward the humanistic goals of self-actualization, greater fulfillment, health, happiness and relational connection for both women and men. To that goal, examination of gender role socialization and patriarchy should be a part of any intervention. My clinical orientation makes me believe that most humans want to be healthy, happy, and safe; if we provide the resources and pathways to make that achievable, most human beings will make every effort to achieve that state for themselves and those they love.

There is also an 'elephant in the room' in terms of how much severe violence and sexual assault is committed by male perpetrators. I personally have never read any account of a group of women committing acts of gang-rape. Accounts in recent news of long-term kidnapping, rape and torture of girls and women involve a male perpetrator and sometimes a female accomplice who aided in the crime but did not participate directly in



the more horrific aspects of it. The stories of groups of male perpetrators in India, who assaulted, raped and murdered women using public transit. The insurgency group of male rebels in Nigeria, Boko Haram, abducted over 200 girls in Nigeria and is currently holding them hostage as slaves. I am unaware of any predominantly female militarized groups in that world that use violence, both physical and sexual, to maintain or assert political power and control. I am aware of several such groups that are predominantly male. I understand that these are extreme and sensationalist examples of male violence. A recent case emerged in the news of the female soccer player Hope Solo assaulting and threatening her nephew with a weapon, so there are certainly examples of female perpetration in the media. However, when I look at the issue globally, I see women denied the right to safety, to education, to reproductive rights. I see girls undergoing genital mutilation or risk rejection from their communities. I see girls and women who are raped or who choose to have sex outside of marriage subject to murder on the basis of family honor. I feel privileged to live in a society that supports by law my right to make choices with my own body and has made it a crime for my husband or father to physically harm me. I have had access to every educational opportunity; I do not feel oppressed in my role within my family or in my household. I feel that I have choices. I realize that my experience is not the dominant one for most women on this planet. Additionally, even with my choices and my privilege, do I feel safe walking down the street? Many times I do not. If I see a group of men approaching me, do I see if there are dark alleys and do I cross the street to avoid them? Yes. Is my experience of the world shaped by the fear of male violence against me? For me, there is no moving beyond

feminism. I would be terrified for myself and the other men and women I love to live in a post-feminist world. As bell hooks wrote:

Imagine living in a world where there is no domination, where females and males are not alike or even always equal, but where a vision of mutuality is the ethos shaping our interaction. Imagine living in a world where we can all be who we are, a world of peace and possibility. Feminist revolution alone will not create such a world; we need to end racism, class elitism, imperialism. But it will make it possible for us to be fully self-actualized females and males able to create beloved community, to live together, realizing our dreams of freedom and justice, living the truth that we are all “created equal”. Come closer. See how feminism can touch and change your life and all our lives. Come closer and know firsthand what feminist movement is all about. Come closer and you will see: feminism is for everybody (p.x).

There is only finding new forms of feminism that match the dynamic reality of our complex and ever-changing lives. I see that as including in this moment in time a growing reflection of the needs of female perpetrators and male victims and an increased expansion of how to address IPV that better meet the needs of those victimized and also serves to help perpetrators as well as provide accountability. The criminal justice system is a difficult and perhaps impossible medium for providing both accountability and avenues towards health and healing and more options are needed. There is also a desperate need for more in-depth research into how sexual perpetration and IPV fit together. Most of the personal accounts I have read about IPV include forms of sexual violence and for reasons I am still unclear about, some literature seem to consider sexual violence and IPV as separate phenomena. For example, a colleague in my department has done extensive work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with couples where husbands perpetrated rape against their wives, within a larger social context where sexual violence against women has been used as a tactic of war. Each situation is complex,

intimate and unique but what is clear to me is that patriarchy, sexual violence and IPV are entirely connected for these couples and to disconnect them would not make sense. As a feminist, I believe we must examine social forces and influences on IPV, including sexism, patriarchy and misogyny but also racism and poverty and other intersecting forms of oppression. As a clinician, I believe we can address those social forces along with more internal, family and community factors to help those who have perpetrated and those who have experienced IPV to lead better, healthier and happier lives free from violence. As an affirmative post-modernist who embraces critical theory approaches, I believe all systems and structures that maintain oppression must be questioned, particularly when those same systems are being named as ways to create justice and healing. Finally, as a post-positivist I believe we can continue to advance science and the scholarly conversation to work towards dramatically decreasing IPV.

Differences in perspective and the state of the field of IPV can be interpreted in a variety of ways. My interpretation and perspective is just one way of looking at the conversation. In the following section I highlight some of the alternative interpretations that I have researched and explored that I believe could be helpful in guiding further exploration about divisions in the field.

### **Heuristics and biases**

The study of heuristics and biases is essentially the study of human judgment, in all of its flaws and quirks. It is a field that has grown rapidly since the 1960s, which started with the idea that humans calculate odds in making decisions. Empirical evidence quickly demonstrated that humans are not entirely rational in their decision making. What

has emerged is the theory of bounded rationality, that in cases of limited information and the limited processing capabilities of the human brain, we use other techniques called heuristics to make intuitive judgments. Some of the common heuristics used are “availability, representativeness, and anchoring and adjustment (Gilovich & Griffen, 2002, p.3).” Availability is how many other examples you can bring to mind of a phenomena in question, representativeness is how representative a phenomena is to the examples you can bring to mind and anchoring and adjustment are other data used as markers to make your best guess related to the phenomena. Because each heuristic is a technique based on previous learning, there is always room for error; this room for error is described as a bias (Gilovich & Griffen, 2002). Heuristics and biases contribute to intergroup and interpersonal conflicts.

When different people are subject to the influence of different biases, they are bound to think and to feel differently about issues. And people who disagree with each other- indeed, even people who are reasonably like minded but attach different priorities to the problems feel they should be addressed or the actions they feel should be taken- are apt to frustrate each other’s efforts and ambitions. There is, however, a second way in which biases fuel enmity that is less direct, but not less important. People and groups who disagree about matters of mutual concern not only interact in conflictual ways; they also interpret, and frequently misinterpret, each other’s words and deeds (Pronin, Puccio, & Ross, 2004, p.636).

This line of theory and research suggests that we come into situations with our minds made up about our perspective and when we see evidence, we will rationalize that evidence to fit our perspective. Arguments that support our position are accepted uncritically while arguments that support the other’s position are dissected. Pronin, Puccio, & Ross (2004) suggested that “such biased processing of information fosters harsh evaluations of individuals on the other side whose perceptions and arguments, in

the eyes of the opposing partisan, appear biased and self-serving (p. 637).” Dissonance research offers that those individuals who in the past made a “prior commitment, personal sacrifice, and perseverance in the face of earlier temptations to abandon a cause (p.637)” are those with the greatest barriers to dispute resolution. Reactive devaluation is another area that erects a potential barrier to dispute resolution in that offers of compromise are negatively evaluated if they come from the other side without regard to the content of the proposal. This connects to the experience of the status of a proposal during negotiations, with one side responding positively to an idea that has not been proposed, but that once it is “on the table, the party receiving the proposal responds coolly, complaining that the proposed terms offer too little or come too late- a response that induces distrust and denunciation from the party offering it, thus further heightening the cycle of ill-will and intransigence (p. 639).

When others disagree with our perspective we tend to put them into one of three categories. Category one is that the other group is looking at different information and that simply by pooling resources, an agreement could be reached. The second category is that the other group may be “lazy, irrational, or otherwise unable or unwilling to proceed in a normative fashion from objective evidence to reasonable conclusions (p. 647).” The third category believes that the other group is biased by “ideology, self-interest, or other distorting influence (p. 647).” I believe some people in the divide have fallen into this category, particularly some of the louder voices in the family violence world who view feminist research as a vast conspiracy. Another interesting idea in this subset of research is the hostile media effect, which is the experience of viewing identical media and

interpreting it as being hostile against oneself and favoring the other side. This phenomenon also translates to neutral third party mediators who attempt to assist in resolving conflict. False polarization is about how each of the various social psychological features build into:

an overestimation of the relevant construal gap between the modal views of the two sides and an underestimation of the amount of common ground that could serve as a basis for conciliation and constructive action . . . this inaccurate and overly pessimistic assessment of differences in views becomes especially difficult to reverse when pessimism about the possibility of finding common ground makes the antagonists reluctant to engage in the type of frank dialogue that could reveal common interests and beliefs (p. 641).

Adding to the intransigence of a particular divide, is polarity between those who choose to remain silent and those who choose to speak out.

During contentious discussions, many individuals choose to remain silent, and thereby leave misperceptions intact; those who do not remain silent generally hesitate to reveal any ambivalence in their beliefs. When addressing peers who seem to be on the other side of the issue, partisans seek mainly to defend their position rather than share doubts or complexities in their beliefs, lest their “concessions” give their adversaries “ammunition.” When speaking with individuals whom they perceive to be on their own side, they similarly hesitate to reveal their doubts or appreciation for valid arguments on the other side, in this case, for fear that such ambivalence will be disapproved of by their peers, whom they (erroneously) assume to be fully resolved and free from ambivalence about the matter (p. 652).

This type of experience can make sitting down between opposing perspectives in an effort to increase constructive dialogue, actually counter-productive and contribute to further extremity and false polarization bias. The third party effect adds to false polarization in that when information emerges that seems negative and inappropriate, one group will assume the other group is more likely to consume this information uncritically, particularly if they have a “vested interest in accepting such a message” (p. 663). We tend

to judge others as being more self-serving and less rational and ourselves as more altruistically motivated and more rational. This leads to a difficult state of affairs when dealing with two groups with different perspectives, when many heuristics and biases may contribute to further polarization.

### **Broader discourses related to feminism and politics**

I have addressed in various ways that much of the discourse about feminism and politics are related in my opinion to broader conversations about feminism in society, in academia and the political nature of the academy. In Messer-Davidow's *Disciplining Feminism: From Social Activism to Academic Discourse*, she described how the roots of sociology conflicted with the development of feminist and critical thought.

The founding fathers instilled at the core of sociology what Dorothy Smith describes as convention-structured objectivity practices. The conventions required sociologists to recast multivalent human activities as nominalized constructs, such as "depression" and "family violence," and then to generate data through such methods as interviews, surveys, and opinion polls . . . Scientization worked together with gender ideology to reorganize the discipline. With the rise of the research university at the turn of the century, the feminized subfields of home economics and social services were scuttled; other subfields, such as social settlements, sex roles, marriage and the family, were devalued; and sociologists began appropriating the large-scale surveys conducted by federal and state bureaus . . . Sociology, it would appear, got caught in a double bind that started when it took on that profitable survey research: as a scientific discipline it needed to maintain a unified core purged of everyday discourse, but as a public profession it needed to put its knowledge to work in everyday arenas (p.36-37).

What I find fascinating about the above quote is that my area of Couple and Family Therapy and Family Social Science, which grew out of a Home Ecology/Home Economics history, is one of these excised areas of the discipline of sociology. Messer-Davidow (2002) outlined how this created a conflict between the esoteric information produced by sociologists about battering and the knowledge and experiences of the

people working with victims and perpetrators and the lived experiences of those who went through it. She detailed the history of feminists in academia, battling overt and covert sex discrimination; the hiring of more males at more prestigious universities and the grants, publications and awards they then achieve, leading to a recursive cycle of discrimination. Messer-Davidow (2002) documented the growing field of women's studies and the challenge of academic feminism in defining itself as an "intellectual program in the academy" versus "an activist-training project in society (p. 88); and the assumption that "feminists could not reconcile the academy's objective of producing and inculcating scholarly knowledge with the movement's objective of making social change (p. 88). In 1969, the Women's Caucus of the American Sociological Association (ASA) made its debut in the same year that the Caucus of Black Sociologists, the Radical Caucus, the Chicano Sociologists Caucus and the Sociologists' Gay Caucus also gained recognition. At the ASA conference that year, the Women's Caucus, the Radical Women's Caucus and the Berkeley Women's Sociology Caucus combined for a meeting where female sociologists shared their experiences of sexism in a public forum. Several changes emerged in the years to come with the establishment of a standing Committee on the Status of Women in Sociology and the creation of a new division on Sex and Gender. Through the years, feminism became institutionalized in academia, intersecting and contrasting with a growing New Conservative movement in the United States in the 1980s and the 1990s. Messer-Davidow (2002) called for the re-engagement of feminist academics and progressive scholars to use the intellectual enterprise for promoting a



liberal, progressive political agenda and thereby reconnecting feminists with their social activist roots.

The context of academia and greater politics is an area that also informs this conversation. In *The Still Divided Academy: How Competing Visions of Power, Politics, and Diversity Complicate the Mission of Higher Education*, Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, & Mathew Woessner (2011) described the political state of the United States University system just prior to 9/11. They collected data from a large, random, nationally representative sample of faculty and students from colleges across the country and contextualized this within an historical analysis of the United State's academic system. Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, & Woessner (2011) described the impact that the 1950's McCarthy hearings and the 1960s and 1970s Vietnam War protests had on the University system. The McCarthy era hinged on the right of professors to academic freedom while the Vietnam War protests focused on the right of students to academic freedom. They described the McCarthy era as an attack from the outside while the Vietnam War protests were an attack from within. Following 9/11, radical scholars espousing anti-war and what some viewed as anti-American rhetoric, were highly criticized. The Students for Academic Freedom was founded in 2003 to protect students with differing political and religious perspectives from discrimination, particularly students with more conservative view points. Based on the results of the survey, the majority of professors in the United States University system identified themselves as Democratic and they tend to take more liberal positions on political issues. This bias is at its most extreme in the social sciences and humanities, resulting in accusations that Universities are sites of political

indoctrination for the left. On a variety of political issues, United States professors are more left-leaning than the general public, with a greater proportion supporting a woman's right to choose an abortion, supporting homosexual lifestyles and supporting cohabitation of unmarried couples. Both Democrat and Republican professors tend to hold more liberal viewpoints than members of their party in the general public.

Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, & Woessner (2011) described how there is often a "chasm between academic discourse and public sentiment (p. 64)." The discourse within academia is often a lightning rod for wars happening in the broader culture; this is particularly true during times when society is experiencing more intense division.

According to Ladd and Lipset (1975), what made the Vietnam and McCarthy years especially problematic for academics is that these periods were marked by "deep tensions and conflicts in the polity." This especially troublesome for those who discuss sensitive social issues as a matter of their profession- social scientists- and are hence vulnerable to criticism for the positions they take. The period following 9/11 is similar to earlier eras in that political turmoil and disagreement served to reveal rather than to create a division between the intellectual elite and the mass public. The North American Academic Survey Study (NAASS), conducted two years before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, reveals that even in less tumultuous times, academics are consistently at odds with the rest of the nation on a wide variety of policy issues (p. 66).

One of the reasons this is exacerbated is that the fields that are most likely to have scholars engaging in public discourse around politics and social policy are the social sciences, which are the more left leaning disciplines. While the majority of academics, even those who self-identify as Republicans and moderates, have more liberal positions on a variety of issues, it may appear that academia is even more biased towards the left than it actually is because of those who engage in public discourse. Younger professors

actually hold more liberal positions than older faculty on several issues but are more likely to identify as moderates instead of as liberals.

Another angle to this conversation is whether liberalism is rewarded in academia and is a requirement to advancing through the professional ranks. The other question is whether more conservative scholars are pushed out of academia or whether they self-select and remove themselves from the pool. Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, & Woessner (2011) found mixed results from their survey and broader analysis. Scholars from more prestigious schools were more liberal on social issues but there was little difference between scholars at different tiers on economic issues. More productive scholars were more liberal on social issues but were more conservative on other non-social issues. Productivity was defined as the number of publications over the past five years. One area that this did not hold true was related to racism, “even controlling for race, sex, and sexual orientation, the least productive professors are still more likely to characterize America as a racist society (p. 90).” Women were more liberal overall than their male counterparts in academia:

. . . low-publishing women are still more liberal than high-publishing men. This supports our earlier claim that women will have a liberalizing effect on the academy, and it appears that this would happen across a range of institutions, regardless of their demands for scholarship (p. 92).

Perhaps counter-intuitively, the relationship between liberalism on social issues and success in publishing holds the strongest in the natural sciences. More success in publishing was the strongest explanation of variance for placement at a prestigious university. However, few academics complained that they have been the victim of

ideological discrimination and the few that did, were Republicans and Democrats in equal numbers.

Some of the most recent controversy between the broader culture and academia relates to political correctness and freedom of speech. As college campuses have sought to create climates that challenge discrimination, critics have countered that these efforts have a chilling effect on freedom of speech and intellectual creativity. This coalesced with a post 9/11 climate where academics suggested that “patriotic correctness” (p. 164), was creating a context where any speech interpreted as critical of the government was swiftly shut-down.

While both sides in the political culture wars claim that the other side routinely violates academic freedom and represses free debate, there is a noticeable difference in their claims. Based on the examples they cite, it appears that one’s perception as to the source of the threat differs according to political ideology. As the minority group within the academic community, conservatives perceive that the threat to academic freedom comes from within the university itself . . . As the majority group in academia, liberals perceive relatively little threat from their conservative colleagues. Yet, as the minority group in the larger society, they perceive a threat from hostile external critics, citing examples of intrusion from the government, the media, and the public (p.164-165).

Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, & Woessner (2011) pondered how anyone could view academia as conservative given their results, but they also mention that “perception is relative (p.189).” They shared that those who are considered to be on the far left in the academy may feel that their campus environments or the broader university system is more conservative. They cited in particular the concerns voiced by some feminist scholars that:

continue to charge that the academy is hostile to feminist scholarship. Hart(2006) argues that the academy is “entrenched in the power of patriarchy.” The author reviews the major journals in higher education and concludes that despite the

influx of women into the academy, “academic scholarship has changed very little. There is a paucity of explicitly feminist scholarship in the journals under investigation.” In *Anti-Feminism in the Academy* (Clark et al., 1996), a number of authors outline what they perceive to be a backlash against feminist thought within the academy, affecting scholarship, teaching, and hiring decisions (also see Superson and Cudd, 2002). Hart observes that the feminist scholarship that does get published tends to be “liberal feminism,” which she regards as a traditional, mainstream form of feminism. In calling for a wider acceptance of more radical feminism, Hart demonstrates that there are competing pressures on the academy. At the same time that conservatives criticize the academy for being left of center, which the survey data supports, those who are even farther to the left claim that the academy is not open to their ideas. As such, perceptions of political solidarity vary . . . it is this perception of isolation that stifles discourse on college campuses (p. 189).

I found a broader political analysis about academia to be a helpful context in which to place the specific divide in the field of IPV. Throughout the interviews with participants, themes related to politics and broader social action emerged. From the beginning of the divide, with the publication of Steinmetz’s *The Battered Husband*, was the argument that family violence researchers were disconnected from what was really happening on the ground with victims and battered women’s shelters and that their work would be co-opted by conservative and patriarchal political groups. The cycle has turned and more recently some feminists are accused of being out of touch with the reality of how women use violence, the experience of male victims and the limitations and missteps of the existing systems of justice and behavioral health intervention. There is also the implication that some feminists are marginalized because of their more radical beliefs and some family violence scholars are accused of holding conservative political positions. It cannot be ignored that the divide in the field is happening within a broader cultural and social framework. The post 9/11 United States, questions about the disconnected liberalism of academia, debates in the broader culture about what feminism means and the perception

that academia discriminates against right-leaning political positions, seem important to consider. How much of the current state of the divide is pushed and pulled by these broader conversations about academic knowledge and the broader culture? How much of the current divide is impacted by the differing ideologies of political groups? On one side are the groups that advocate for feminist-informed social policy and on the other, are the groups who advocate for a gender-neutral application of policy, that the state has gone too far in redressing sexism and that in fact, men are now starting to be discriminated against. In my opinion, these influences cannot be ignored and I believe they enhance the division as opposed to having either a neutral or more a unifying influence. I believe the division would exist regardless of this political and cultural context, but these forces make dialogue more difficult, problematic and weighted with consequence.

### **The personal is the professional**

Ultimately this dissertation has been an exploration of my personal and professional position that the divide in the field of IPV is not as dichotomous and filled with animosity as it sometimes appears. I wanted to find my place within both feminist and family violence perspectives by hearing the stories of the scholars whose work continues to transform the landscape of IPV. I sought to explore nuances of the divisions and the potential angles that can offer enlightenment or at least a novel way of looking at the issue. However, I am a couple and family therapist. I believe that relationships are the heart of the human experience. When I look at the divide through the lens of history and through the narratives of the participants who shared their stories, I see relationships formed and I see relationships broken. As scholars we pour ourselves into our work, it is

an extension of ourselves and represents many of our deepest values and beliefs about the world.

There are ways that the academy socializes us to the norm of what healthy and constructive criticism is. We develop the ability to embrace a constructive critique for the gift of what it is, a way to make our work and ultimately our thinking, writing and scholarship, better. When voices in this divide publish critiques that attack people in globally negative and personal ways, I question how that can be considered within the bounds of healthy constructive criticism. What is unproductive in couple and family therapy is similarly unproductive in professional relationships and scholarly discourse. To imply or to directly say “I do not respect your theoretical framework, your research or you; I think you are a fraud, unethical, a bad scholar and a bad person who is helping to ruin peoples’ lives,” leaves no room for the other person to respond in a way that moves the conversation forward. Ending the conversation, fighting back or agreeing is the only option for someone in that dialogue.

The experiences that some of the participants in my dissertation have been through disturbs me. It goes beyond being professionally appropriate, which means treating our fellow human beings with respect and dignity. I am left with hope that, while the divide continues, there can be a dialogue that is more constructive and relational. That is ultimately what I am seeking. I believe a social-psychological phenomenon has occurred that has created the image that the divide is more polar and dichotomous than it is. In an effort to address this, I would also like to charge my fellow scholars, editors, conference presenters and organizers, to maintain a higher standard for what we see as

appropriate scholarly discourse. Let us pay attention to what is happening in the broader culture and how that may be influencing how we communicate our positions and strive to treat each other with greater respect and dignity. Does that mean we have to lose all individual character in our work? No, I do not believe so. I believe we can be humorous without sharply mocking, I believe we can be passionate without cutting. I sincerely believe we could do a better job of finding a balance that creates more room for constructive dialogue and debate. Just as in couple's therapy, I believe we must recognize when others make attempts to heal or move forward our relationships. If a scholar moves or changes her or his position through the years and has come to a place that is more nuanced, embracing some of the heuristics literature, we should try to accept that change instead of rejecting it because of a disagreement with her or his past positions. People change, positions change, the world changes, we need to be able to allow that to happen. Finally, I believe we would be best served by putting our words into action, by creating connections to local collaborative networks working to intervene with and to end IPV in our communities. In our privileged positions in academia, it is important to see how the wider community receives our work, interprets it and seeks to redress and correct misrepresentations when they happen. What is common among all the scholars in the field of IPV is that we agree that the violence needs to be addressed. Starting from that commonality, we then need to establish how we can dialogue about our irreconcilable differences in ways that continues the conversation versus ending it. My motivation for doing this work and representing a range of scholarly voices is to continue towards that goal.



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