Violence within marital dyads is a problem with deep historic roots in American culture. Although the family is idealized as a safe and loving haven from a cruel world, this ideal is often not achieved by many couples. This study develops an integrated theoretical perspective that combines feminist theory and social exchange theory to examine levels of domestic conflict.

A regression model was constructed to test the hypothesis that identification with fundamentalist Protestant religious and moral beliefs and the economic dependence of women were factors contributing to high levels of violent conflict within marital dyads.
The study analyzed data gathered from a probability sample of 3421 married couples. The dependent variable, marital conflict, was operationalized using a modified version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979). This variable was regressed on the independent variables: Protestant fundamentalist religiosity, religious affiliation, Protestant moral/family values, wives' economic dependency and the economic, social and demographic variables cited in the literature for their relationship to dyadic violence.

The study found that identification with a fundamentalist Protestant religious discourse was not significantly related to increased levels of dyadic violence. Agreement with the basic moral/family values of the fundamentalist Protestant discourse were significantly related to lower levels of conflict. Women's economic dependency was also significantly related to lower levels of conflict. These data support the conclusion that women who identify with conservative values and acquiesce to the male power structure by choosing a more traditional life-course of economic dependency are less likely to be involved in high conflict or violent marriages.
Spousal Violence: An Exploration of the Interrelationships of Fundamentalist Protestant Discourse, Women's Economic Dependency and Violent Conflict in Marital Relationships

by

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A THESIS submitted to Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies

Completed May 4, 1992 Commencement June 1992
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Date thesis is presented: May 4, 1992
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of individuals that I would like to thank for making this degree possible. First, I would like to extend my appreciation to the members of my committee for their help with this project.

A special thanks is also due Alan Acock, who provided me with the opportunity to use the National Survey of Family and Households data as well as providing me with the technical support necessary. Alan has been a valuable mentor who has greatly increased my understanding of statistics and data analysis. Another individual who has contributed greatly to my success as a graduate student is Sheila Cordray. She has provided me the opportunity to work on a variety of projects and acquire an understanding of basic, practical research skills, for which I am most grateful.

In addition, I would like to thank my husband, children and mother for their patience and understanding. Without their support and cooperation, this degree would not have been possible.

I would also like to extend a very special thanks to my friend, Cindy Schmiege, for all of the time, support and assistance she has provided me during my graduate school experience. Without friends, family and mentors, I am sure that I would not have been able to achieve this degree.
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...the American family and the American home are perhaps as or more violent than any other single American institution or setting (with the exception of the military, and only then in time of war). Americans run the greatest risk of assault, physical injury, and even murder in their own homes by members of their own families (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980, p. 4).

Domestic violence, once thought to be a rare phenomenon in America, has recently been recognized as a problem of major proportions found in every segment of society (Gamache, 1991; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Gelles, 1990; Buzawa & Buzawa, 1990; Rosenbaum, Stordeur & Stille, 1989; Lockhart, 1987; Martin, 1983; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). This thesis will integrate a feminist perspective with social exchange theory to provide a conceptual framework for examining the relationship of domestic violence to the economic dependency of wives and identification with a fundamentalist Protestant discourse. The terms domestic violence, marital violence, dyadic violence and conjugal violence will be used interchangeable to refer to conflicts between marital partners. Family violence is more broadly
defined to include any member of the household, including children, siblings and elderly parents.

In 1975, using a nationally representative sample of 2,143 married couples, Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz found 16 percent of families had experienced at least one incidence of violence during the previous year and 28 percent had had a violent incident at sometime during their marriage (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). This study, which was repeated in 1985 with similar results, found approximately two thirds of the incidents were minor assaults while the other one third were more serious, up to and including using a knife or a gun (Straus & Gelles, 1986).

The National Violence Survey prompted increased research in the area of family violence, all of which confirmed the basic thesis that family violence is a significant problem, with deep historical roots in our culture. Family violence is a complex, multifaceted problem that touches the lives of many individuals, both children and adults.

Since the early 1960's, numerous studies using various approaches have examined the issue of domestic violence. The earlier works frequently developed a psychological perspective that focused on the personality traits of abused women, who were often judged to be the principle cause of their own misery, either by failing to
perform adequately as wives or because they "masochistically" sought abusive partners to fulfill their own need to suffer (Andrews & Brewin, 1990; Caplan, 1985; Walker, 1985; Schechter, 1982; Walker, 1979; Faulk, 1974; Snell, Rosenwald & Robey, 1964). These early psychological models have been severely criticized for defining abuse simply as a problem of pathological individuals or deviant couples and for their tendency to foster a "blame the victim" perspective, which blames women for the abuse they suffer, especially those women who are unable to extricate themselves from their abusive relationship. As Hilberman (1980) noted,

> Wife abuse, when it was identified, was generally assumed to represent some intrapsychic liability on the part of the victim. This psychiatric labeling or attribution of blame reflected and reinforced the societal belief that spouse abuse was an isolated problem in unusually disturbed couples (p. 1336).

Rather than focusing on the psychopathology of the individuals involved, sociological approaches to domestic violence, developed in the early 1970's, began to examine the family as a social system that is shaped by the larger society (Breines & Gordon, 1983). These early studies were concerned with issues of family power and how family violence could occur.

Undoubtedly, the major influence in the study of family violence has come from the work of Murray Straus (1979). Straus, a sociologist, has been instrumental in
developing a widely accepted scale for measuring levels and frequency of family violence, the Conflict Tactics Scale. In addition, along with Richard Gelles and Suzanne Steinmetz, he has conducted two national surveys on family violence. Much of the current work on family violence has relied on the data gathered in these two surveys (Straus, 1990; Gelles, 1986; Martin, 1985; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980).

The work of Murray Straus and Richard Gelles has been criticized by feminists because it attempts to be gender neutral and does not adequately address the issue of gender based power. Many feminists believe that family violence must be approached from a gendered perspective and that gender neutrality is impossible (Martin, 1985; Yllo, 1984; Breines & Gordon, 1983; Schechter, 1982). As Breines and Gordon (1983) state, "We (feminists) see the family and family violence, like all other historical phenomena, as produced within a gendered society in which male power dominates" (p. 493). In spite of these criticisms, the work of Straus and Gelles has provided a foundation of knowledge for the study of violence in American families and the Conflict Tactics Scale, developed by Straus, has provided a widely utilized tool for operationalizing the concepts of family violence.
Domestic violence is not confined to any single racial, socioeconomic or social category; it transcends all intimate human relationships, from dating couples to co-habitators and spouses (Forsstrom, 1991; Flynn, 1987; Lockhart, 1987; United States, 1984) and cannot be separated from the larger issues of child abuse and other violence within the family (Buzawa & Buzawa, 1990; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Morgan, 1982). Child abuse and marital violence are defined by many researchers as a continuum of a single problem, family violence (Straus & Gelles, 1990; Kalmuss, 1984; Bernard & Bernard, 1983; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980).
Chapter 2
Review of Literature

Introduction

Domestic violence is a problem that has been attributed to a variety of cultural, social and psychological factors. Although this problem has been the focus of a great deal of research during the past decade, little progress has been made in understanding why some couples resort to violence as a method of resolving conflicts. This chapter examines the history of marital violence in western culture as well as many of the social and cultural factors that have been implicated in the problem. In addition, this section will examine measurement issues and theoretical perspectives that have contributed to the study of this problem.

History of Family Abuse

Violence between men and women in western culture is recorded in some of its earliest records. Greek stories tell tales of the subjugation and physical punishment of women and their occasional retaliation against the men who abused them. Although these stories are fanciful tales of gods and amazons, they reflect, according to Tyrrell (1984), the often violent relationship between the sexes that was the reality of the times. He states, "Classical Athens was a patriarchy, a social system
organized along the lines of sexual asymmetry of male privilege" (p. xiii). Women in early Greek society were legally and socially subordinate to men (Anderson & Zinsser, 1988; Lerner, 1986; Tyrrell, 1984). Greek families were structured along clear gender roles, with men assuming the roles of warrior and ruler, while women were restricted to the household. To the Greeks, this reflected the natural order of the universe. Male rule was seen as necessary to preserve the household. As Tyrrell (1984) notes,

...on the public level, loss of male rule meant the creation of a matriarchy, a situation tantamount to chaos in the state and in cosmos (p. 28).

Early Judeo-Christian writings also illustrate that male violence toward women was common. Retaliation by women, however, was a rare occurrence and was punished brutally. As in Greece, early Jewish culture was structured as a strict patriarchy, with all rights and privileges reserved for men. Men owned their wives and daughters and were empowered to use and dispose of them freely. Women and children were required to submit, no matter how abusive, violent or fatal the situation (Anderson & Zinsser, 1988; Stets, 1988; Lerner, 1986; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Davidson, 1977; Brownmiller, 1975).

The rise of the Roman empire did not improve the legal status of women or children. Roman men were still
the complete rulers of their respective households, with the power of life or death over all female dependents (Anderson & Zinsser, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gies & Gies, 1987). It was not until much later that the legal status of women and children, in Europe, began to improve slightly, although men still had the right to beat and abuse their dependents. According to Davidson (1978)

(...history has hidden many of the details of legal, religious, and societal cooperation with conjugal crime... (it) does document the fact that men fathers and husbands considered themselves owners of women (p. 104).

The social validation of the ownership of women is seen by Dobash and Dobash (1979) as the cornerstone for their oppression. "The seeds of wife beating lie in the subordination of females and in their subjugation to male authority and control" (p. 33). As long as men consider women to be their personal property, they may feel justified in abusing them.

In 1768, a husband's right to beat his wife was clearly defined in Blackstone's codification of English common law, a foundation of American law (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). An errant wife could be physically chastised with a stick, as long as it was no larger than the husband's thumb. This "rule of thumb" was upheld in a North Carolina court in 1867 and was not completely struck from American law until into the 20th century
Although we typically think of the family as a warm, loving, supportive institution, the reality in many families falls short of this ideal. Marital violence and child abuse are not historical anomalies, they are issues that face many modern families. Family violence is not a rare occurrence, confined to the lower classes or to those who suffer from mental disturbances (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Gelles, 1987). Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) observed that many households in America "...have been the scene of a spouse striking his or her partner last year...every American neighborhood has violent families" (p. 3). This violence is not limited to confrontations between adults, but often involves children, either as observers of adult violence or as the victims of physical abuse themselves. The consequences of involving children in family violence is an issue that researchers are only now beginning to address.

Family Violence

A variety of factors have been identified as contributing to high levels of family violence in America. This study will examine the relationship between each of these factors and levels of violence within marital dyads. Poverty, unemployment, and women's
economic dependency on men are structural factors that may contribute to the problem. Age, race, social class and occupational status are also variables that have been examined for their relationship to domestic violence, as well as alcohol abuse, witnessing parental violence as a child and the socially accepted practice of physically punishing children (Andersen, Boulette & Schwartz, 1991; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Kantor & Straus, 1987; Lockhart, 1987; Mirowsky & Ross, 1987; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Sonkin, Martin & Walker, 1985; Bernard & Bernard, 1983; Martin, 1983).

Many researchers suggest that beliefs in male dominance and identification with traditional sex roles are a basic underlying cause of family abuse (Gamache, 1991; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Walker, 1984; Breines & Gordon, 1983), however, little empirical work has been done in this area. Feminist writers, as well as more mainstream sociologists, suggest that men's violence toward women is part of an overall cultural practice designed to maintain the privileged patriarchal position that men enjoy in this society. They have suggested that conservative, fundamentalist Protestant religious beliefs, which support traditional sex role differences and the dominance of men over women, contribute to both child abuse and men's violence toward women (Yllo &
Wife Beating or Mutual Combat?

There is ample evidence in the research on domestic violence that many men assault and injure their wives, however, the level of assaultiveness by women toward their husbands is a major controversy (Straus & Gelles, 1990; Steinmetz, 1987; Breines & Gordon, 1983; Gelles, 1980). Steinmetz (1978), using the incidence of violent interactions between spouses, posited that women are often guilty of abusive behavior toward their husbands. She concluded that many men could be classified as battered husbands and that research in domestic violence should also focus on this problem. Her work has been criticized by a variety of feminist researchers because she only considered reported incidence of violent behaviors, not the context of the interactions. Feminists have pointed out that many women strike out in self-defense or when they fear that they are about to be assaulted. In addition, if the level of injuries is included in the analysis, men are many times more apt to seriously injure their spouses than are women. Feminist researchers are, for the most part, adamant that the problem is one of wife abuse, not mutual combat, a view
shared by other, non-feminist researchers (Walker, 1989; Saunders, 1988; Walker, 1984; Breines & Gordon, 1983).

A Culture of Violence

Murray Straus and Richard Gelles are two sociologists who have moved the study of family violence beyond looking at individual psychopathology to examining its cultural and social causes. They believe that we live in a culture where family violence is the norm, not an aberration. Children are taught to be violent by being violently punished and women are subjugated and dominated by men who feel justified in using physical force on their dependents. Women strike out at both their husbands and children because it is culturally acceptable for them to be violent in the home. Cultural violence and family violence are seen by them as both elements of the same problem (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980).

Measuring Domestic/Family Violence

Conflict and violence are two constructs that are very difficult to define and even more difficult to measure. What is violent behavior? When is conflict exceeding culturally acceptable limits? When is a violent response to conflict acceptable and how much violence is appropriate for the situation? These are not questions
that have explicit answers. No society has absolute rules that govern conflict and violence, but rather, these behaviors are defined relative to specific situations. Because family violence is intricately interwoven into our social norms and cultural ideals of family behavior, it is especially problematic to analyze (Gelles, 1987; Margolin, 1987; Pagelow, 1984; Dibble & Straus, 1980; Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980; Straus, 1979).

The Conflict Tactics Scale, developed by Straus, provides a widely accepted measure of family violence, which he defined as an "...act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person" (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980: p. 20). The scale is linear, ranging from discussing an issue calmly, through throwing objects, pushing, shoving and hitting, to using a knife or a gun. It is designed to measure both the frequency and the severity of violent acts, but not the resulting levels of injury caused by the violence (Straus, 1990; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980; Straus, 1979).

Although this scale is extremely useful and widely used in studies of family violence, it has several limitations. Feminists have criticized it because it does not differentiate between aggression and self defense. All violent acts are categorized the same. Because the scale measures only the type of act and the frequency, it
is not useful in measuring differing levels of injury inflicted on the victim. Many feminists feel that this is an important issue in any study of domestic violence, which the Conflict Tactics Scale minimizes. They also object to using a linear definition of violence, that designates verbal aggression as less violent than physical abuse. Verbal abuse nearly always accompanies physical abuse and may be equally devastating to some women (Straus, 1990; Breines & Gordon, 1983; Walker, 1979). In spite of these weaknesses, the Conflict Tactics Scale provides researchers with a widely accepted and useful tool for operationalizing the issues of family violence.

Couple Data and Methodological Bias

Although the National Violence Survey (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980) did establish that it was possible for researchers to survey a large segment of the population on a very sensitive subject, it can be criticized for using self-reports of violent behaviors and gathering only aggregate, rather than couple data. Researchers admit that the reporting of socially sensitive behaviors may be subject to serious under-reporting and that men consistently under-report and minimize their own violent behaviors (Pagelow, 1981;
Walker, 1979). This systematic under-reporting may seriously bias the results of many studies.

Jouriles and O'Leary (1985) assessed a small sample of couples (n=102) for agreement in reporting incidents of marital violence and found that overall agreement rates were highest for those couples who reported no violence, while couples who reported marital violence had a low to moderate level of agreement. Edleson and Brygger (1986) also found "...greater gender differences in reports of threats than in reports of violent acts" (p. 381), however, in this study, women also reported higher levels of violent behavior by their spouses than their husbands acknowledged.

Szinovacz (1983) found little agreement between husbands and wives about the level of violence in their relationships. "The differences between spouses' descriptions of marital realities are usually not reflected in distinct differences between aggregate husband-wife data" (p. 633). Because much of the current research on family violence relies on aggregate rather than couple data, frequency of marital violence may be seriously underestimated and relationships with structural variables such as income, age and education may be distorted (Edleson & Brygger, 1986; Jouriles & O'Leary, 1985; Szinovacz, 1983).
Abuse and Pregnancy

Children may be the innocent victims of adult abuse even before they are born. Many studies have found a strong correlation between pregnancy and wife-abuse. Maria Roy (1977) reports that in her sample, many of "...those citing pregnancy as a precipitant to violence...reported that an unplanned pregnancy put a great strain on the relationship. Many (sic) indicated that the husbands were jealous toward the unborn newcomer and resented the intrusion" (p. 42). This pattern of jealousy and abuse was also reported by Davidson (1978), who found that the incidents of battering often began with the onset of the first pregnancy. Walker (1979) also reports a high level of abuse and mutilation of women during pregnancy with the accompanying death or deformity of many infants.

Although this link between pregnancy and abuse is often reported in studies of wife-abuse, Richard Gelles (1988) has questioned its accuracy and cautions that these studies are not based on representative national samples of the general population, therefore "...generalizations...must be made with care" (p. 842). Gelles concludes that the relationship between pregnancy and abuse is confounded by age. Marital violence is most prevalent among young couples and it is young women who are most apt to be pregnant. Therefore, they are at the
greatest risk of abuse, whether they are pregnant or not. Although there is no positive evidence that pregnant women are at special risk of abuse, it is clear that pregnancy does not protect a woman from being the victim of violence.

**Early Childhood Experience With Violence and Abuse**

Early childhood experiences of violence have been found by researchers to be a major predictor of aggressive behaviors in adult relationships, especially for men. Children who witness marital discord between their parents, especially hitting, or are the victims of abuse themselves are more apt to engage in relationship violence as adults (Davis, 1991; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Stets, 1990; Flynn, 1987; O'Leary & Curley, 1986; Pagelow, 1984; Walker, 1983; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981a; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981b; Davidson, 1978).

Rosenbaum and O'Leary (1981a) found,

There is some evidence, at least in the area of marital violence, that one of the most significant long term effects of exposure to family violence may be the intergenerational transmission of such violence...wife abusers are significantly more likely to have witnessed parental conjugal violence and/or to have experienced child abuse in their families of origin, suggesting that exposure to family violence may predispose the male child to repeat the pattern of abuse in his own marital relationship (p. 692).
The mechanism for this transmission of violence between generations is role modeling, with men duplicating patterns of aggression while women who were raised in abusive environments may be more tolerant of abuse in adulthood (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981a; Gelles, 1976).

Alexander, Moore and Alexander (1991) also found evidence that supported a social learning model of intergenerational transmission of violence for men: "Men seem to model violent behaviors directly, as a function of experiencing abuse by their father" (p. 666). Ulbrich and Huber (1981) found that observing parental hitting influenced attitudes about violence toward women. Men who witnessed parental hitting were more positively disposed toward hitting a woman. The effect was not so clear cut for women however. Those who saw their fathers strike their mothers were less approving of striking a woman while those who reported only seeing their mothers strike their fathers were more accepting of a man hitting his wife.

Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) also found clear evidence that teenagers who receive physical punishment are more likely to be involved in a violent relationship when they become adults. They found, "...people who experienced the most punishment as teen-agers have a rate of wife-beating and husband beating that is four times greater than those whose parents did not hit them"
There is some evidence that being abused during childhood is the strongest predictor of adult relationship violence (DeMaris, 1987; Forsstrom-Cohen & Rosenbaum, 1985).

Consistent evidence of the link between a man's childhood experiences of abuse and violent adult relationships was also found by Gelles and Cornell (1990), although they caution that a violent background does not predispose men to becoming abusers, either of children or women. Many violent men have had little childhood experience with abuse or marital discord and some who were raised in extremely violent environments become nonviolent adults.

The relationship between early family violence and adult relationship abuse for women, however, is somewhat problematic (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Saunders, 1988; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1981). Star et al (1979) found that one-third of their sample of abused women had a history of witnessing or enduring abuse during childhood. Although, there is evidence that women who have a childhood history of family violence are both more aggressive themselves and more apt to be abused by their spouse (Rosenbaum, Kalmuss, 1984; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981b; Gelles, 1976), both levels of aggression and tolerance for victimization are areas that are not well defined at this time. Forsstrom-Cohen and Rosenbaum
(1985) found that witnessing parental conjugal violence increased aggression in their sample of women and concluded that it was a strong predictor of future violence.

The issue of women's tolerance of abuse is one that is difficult to address. Although many women stay in situations that are abusive and dangerous, it is risky to assume that this is the result of a personal decision to tolerate the violence, based on childhood experiences. The reasons women stay in abusive relationships are many and complicated, ranging from the possibility of learned helplessness, psychological entrapment, low self-esteem and increased levels of depression to economic dependency and fear of reprisal for leaving (Gondolf & Fisher, 1991; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Kalmuss & Straus, 1990; Strube, 1988; Boulette & Andersen, 1985; Pagelow, 1984; Walker, 1984; Martin, 1983; Gelles, 1976).

Breines & Gordon (1983) criticize much of the work on the intergenerational transmission of violence because "...we do not have studies about the effects of childhood violence on nonviolent adults, or on adults who are violent in their families but who have not been caught and labeled" (p. 515). In addition, they point out that much of this research uses clinical samples, often lacks controls and does not control for class or other variables that may occur with the childhood experience of
violence. Because there is a fine line between examining the factors that make an individual more apt to be victimized and blaming the victim for their situation, research in this area has been somewhat tentative and lacking in results (Saunders, 1988). Satisfactory answers have not been found for why women remain in abusive situations, especially when they are only dating and are not obliged by the legalities and customs of marriage.

Dating and Courtship Violence

Although early research by Gelles (1973) seemed to indicate that violence was most apt to be experienced by married couples, later studies have revealed that dating couples are also apt to experience both verbal and physical aggression (Bateman, 1991; Flynn, 1987; Rosenbaum, Cohen & Forsstrom-Cohen, 1991; Bernard & Bernard, 1990; Pirog-Good & Stets, 1989; Henton et al., 1983; Makepeace, 1981). Flynn (1987) found that

...violence is not uniquely characteristic of marital relationships....The occurrence of violence in intimate adult relationships is not a function of marital status" (p. 298).

Violent relationships between dating couples may not be perceived by them as abnormal or discordant and many of these couples will later marry. As Rosco and Benaske (1985) state, "It appears that for many women physical
abuse alone is not sufficient grounds for termination of a relationship" (p. 423). If aggression is a learned behavior, dating can be considered a training ground for marital violence (Flynn, 1987; Bernard & Bernard, 1983).

Bernard and Bernard (1983) suggest that children who are subject to abuse or witness parental violence may become abusers when they are adults. They found that individuals modeled violent behaviors, including

...indulging in the same forms of abuse as they experienced or observed in their families of origin....It seems clear that in many American homes, children are not only educated to be violent, but are even taught how to be violent (p. 286).

This study, by Bernard and Bernard (1983), of dating relationship violence among 461 college students indicates that "...violence among (dating) college students may be simply a link in an unbroken chain reaching from the abuse observed or experienced in childhood to spouse abuse in marriage" (p. 286). Another study of 484 college students by Alfred DeMaris (1987) also found some support for the hypothesis that, for males, harsh physical punishment during childhood was somewhat predictive of future involvement in courtship violence.

Makepeace (1983) examined the relationship between life stresses and levels of courtship violence and found that
Clear differences were evident...by sex and by whether the violence was expressive or receptive. In terms of expressive violence, the sex difference is especially striking: every specific type of violence was more common among males than females....The rate of severe expressive violence was over 2.5 times higher among males than females (p. 103).

He also found that males were much more apt to have assaulted females with a lethal weapon. Patterns of severe violence between married couples does not show such clear gender linked differences. Makepeace speculates that in a stressful marital relationship, women were more prone to using violence in self-defense.

In contrast to the other studies that have examined this issue, Stets and Straus (1990) found that when they controlled for age, dating couples had lower assault rates than either married or cohabitating couples. They suggest that dating couples may have fewer conflict-generating characteristics and a lower investment in their relationship than married or cohabitating couples. Although age is a significant variable, it has not been adequately addressed in other studies of dating or courtship violence (Stets & Straus, 1990; DeMaris, 1987; Flynn, 1987; Bernard & Bernard, 1983).

Lane and Gwartney-Gibbs (1985) also raise some objections to the way that many of these studies were conducted. They suggest that the results of these studies may have been compromised because they did not
use a clear and uniform definition of courtship violence and their samples were volunteers from introductory Sociology, Psychology and Family Studies classes. These studies may provide only a gross estimate of the levels of violence among dating couples.

Overall, however, most studies of courtship/dating violence have found striking similarities between courting and married couples. Parallels have been observed in both the levels and the types of violence and, unfortunately there seems to be little evidence that a violent relationship will necessarily be seen as reason for separating. As dating relationships increase in seriousness, levels of violence may increase correspondingly. Although levels of dating violence may be slightly overstated due to the confounding influence of age, it seems disturbingly clear that relationship violence is not an uncommon occurrence and that it may not prevent the couple from marrying (Stets & Straus, 1990).

**Economic Dependency**

Women's economic dependency on their partners is another factor implicated in conjugal violence (Pahl, 1985). Several studies have examined the link between marital violence and dependency and have presented conflicting results. Dobash and Dobash (1979) and Walker
(1978) found evidence of high levels of abuse related to increased dependency. They suggested that women who are dependent find it difficult to leave their relationships. An opposing perspective has been presented by Goode (1971) and Allen and Straus (1980), who argue that men with dependent wives have less need to resort to violence to maintain their dominant position in the family. Strube and Barbour (1983) found that women who were unemployed and economically dependent were less apt to leave a violent relationship than those who were more independent. Women who are economically dependent on their partners bring fewer resources to the relationship, have fewer options for leaving a bad relationship and may therefore be more vulnerable to spousal abuse (Kalmuss & Straus, 1990).

Lewis Okum (1988) uses "feminist resource theory" to predict "...that battered women will be more likely to terminate relationships with men who provide fewer material resources, and that the more independent economic resources that a battered woman has, the more likely she will be to dissolve her relationship" (p. 116).

Kalmuss and Straus (1990) also examined the relationship between economic dependency and abuse and concluded that although dependency does not cause abuse, it could impede a woman's leaving a difficult
relationship. Their data indicate that the severity of violence is highest in marriages with dependent wives and they conclude that dependent women are more apt to tolerate higher levels of abuse because they have less power within their relationships and fewer options for leaving. As they state, "Dependent wives have fewer alternatives to marriage and fewer resources within marriage with which to negotiate changes in their husbands' behavior. Thus, marital dependency reinforces the likelihood that women will tolerate abuse from their husbands" (p. 379).

Gender inequality, a powerful mechanism for maintaining women's subordinate position in society may result from their economic dependency. According to Sorensen and McLanahan (1987), "Women's economic dependency on men is an important attribute of stratification systems and an essential force in the maintenance of gender inequality" (p. 663). This stratification, based on an asymmetrical system of power for men and subjugation and subordination for women, is further reinforced by socialization in traditional sex roles. Women's economic dependency is defined by Sorensen and McLanahan (1987) as "...the extent to which married women rely on the incomes of their husbands" (p. 661). Economic dependency can be conceptualized as that amount of income that must be transferred from the husband to
the wife to maintain her standard of living. This transfer of resources is the source of her dependency (Sorensen & McLanahan, 1987).

**Identification With Traditional Gender Roles**

The belief that men are instinctively aggressive, dominant and violent while women are naturally passive, dependent, submissive and subordinate is identified, by many researchers, as a probable factor in conjugal violence (Crossman, Stith & Bender, 1990; Stets, 1980; Mirowsky & Ross, 1987; Finn, 1986; Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980).

Crossman, Stith and Bender (1990) suggest,

Men who abused their spouses tended to be less egalitarian and more traditional than nonbatterers....Those who held more traditional attitudes, whether male or female, were also likely to believe that men had the right to maintain their dominant position with physical force (p. 294).

Finn (1986) also found a relationship between "...traditional male sex roles and attitudes endorsing the use of physical force....Conversely, as sex role attitudes become more egalitarian, attitudes legitimizing force decrease" (p. 241). Because men benefit from their advantaged position in the social hierarchy, they are more inclined to believe in the innateness of sex roles than women (Mirowsky & Ross, 1987). Beliefs in traditional sex roles are used to maintain and enhance
the patriarchal structure of society and to sanction the use of violence by men to maintain this privileged position (Yllo & Straus, 1990).

According to Finn (1986),

Sex role socialization—which results in aggressive, dominant, authoritarian men and passive, dependent, self-sacrificing women—is viewed as one vital social mechanism for the creation and maintenance of an ideology that legitimizes men's greater power and resources. The need for men to maintain a superordinate position in conjunction with implicit cultural norms that condone intramarital violence contribute to a high incidence of spouse abuse (p. 236).

Although many American families are moving toward more egalitarian relationships (Straus & Gelles, 1986), those who identify with conservative or fundamentalist religious discourses may still adhere to older, more patriarchal family structures, sex role stereotypes and traditional family values (Mirowsky & Ross, 1987; Brinkerhoff & MacKLE, 1985; Aldous & D'Antonio, 1983; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981b). Although religious participation may provide social support for families, religious teachings also strengthen normative moral values, serve to constrain certain behaviors and validate traditional gender role ideologies (Thomas & Cornwall, 1992). According to Mirowsky and Ross (1987),

In their efforts to create social stability, mutual responsibility, and a sense of meaningful reality, religions
may promote the view that social roles are innate (p. 530).

Religion has been identified as the strongest shaper of sex roles (Nilson, 1978). Brinkerhoff and MacKIE (1985) suggest, "The family, the primary agent of gender socialization, derives many of its ideas about gender from religion" (p. 416).

Religion

The role of religion can be conceptualized on two different levels, a macro or social/cultural level and a micro or individual/family level. Although this distinction is not often made clear in the literature on family violence, it has important implications. All members of a society are touched by the overall cultural norms that may come from a common religious background, however, different denominations, individuals and families may translate those norms very differently.

Traditional Christian doctrines have emphasized the supremacy of men over women and have often given explicit voice to extreme misogynist beliefs. According to Brinkerhoff and MacKIE (1985),

Religious imagery appears to buttress male supremacy. God is father, judge, shepherd, king. Jesus and the twelve apostles are all male. The Christian tradition has two divergent views of the nature of womanhood: Eve, the first "sinner" responsible for humankind's expulsion from paradise; and Mary, immaculately conceived virgin and mother
of God. However, no matter how revered the Virgin Mary is, she remains human and, as such, subordinate to the masculine Trinity (p. 416).

Pagelow & Johnson (1988) summarize traditional ideology as accepting "...the rightness of the patriarchal-hierarchal order of social structure" (p. 5).

More conservative fundamentalist religious teaching, according to McNamara (1985), stresses "...patriarchy... expressed in obedience of wife to husband and children to parents" (p. 449). This traditional idea of the role of men and their relationship toward women is deeply imbedded in Christian religious teachings (Brinkerhoff & MacKIE, 1985), however, it is strongest among the most conservative elements of the Protestant denominations.

Aldous and D'Antonio (1983) state

Ultra-rightists...are looking to the social control function of religion to force families back into traditional conjugal power arrangements, arrangements that they view as associated with lower divorce rates, less sexual freedom, and better mothers. Women's family roles in such a setup would be prescribed and not a matter of individual choice (p. 11).

The asymmetrical balance between men and women is seen as necessary to maintain order and stability within the family (Brinkerhoff & MacKIE, 1985; McNamara, 1985; D'Antonio, 1983).

McNamara (1985) suggests that although traditional protestant ideology stresses hierarchial family
relationships based on the supremacy of the husband and the subordination of the wife and children, this is tempered by pastoral teachings that encourage responsibility, love of family, consideration of individual needs and a negotiatory process for settling differences. In addition to a male dominated family structure, conservative Protestant family values stress the importance of preserving the family unit against divorce and keeping women in the home rather than allowing them to participate in paid labor, disapproval of premarital or extramarital sex and abortion. The sanctity of human life and the preservation of the family unit are common themes of both the pastoral and polmetic teachings of the more fundamentalist, conservative Protestant denominations (D'Antonio, 1983; McNamara, 1985).

Alsdurf & Alsdurf (1988), in a study of Protestant pastors, found that many of their respondents had a stronger commitment to preserving the family and protecting the husband's position in society than to protecting the battered wife. Although their study had only a 10 percent response rate, it does provide some interesting suggestions about the attitudes of Protestant clergy toward women and the issue of domestic violence. They found that the clergy, who responded to the survey, often discounted the women's reports of violence and expressed the belief that a woman's "...failure to be submissive (was linked) to her husband's violence" (p. 167). They found that about one quarter of
the pastors responding to their survey felt lack of submissiveness by wives accounted for most family violence and 26 percent believed that "...a wife should submit to her husband and trust that God would honor her action by either stopping the abuse or giving her the strength to endure it" (p. 167).

Although religious beliefs are often suggested as possible causes of marital violence, little empirical work has been done to examine this issue. Gelles (1987) examined religious affiliation of a small sample of violent families and concluded that there was generally a higher level of violence if one of the spouses was agnostic, atheistic or had no religious affiliation. He concluded that these individuals represented a group of people who were less conventional and less bound by society's rules against violence. Therefore, they experienced greater marital stress and higher levels of domestic violence. This is an interesting set of assumptions, however, he presents no evidence to support the idea that lack of religious affiliation corresponds either to nonconformity with society's rules and norms or to a greater inclination to react violently to marital stress.

Religion is an important institution in developing and perpetuating the cultural norms of society. Although the topic is often controversial, it is important to develop a
better understanding to the role that religious beliefs and traditional values play in patterns of domestic violence.

Age

Most studies have found the level of marital violence is negatively correlated with the age of the couple. Those couples with both members under thirty are at the highest risk of developing a violent relationship while levels of violence appear to decrease steadily with the increasing age of the couple (Cazenave & Straus, 1990; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). This may reflect both the level of criminal violence in the general population by younger adults (Stets, 1990; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980), and the fact that many violent relationships eventually end in separation or divorce (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980).

One exception to this finding is a study by Gelles (1987) which indicates that conjugal violence is the highest for people approaching middle age, from 40 to 51 years old. Although this study presents some interesting findings, it relies on an extremely small sample that may not be reliably generalized to the greater population.

Suitor, Pillemer and Straus (1990) examined the relationship between age and changing patterns of family violence to determine whether this represents an actual change across the life course or the behavior of a
particular cohort. If patterns of violence change with age, then as people age they will be less apt to engage in this behavior, however, if the difference observed between age groups is a cohort effect, then the levels of family violence are rising and will continue to remain high during the lifespan of the affected cohort. This study, using a longitudinal sample of couples, found evidence that, over a ten year period, levels of violence were decreasing for specific cohorts. There was no evidence that the high rates of conjugal violence found among contemporary young couples was unique to their specific cohort or that they were particularly apt to remain at these high levels of violence as they continued to age (Suitor, Pillemer & Straus, 1990).

Alcohol Abuse

The relationship between the misuse of alcohol and high levels of family violence is somewhat controversial (Kantor & Straus, 1989; Kantor & Straus, 1987; Davidson, 1978). Bard and Zaker (1974) found little association between alcohol use and family violence, while other studies have found strong correlations between the abuse of alcohol, both by the aggressor and by the victim, in incidents of family violence (Kantor & Straus, 1989; Stordeur & Stille, 1989; Pagelow, 1984; Fagan, Stewart & Hansen, 1983).

Walker (1979) found that over half of the women in her study linked alcohol use to their battering, while Sonkin,
Martin and Walker (1985) reported that 80 percent of the men in their study were under the influence of drugs or alcohol during their last battering incident. Although many individuals in violent relationships attribute their problems to the use of alcohol, it is not clear whether the drinking triggers pent-up aggression or is merely a socially acceptable excuse for loosing control (Walker, 1989; Sonkin, Martin & Walker, 1985; Walker, 1985; Davidson, 1978). Pahl (1985) found that alcohol abuse may be "...a condition which sometimes co-exists with (abuse)" (p. 40).

Kantor and Straus (1987) examined the relationship between alcohol abuse and family violence and concluded that, although it was strongly correlated with the physical abuse of wives, it was not directly antecedent to violent incidents in many families. They concluded that the use of alcohol alone was not "...a necessary or sufficient cause of wife abuse" (p. 213). These findings were confirmed in a later Kantor and Straus (1989) study which found that although substance abuse was an important factor in family violence, intergenerational violence and low income were also significant factors. The role of alcohol in violent family behavior is a complex and difficult issue that needs further clarification. Although public perception supports the notion that batterers are drunken men who have lost all reasonable control, there is little empirical evidence at this time to support this belief.
Race/Ethnicity

Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) found that black families reported more frequent episodes of family violence than white families, especially marital abuse. In addition, blacks and minorities are more apt to come into contact with police or social agencies as a result of family violence. Although these figures seem to indicate that black and minority families may have a greater problem with violence, they caution that there are many confounding factors in the relationship between race and levels of family violence.

Because blacks in this country are more apt to be in poverty, unemployed and live in undesirable neighborhoods, economic stress may account for a great deal of their apparent problem. In addition, police and social agencies may be quicker to intervene in minority families, which would account for their disproportionate representation in these populations (Cazenave & Straus, 1990; Lockhart, 1987; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). It appears that socioeconomic and cultural factors may confound the analysis and make any assumptions about the relationship between race and family violence suspect.

Social Class

Although membership in a particular social class is without a doubt an important factor in family behavior problems, the methodological issues of measuring this
construct make it a variable that is also suspect. Social
class may be defined using a variety of factors, usually
including the husband's occupational status, his educational
level and either his or the family's income. These factors
do certainly apply to the concept of social class, however,
it is arguable that other unknown factors may be equally
important for specific families. Although socioeconomic
status is difficult to conceptualize and cannot be
accurately measured, interesting differences have been found
by examining the individual structural variables education,
employment and income, that are often included in a
socioeconomic construct.

Education

Gelles (1980) found that there was an inverse
relationship between the husband's education and marital
violence, however, this relationship is not the same for the
wife's education. Violence most often occurs in families
where the husband's education is low and where the wife has
at least some high school. High levels of conjugal violence
are also reported in families of women who are college
educated. This relationship was also observed by Allen and
Straus (1980) who suggest,

Lacking monetary, prestige, and
educational resources on which to base
power, low status men are more likely to
compensate by using actual or threatened
physical force as a basis for power
(p. 190).
Fagan, Stewart and Hansen (1983) also report that batterers typically have less than a high school education, however, Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) suggest that those who have a high school education are the most violent while the least violent are those who dropped out before completing grammar school. It appears that the relationship between education and family violence is not a simple linear progression, but rather a complex issue that needs further investigation.

**Occupational Status**

Low occupational status for men and clerical or professional-managerial status occupations for women have also been found to be related to increased levels of family violence. Jobs that involve a great deal of stress and little financial rewards do seem to make families more violence prone (Gelles, 1980). In addition, Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz found

The consistent pattern was that men and women who held blue collar jobs had higher rates of family violence than people who had white collar occupations. The rate of violence between husbands and wives was twice as high in the families of blue collar workers-men and women-than for white collar workers (p. 149).

Kantor & Straus (1987) found that blue-collar men had a slightly higher rate of wife abuse than white-collar workers, however, the major influence was a
combination of blue-collar occupation with a high level of alcohol consumption and an approval of violence toward women. Men who combined all three of these traits were the most apt to use physical force against their spouses.

Unemployment

Several researchers have identified the stress of part-time employment and unemployment as a major factor in levels of family violence, especially spousal abuse (Straus & Gelles, 1990; Donavan, Jaffee & Pirie, 1987; Gelles, 1987; Keefe, 1984; Stewart & Hansen, 1983; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). Fagan et al. (1983) found that nearly one third (30%) of their sample of violent husbands were unemployed while Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) suggest that "...unemployed men are twice as likely to use severe violence on their wives as are men employed full time, and men employed part time have a rate of wifebeating three times the rate for full-time employed men" (p. 150). In addition, they found that unemployed men and those who work only part-time were much more apt to be beaten by their wives than men who were employed full time.

Although there seems to be clear evidence of a relationship between family violence and unemployment, this is another variable that must be approached with caution. The relationships of age and income to
employment are complex and interwoven and it may be impossible to differentiate their separate effects on families.

**Income**

Low income may also be inversely related to conjugal violence, with violence being the most common among extremely low income families, those who must struggle constantly just to survive (Gelles, 1980). It must be cautioned, however, that age may also confound this finding. Young families are both the most violent and have, on average, the lowest incomes. In addition, higher income families are more isolated from social service agencies that may intervene and report abuse. Because they are able to afford private physicians and counseling, higher income families with problems may be less visible. Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) found that financial stress did increase rates of spouse abuse in families earning less than $20,000 (in 1975). Well-to-do families did not show increased levels of spouse abuse as a result of financial stress.
Psychological Studies

Blaming the Victim

Snell et al. (1964) concluded that women who were abused by their husbands were undesirable wives, who were often sexually frigid. Hilberman (1980) writes,

If the victim can be seen as provoking or needing the abuse, mental health professionals can more comfortably focus on the "meaning" of the violence than on the fact of the violence per se (p. 1336).

Other psychologists, using a Freudian approach, defined all women as naturally masochistic to explain why women, who remained in abusive relationships, did so from choice (Caplan, 1985; Schechter, 1982; Faulk, 1974). The men who battered them were described as suffering from a variety of mental disorders that diminished their capacity to act rationally (Faulk, 1974). Pagelow (1984) found, however, that "...battered women are no different from other women" (p. 304).

Natalie Shainess (1977) found that "wifebeaters" were stressed individuals whose early lives had been full of chaos. She suggested that a "...lack of collaborative living between parents" (p. 117) was a major element that explained the tendency of some men to behave violently toward their spouses. These men were, according to Shainess, often "passive-aggressive", with personalities that tended to feel helpless and vulnerable. In addition, she assigned much of the problem for the
violent behavior to the woman who is the victim. However, she states that the woman is not really to blame, but rather suffers from low-esteem that leads to masochism. The masochistic tendencies of the wife prevent her from freeing herself from the violent situation.

The interaction between hormones and behavior is also posited by Shainess as a factor in marital violence. She suggests that,

Where the testes are producing adequate amounts of hormone (together with the adrenals) the only contribution to violence is that an unsatisfied male tends to be more irritable and skittish. In the woman, the premenstrual phase is sometimes accompanied by greater tension, both physical and emotional, and the woman may have a greater need for attention at this time. The demand for this, both subtle or overt, may trigger rage in a man incapable of any sympathetic or loving feelings (p. 118).

Learned Helplessness and A Cycle of Violence

Lenore Walker (1979) a clinical psychologist, who specializes in working with abused women, uses a social learning approach to examine the issue of wife battering. She suggests that violence is a learned trait and that men are socialized to resort to violence in order to achieve their goals. If boys see their fathers successfully use physical force against their mothers, then they will learn that this is an effective and
acceptable way to act. Women are assumed to learn that they are helpless to change their situation and must endure the abuse. Walker posits that some battered women suffer from a form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which she defines as "Battered Woman Syndrome" (Walker, 1989), this, when combined with learned helplessness, provides a framework for understanding the dilemma that the battered woman faces.

Learned helplessness, according to Walker (1989), helps to explain why many battered women do not attempt to leave their violent relationships, rather than how they originally learned that they were helpless. She writes,

A woman can learn she is unable to predict the effect her behavior will have. This lack of ability to predict the efficacy of one's own behavior changes the nature of an individual's response to situations....Battered women don't attempt to leave the battering situation, even when it may seem to outsiders that escape is possible, because they cannot predict their own safety, they believe that nothing they or anyone else does will alter their terrible circumstances (p. 50).

A cycle of violence theory has also been posited by Walker as the reason that many abused women remain in their violent relationships. Walker's research (1984) suggests that recurrent battering involves three distinct phases "1) tension building, 2) the acute battering incident, and 3) loving contrition" (p. 45). A period of
rising tension precedes the actual violent incident, which is followed by a period of calmness and even affection. Over time, however, the tension phase increases, conflict escalates, the final contrition phase diminishes and the relationship is apt to disintegrate. As long as the third phase of the relationship is significant, a women may hope that her abuser will eventually change his behavior and no longer be violent toward her (Walker, 1988; Walker, 1984).

Sociological Studies

Resource Theory

Goode (1971) defines the family as a social unit that is essentially a power system in which individuals use force to control the behavior of others. Force may be used either to persuade someone to behave in a certain way or as a deterrent, to stop undesirable behaviors. He suggests that men with higher levels of economic resources have more power within their families and do not need to resort to physical violence in order to control their wives and children. Men who have few material resources need to resort to threats or actual physical violence in order to feel in control. Goode states,

It is a general rule that the greater the other resources an individual can command, the more force he can muster,
but the less he will actually deploy or use in an overt manner (p. 628).

Because middle and upper class men can command more force, based on their greater economic resources, Goode assumed that they would be less inclined to resort to actual physical violence to achieve their own ends.

Goode also uses an exchange perspective to examine the origins of family violence. He states, "In any continuing family structure, people are bound to one another through an ongoing flow of transactions which may in part be viewed as exchanges" (p. 631). Exchanges within the family may slip out of balance, leaving some individuals feeling that they are contributing more to the family than others. This may be accompanied by a growing sense of frustration and anger that culminates in the open conflict. "Family members come to feel diminished, put upon, punished unjustly, or short-changed by others" (p. 632). Those who have fewer resources have fewer options for solving conflicts and restoring a balance of exchanges. Because men are socialized to be more aggressive and violent, as well as to believe that they must maintain control of their family members, they are the family member most likely to resort to using physical force.

Although Goode does provide an interesting analysis of the use of force from an exchange perspective, his argument has several flaws. He assumes that because
lower class and minority men lack economic power they are more prone to using violence against their families. Later empirical studies have shown that family violence affects all classes of families, including middle and upper class white ones. Davidson (1978) found substantial evidence that wife beating was a significant problem even among middle and upper class families.

Goode sees the dynamics of family violence as an interactive process that is equally shared by both husband and wife. As exchanges become unbalanced and family members develop feelings of dissatisfaction, conflict becomes inevitable. According to Goode, the resultant use of physical force by the husband may be a direct result of his inability to match his wife's verbal skills. This causes, according to Goode,

The conflict as it finally appears in the war of words... (to be) so sharp, the feeling of betrayal and loss so great, that redress must be physical and destructive. This impulse is the stronger because the person who wins the war of words—often the woman since she is perhaps ordinarily more facile verbally—is not necessarily the person with the greatest sense of outrage or even with the better case to present. The person who is least fair may be most competent in verbal attack (p. 632).

Since men find it hard to accept defeat, especially in verbal conflicts with women, it is difficult to reach a peaceful resolution. Goode assumes that men need to control their wives and to win conflicts in order to feel
masculine. Because men who lose verbal battles with their wives may escalate to using physical force, he concludes that "...both parties have contributed to the violence, not only over the long run, but also within the ultimate conflict situation" (p. 633). This provides an interesting rational for blaming the victim for her abuse. If women would refrain from besting their husbands verbally, men would not need to resort to using physical force against their wives and marital violence could be avoided.

Theoretical Perspective

This study approaches the issue of domestic violence from a feminist perspective that defines family violence as a cultural/social problem. This study conceptualizes domestic violence within a cultural framework of patriarchy that values those traits defined as masculine and devalues those that are considered feminine. Within this framework, families are defined as social organizations that replicate the larger social hierarchy, with males occupying positions of power and prestige while women are held in subordinate positions of dependency. This asymmetrical system of male dominance and power is assumed to underlay much of the violence that is prevalent in American families, especially men's
violence toward women (Buzawa & Buzawa, 1990; Tong, 1989; Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Radical feminists stress the historical, sexual oppression of women. Some, like Firestone (1970), see the oppression of women as a direct result of their reproductive capacity. Firestone presents the provocative and controversial suggestion that until women are freed from the biological functions of childbirth and the oppression of "the biological family", they will never achieve freedom and equality.

Millet (1970), another radical feminist, argues that the family is "...patriarchy's chief institution" (p. 33). She posits that patriarchal ideology exaggerates the sexual differences between men and women in a manner that always assures men will secure positions of power and control in those institutions. Radical feminist theory supports the idea that the sexual oppression of women is directly responsible for their abuse by men (Tong, 1989; Daly, 1978; Firestone, 1970; Millett, 1970).

Socialist feminist theory states that the economic dependency of women, especially wives, is the foundation for the subordination of women in our society. Tong (1989) states, "Through the sexual division of labor, patriarchy maintains the subordinate status of women both in the workplace and in the home" (p. 181). Although sociologists have often viewed the economic dependency of
wives as natural and necessary to family functioning, it is not without negative consequences for women (Sorensen & McLanahan, 1987).

In addition to the feminist perspective, domestic violence will also be examined from a social exchange perspective, which defines relationships as a series of emotional and economic exchanges between individuals. According to Burgess and Huston (1979), social exchange is based on "...a bartering of rewards and costs both between partners and between members of the partnership and others" (p. 4). Within this theoretical framework, it is the reciprocal effects partners have on each other that is fundamental to understanding the workings of the relationship (Burgess & Huston, 1979; Thibaut & Kelly, 1959).

McDonald (1981) criticized social exchange theory because it focused on the interaction as if "...it were occurring in a social vacuum" (p. 826). He suggests that "...it is also necessary to consider the dictation of interaction patterns by the internalization of culturally prescribed norms regarding marital role interaction and exchange relationships" (p. 826). In addition to considering the exchange process between individuals, it is necessary to understand the "...culturally internalized expectation of the nature of marriage relationships generally and, more specifically the
normatively perceived expectations and obligations of the husband and wife roles and, perhaps, more broadly, gender roles" (p. 826).

Guttentag and Secord (1983) expand exchange theory to include a concept of dyadic power, or power within the relationship. They state,

Dyadic power in a relationship between two persons derives from the psychological resources that one partner has for satisfying the needs of the other partner. The more such resources a person has and the stronger the need of the partner for those resources, the greater the dyadic power (p. 157).

Power within relationships is also a function of the dependency that one member has on the economic resources provided by the other. Individuals who bring fewer resources into their relationships will have less dyadic power. In marital dyads, issues of power and dependency are often related to the acquisition of money by one individual and the financial dependency of the other.

Radical and socialist feminist theory will be interwoven with social exchange theory to provide a structural framework to examine the relationships among traditional religious beliefs, economic dependency and domestic violence. This study will examine whether there is a higher level of domestic violence among couples with more traditional, Protestant, religious beliefs and values. It will also examine whether couples with economically dependent wives are more apt to use violence
as a method of resolving conflicts. Because family violence may result from high levels of economic or social stress, this study will also examine the relationship among these factors and increased levels of marital violence. Feminist theory supports the contention that dependent women who adhere to traditional, patriarchal religious beliefs are at greatest risk of suffering abuse from their partners and that conservative, traditionally oriented men will be more apt to resort to violence to maintain their superordinate position in the family. Social exchange theory also supports the idea that dependent women are more apt to be involved in violent, abusive relationships.

Summary

Domestic violence is a theme that has a deep and enduring history in our culture. Although the myth of the loving, happy, private family is widely accepted, the reality for many families is continuing discord, violence and injury. Hilberman (1980) found that between 20 percent and 50 percent of all murders in this country occur within families. In addition, family disturbance calls account for 20 percent of police fatalities. Some studies show evidence that both men and women engage in acts of violence, but these is overwhelming evidence that
women are predominantly the victims of marital violence. Dobash and Dobash (1979) found that approximately 40 percent of female victims of homicide were killed by their husbands while only 10 percent of males were killed by their wives. They also found that wives who do kill their spouses were seven times more likely to have acted in self-defense than were husbands. The evidence is clear that women, not men, are most often the victims of spousal abuse and domestic violence.

Research Questions

This study will examine the theme of patriarchy, as supported by Protestant religious discourse and the economic dependency of women, as factors in dyadic violence. Although patriarchy is an inherent component in legal, governmental and economic structures in our culture, the relationships of these institutions to marital violence is beyond the scope of this study. Two research questions have been developed to examine the issue of domestic violence, at the family level, from both a feminist and a social exchange perspective.

1) Women's economic dependence is identified by this study as an important factor in marital violence. Women who do not contribute financially to the family may suffer from a loss of power and prestige.
Economic dependence may also prevent an abused woman from leaving the relationship. These factors are hypothesized to be positively related to levels of marital violence. If levels of marital violence increase with increasing levels of women's economic dependence, this will support a social exchange perspective that family/dyadic power is derived from the economic contributions individuals make to the relationship. It will also support the feminist position that women lack power in their relationships because they are often dependent upon their husband's for economic support.

This study assumes that a man's violence toward his wife is not uncontrolled behavior, but rather is focused toward the specific goal of controlling her behavior. Although there are many social costs involved in this pattern of violent behavior, feminist theory suggests that the benefits to men outweigh the costs. The battered, dependent wife, who is unable to leave the relationship, must accept her husband's control of her behavior and may be forced to provide a wider variety of sexual services to her husband than she considers comfortable or desirable. In addition, if she is economically dependent, the wife may also have little control of her own financial resources and little power within the dyad to protect herself from her husband's abusive behavior.
2) What is the relationship between an individual's identification with fundamentalist Protestant discourse to levels of dyadic violence? This study will seek to determine the relationship between those beliefs that are acknowledged as important to fundamentalist religious teaching and levels of marital violence in families. Does religion, which transmits patriarchal cultural norms, have a positive relationship to levels of marital violence or does it provide a set of rules and norms that increase family stability and encourage domestic tranquility? This study will examine the hypothesis that traditional, fundamentalist doctrines encourage patriarchal beliefs that devalue women and encourage men to be dominant in their family relationships and that couples who identify with a fundamentalist protestant discourse will experience higher levels of marital violence.
Chapter 3
Methods

Sample

This study uses data from a nationally representative sample of 13,017 respondents. These data were collected for the 1987-88 National Survey of Families and Households by the Center for Demography and Ecology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Telephone interviews were conducted with respondents age 16 and older, living in households, plus a double sample of minorities and single-parent families (Sweet, Bumpass & Call, 1988). A sub-set of 5076 married couples, who completed separate questionnaires for the primary respondent and for the spouse, were selected from the larger sample for this study, however missing data limited the analysis to 3421 couples. Data were weighted, using a spouse weighing coefficient', to return to a probability sample of married couples in the United States. The sample was restricted to married couples in order to control for marital status and not obfuscate the analysis with additional parameters. Because economic dependency is a concept that is based on the assumption that one member of the dyad is dependent on a portion of

''The Married Couple Weight is designed for analysis of persons who are members of a married couple household. A Married Couple Weight exists for only those respondents who had a corresponding (Spousal Questionnaire) completed by the spouse. The weight is simply a poststratification adjustment which aligns the respondent distributions of sex, race/ethnicity, age and region to those from the March 1987 CPS'' (Center for Demography and Ecology).
the partner's income to maintain their standard of living, the concept is only applicable to couples who share assets. Co-habitating couples were excluded from this study because they are more inclined to maintain economic separateness, while married couples traditionally pool their financial resources (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983).

The couples in this sample reported somewhat lower levels of serious conflict than was found by the National Survey of Family Violence in 1975 (Straus, 1979). Nearly one third (31.2%) of the couples, in this sample, reported that they argued heatedly or shouted at each other, however, only 14.6 percent admitted to physical arguments that involved pushing, shoving, throwing objects at each other or hitting. An even smaller percentage of the couples (3.0%) reported injuring or being injured by their spouse during an argument. Although it is possible that these lower levels of violence reflect a lessening of the problem over the years, it is more likely that increasing levels of social disapproval of marital violence and an accompanying reluctance to admit to this behavior account for these reduced numbers. In addition, the scale used for this study is not as detailed as the original Conflict Tactics Scale, due to the nature of the questions asked in the survey. This may have resulted in a higher level of
under-reporting of these behaviors by the couples involved.

**Constructed Variables**

The dependent variable for this study, marital conflict, is a modified version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979). Marital conflict is conceptualized as a continuum ranging from calm discussions of disagreements to serious altercations resulting in injuries. Conflict resolution and reported violence were grouped into four categories, ranging from calmly discussing an issue to physical arguments with injuries. Table 1 presents the coded levels of conflict used in this scale. The scale measures only the level of violence in the relationship, not the frequency of violent behaviors or the seriousness of any injuries involved.

Because the literature cites serious under-reporting of family violence by many individuals, especially men, this study used a dyadic variable to identify methods of conflict resolution within the marriage. It was assumed that if violence was not truthfully reported, the problem was under-reporting not exaggeration, therefore, a couple's violence level was coded as the highest level that either party reported. Although this did not correct combined underreporting by
Table 1

Conflict Tactics Scale: Levels of Violent Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Level of Marital Conflict</th>
<th>Coded Level of Conflict&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usually to often discuss disagreements calmly</td>
<td>Low or no violence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes to often argue heatedly with each other</td>
<td>Verbal arguments</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes to often hit or throw objects at each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes to often have physical arguments (during past year)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more fights with husband hitting or throwing objects at wife (during past year)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or more fights with wife hitting or throwing objects at husband (during past year)</td>
<td>Pushing, shoving, throwing or hitting</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife has been injured by husband in a fight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband has been injured by wife in a fight</td>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Couple's level of conflict coded at the highest level reported by either individual.
the couple, it did compensate for individual minimization of violence.

Religiosity was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that included religious affiliation, religious beliefs and agreement with moral/ethical doctrines. Fundamentalist Protestants were the specific group of interest in this study, therefore a dummy variable was created to indicate Protestant affiliation. Individuals were coded 0 if they indicated that they were not affiliated with a Protestant denomination. Those who identified themselves as belonging to a Protestant church were coded 1. This variable was also coded to indicate the gender of the individual.

Questions, in the form of Likert scales, were selected to represent the latent concepts of traditional religious beliefs and conservative family/moral values that form an important core of fundamentalist Protestant doctrines. These questions were coded from 1 - very liberal orientation, to 5 - very traditional orientation. These variables were also coded to indicate gender. A factor analysis confirmed that these questions measured distinct latent constructs, religiosity and traditional family/moral values. Because they were coded separately for husbands and wives, a total of four scale variables were created, two for each gender. Factor loadings, Chronbach's Alpha and Eigenvalues for these factors are
shown in Table 2 and Table 3, were high for all of the variables with the exception of attitudes toward marital fidelity. This question was less correlated with the others, but was included in the scale for theoretical reasons. Disapproval of extra-marital sex is a basic tenant of conservative, fundamentalist Protestant ideology. For this reason, this variable was included in the analysis, in spite of its weaker factor loading.

Women's economic dependency was calculated using a dependency ratio developed by Sorensen and McLanahan (1987) and slightly modified by Barbara Hobson (1990).

\[ \text{DEP} = \frac{(\text{HUSBAND INC} - \text{WIFE INC})}{(\text{HUSBAND INC} + \text{WIFE INC})} \times 100 \]

This scale provides a percentage of economic dependency for wives ranging from +100, complete dependence, to -100, the husband is completely dependent on the wife. At the mid-point, 0, the couple has achieved equality, with neither being dependent on the other.

Sorensen and McLanahan's computation of dependency counts only earned income and assumes that couples pool their resources equally. No attempt was made to adjust the dependency scale for the amount of domestic work or child care that the wife may perform. Since their data did not allow them to measure income from other assets, earned incomes were originally chosen for practical reasons. Income is an imperfect indicator of the true nature of economic dependency, however, it is adequate
Table 2

Factor Loadings, Eigenvalues and Chronbach's Alpha for Fundamentalist Religious Belief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Factor Loadings (women)</th>
<th>Factor Loadings (men)</th>
<th>Chronbach’s Alpha &amp; Eigenvalues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alpha (women)</td>
<td>Eigen (women)</td>
<td>Alpha (men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bible answers all of life's problems</td>
<td>.90047</td>
<td>.90838</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible is truely God's word</td>
<td>.90035</td>
<td>.90071</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself a religious fundamentalist</td>
<td>.78288</td>
<td>.81262</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3
Factor Loadings, Eigenvalues and Chronbach's Alpha for Traditional Family/Moral Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional family/moral values</th>
<th>Factor Loadings (women)</th>
<th>Factor Loadings (men)</th>
<th>Chronbach's Alpha &amp; Eigenvalues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alpha (women)</td>
<td>Eigen (women)</td>
<td>Alpha (men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women should not work full-time if they have children under 5 yrs. old</td>
<td>.60563</td>
<td>.62081</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is wrong to have sex even with no plans to marry</td>
<td>.68418</td>
<td>.69499</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is better for the man to work the woman to stay home</td>
<td>.68926</td>
<td>.66702</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce is wrong in almost all circumstances</td>
<td>.62066</td>
<td>.58070</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is wrong for unmarried people to live together</td>
<td>.70561</td>
<td>.71681</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples should overlook isolated instances of marital unfaithfulness</td>
<td>.25798</td>
<td>.34839</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for this study as it addresses the basic issue of interest, the amount of income that each member of the dyad provides.

A final variable was constructed to measure the presence of substance abuse in the family. This variable was also dyadic, with the couple being the unit of analysis. The couple was coded as having a substance abuse problem if either member of the dyad indicated that a family member had a problem with drugs or alcohol. This includes both self reports of a problem and reports that the spouse or other family member was a substance abuser.

Sample Description

Table 4 presents the frequencies of the couple level variables: Conflict Level, Alcohol/Substance Abuse and Intermarriage. Table 5 provides the sample means for conflict, family income religiosity, traditional values and age, as well as the median level of women's economic dependency and median family income. Individual characteristics of the men in this sample are presented in Table 6 while Table 7 provides the corresponding set of characteristics for the women. These descriptive characteristics include education, race and religious affiliation.
Table 4

Couple Sample Description: Conflict, Alcohol/Substance Abuse and Intermarriage Data (N=3421)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Level of Reported Conflict</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
<th>Percent of Sample (weighted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calm Discussions</td>
<td>1703</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue or Shout</td>
<td>1054</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push, Shove or Hit</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fight with Injuries</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Currently Employed</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol/Substance Abuse by Family Member</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>298</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intermarried Couples:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnic</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

Sample Description: Average Conflict Score, Family Income, Religiosity, Traditional Moral/Family Values, Age, Median Wife's Economic Dependency Score and Median Family Income (N=3421)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Standard Deviations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couple Conflict Score</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>46086</td>
<td>51447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalist Religiosity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>9.29</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>9.77</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Moral/Family Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>24.57</td>
<td>4.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>24.25</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>39.88</td>
<td>12.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>37.29</td>
<td>12.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>37000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife's Economic Dependency</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

Men Sample Description: Education, Religious Affiliation and Race/Ethnicity Data (N=3421)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
<th>Percent of Sample (weighted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than High School Diploma</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>1210</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College/2 Year Degree</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachlors Degree or Higher</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Affiliation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>2154</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2933</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

Women Sample Description: Education, Religious Affiliation and Race/Ethnicity Data (N=3421)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
<th>Percent of Sample (weighted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than High School Diploma</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>1403</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College/2 Year Degree</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachlors Degree or Higher</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religious Affiliation:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>2307</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2944</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mean age of husbands in the sample was 40 years old (sd=12.85). The women were slightly younger, averaging 37 years of age (sd=12.37). Less than 10 percent (9.9%) of the men in the sample did not have a high school diploma while slightly less than one third (34.4%) had completed at least a high school education. In addition, nearly one third (29.8%) of these men had a college degree. Although more of the women in this sample did not have a high school diploma (12.0%), 42 percent of them had graduated from high school.

The sample of both husbands and wives was predominantly white (89%) with less than 6 percent of these individuals identifying themselves as black. Only a few couples (4.2%) indicated that the husband and wife were from different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Although these numbers do not reflect the actual proportion of minority individuals in the population, it is important to remember that this is a probability sample of married couples. A much larger percentage of the white population is married (61.5%) than the black population (46.7%) (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990). Median earnings for these couples was $37,000, above the 1987 national median income for married couples of $34,782 (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990).

Religious affiliation, which is shown in Table 6 and Table 7, is another important characteristic of these
respondents and their spouses. Five categories were used to designate religious affiliation, 1) No religion 2) Catholic 3) Jew 4) Protestant and 5) Other. The sample was predominantly Protestant, however a slightly higher percentage of women (67.2%) identified themselves as Protestant then men (62.7%). Slightly over a fifth of the individuals in this sample (20.9%) indicated that their religious affiliation was different from their spouse.

Data Analysis

A regression model was constructed to test the research hypothesis that women's economic dependence was positively related to increased levels of domestic violence. This model also examined the relationship between identification with traditional, Protestant conservative religious discourse and domestic violence. In addition, the model controlled for the effects of occupational status, racial/ethnic identity, education, age and family substance abuse problems.

Marital conflict, the dependent variable, was regressed on the independent variables religiosity, traditional family/moral values, Protestant religious affiliation, wife's economic dependency, family income, occupational status, racial/ethnic identity, education, age and family substance abuse problems.
Because this study used couple level variables, it was necessary to clearly define the characteristics of husbands and wives separately. Any variable that did not include both members of the dyad was coded by gender rather than using the categories respondent and spouse, which did not clearly differentiate between husbands and wives. This is in keeping with the feminist perspective of this study that conceptualizes the problem of marital violence in a framework of gender that directly impacts all other relationships.

The socio-economic variables were included in this equation because of their possible influence on the incidence of marital violence. Age, race, income and occupational status are factors that are often cited in the literature for their correlations with domestic violence and were included in the equation as control variables. Family income was logged to increase normality. Although the causal relationship between substance abuse and marital violence is problematic, its overall relationship to this issue was also determined to be an important factor and it was included in the analysis.
Chapter 4
Results

The research questions were examined by calculating two iterations of the regression formula. Both iterations included the couple-based variables conflict level, wife's dependency, family income and substance abuse. The first regression model used the men's scale of religiosity, traditional family values and the men's socio-economic and demographic characteristics while the second substituted the women's scales and demographics. The regression results for the men are reported in Table 8 and the women's results are in Table 9. Results were reported using the designations "beta" for the unstandardized parameter estimate and "Beta" for the standardized regression coefficient. Indicator variables were interpreted using only the unstandardized coefficient, since it is inappropriate to apply a standardized solution to a variable with only two possible values. The analysis was designed to control for the effect of gender without introducing the serious level of multicollinearity that would be present if these variables were included in one equation.

Question 1

The results of this analysis indicate that women's economic dependence is not significantly related to
Table 8

Regression Analysis - Husband's Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient (beta)</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient (Beta)</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-0.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Moral Values</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>-.087</td>
<td>-4.433***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Religious</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>-.028</td>
<td>-1.531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife's Economic Dependency</td>
<td>-.000</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>-1.420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>-.114</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>-2.372*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>0.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-collar Employment</td>
<td>-.000</td>
<td>-.000</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Race/Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>2.402*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Race/Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>1.992*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Race/Ethnic</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>0.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Race/Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>.258</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>1.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse Problem</td>
<td>.355</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>7.219***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>-.052</td>
<td>-2.559*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>-.198</td>
<td>-10.477***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.786***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = 22.684, df=14, 3406 p < .001, R²=.0853
* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Reference categories for indicator variables:
  a white-collar employment.
  b white race/ethnic identity.
Table 9

Regression Analysis - Wives' Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient (beta)</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient (Beta)</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>0.421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Moral Values</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td>-3.578***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant Religious</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>-2.046*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife's Economic Dependency</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>-2.240*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>-2.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Employed(^a)</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>1.581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-collar Employment(^a)</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>2.275*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Race/Ethnic Identity(^b)</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>2.198*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.032</td>
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<td>2.099*</td>
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<td>-0.699</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.121</td>
<td>7.324***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>-2.452*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>-.197</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13.185***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = 21.468, df=14, 3406 p < .001, \(R^2=.0811\)

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Reference catagories for indicator variables:
\(^a\) white-collar employment.
\(^b\) white race/ethnic identity.
levels of domestic violence for married couples when the husband's religious orientation, age, education, employment status, race and family income are controlled for in the model. The second iteration of the model, which controlled for economic and personal variables of the wives, did indicate that women's economic dependency was significantly related to marital violence (women's Beta=-.04, p < .05), however this relationship was not in the direction hypothesized. Dyadic violence was lowest for those couples with a dependent wife. Although feminist theory supports the assumption that the economic dependency of women, especially wives, is the foundation for the subordination of women in our society and is a significant factor in levels of marital violence, there is not sufficient evidence in these data to support this conclusion.

**Question 2**

These data also fail to support the hypothesis that individuals, of either gender, who identify with fundamentalist Protestant religious beliefs, will experience higher levels of marital conflict. Agreement with conservative Protestant religious tenets (religiosity) was not significantly related to levels of conflict for either gender. Membership in a Protestant denomination was also not significantly related to
marital conflict for men, however, women who identified themselves as Protestants were significantly less apt to be in violent relationships than non-Protestants (women's beta=-.07, p < .05).

Although fundamentalist religious beliefs are not significantly related to levels of family violence, identification with the basic family values of the fundamentalist discourse was significant for both genders (men's Beta=-.09 p < .001; women's Beta=-.07, p < .001), however, also not in the direction hypothesized.

The data do support previous findings that domestic violence is inversely related to age for both genders (men's Beta=-.20, p < .001; women's Beta=-.20, p < .001). This finding, although not unexpected, is surprisingly strong.

Although the relationship between race and marital violence is complex and somewhat suspect, it was controlled for in this analysis. These data do provide some interesting implications about the race/violence relationship, however, generalizations must be made cautiously. Both black men and black women are significantly more apt to be in violent relationships than whites (men's beta=.14, p < .05; women's beta=.13, p < .05). Hispanic men were also significantly more apt to be in high conflict relationships than white men (men's beta=.15, p < .05), but the results were not
significant for hispanic women. Although native American women report significantly higher levels of violence, native American men are not significantly more apt to be in high violence relationships than white men (men's beta=.30, p > .05; women's beta=.42, p < .05). These findings are somewhat of a paradox since the rate of racial/ethnic intermarriage is relatively low for this sample.

It is likely that these findings indicate a spurious relationship between the race of the individual and marital conflict. The findings do not clearly show that any single racial/ethnic group is more involved in violent dyadic relationships, but rather that all of the minorities in this study had some difficulties in this regard. Because these groups are culturally diverse it is important to examine the one trait that they all share, minority status in a racially biased society. The stress of being a minority in a racially prejudiced culture may account for these findings.

As indicated in Table 4, more than one forth of the women (27.8%) and nearly 10 percent of the men (9.7%) in this sample were not employed. In spite of the perception that marital violence is a serious problem for unemployed or non-employed individuals, these data indicate that lack of employment is not a significant factor for either gender. This finding is counter to the
results of many previous studies. These data do indicate that the family's total income is a significant factor in levels of marital violence when the model controls for men's occupational status, employment and wife's economic dependency (men's Beta=-.04, p < .05). This indicates that it is the stress of an inadequate income, rather than men's unemployment or underemployment, that is related to marital violence.

Although it is undeniable that periods of unemployment may be extremely stressful (Keefe, 1984; Donovan, Jaffe & Pirie, 1987), the apparent relationship between unemployment and domestic violence may actually reflect decreased levels of family income rather than the stress of looking for work. Keefe (1984) found that the loss of "the capacity to consume and to associate in groups that require money" (p. 266) was a devastating consequence of unemployment resulting in loss of feelings of "adult self-worth in a market economy" (p. 266). This loss of economic sufficiency may result from a variety of factors including, but not limited to unemployment. If the loss of income incurred by a period of unemployment does not seriously threaten the family standard of living, couples may weather the interval with little increase in conflict.

Men's occupational status was also not significantly related to levels of marital violence for these couples,
however, women's job status was (beta=.09, p < .05). These data indicate that women in lower status, blue-collar, jobs are more often involved in domestic violence than women who have higher-status, white-collar employment. This supports the socialist feminist position that women who are economically exploited may also be the subject of abuse and violence within their dyadic relationships.

Couples who identify drug or alcohol abuse as a problem for some member of their family were also found to experience significantly higher levels of marital violence (men's beta=.36, p < .001; women's beta=.36, p < .001). Although the role of substance abuse is not clearly defined in these data, this finding is consistent with earlier reports of a consistently positive correlation between alcohol/drug abuse and levels of domestic violence.
Chapter 5
Discussion

Violent conflict within conjugal dyads is a multidimensional problem with deep historical roots in our culture. Although it has been the subject of a great deal of research during the past two decades, from a variety of perspectives, we still have little real understanding of the issue. No single discipline nor theoretical perspective has been able to account for this complex social dilemma.

In order to better understand marital violence we must seek answers to a set of basic questions. Why does violence occur in intimate relationships, what factors allow it to happen, what causes marital discord to escalate to violence, who commits the acts of violence and what can society do to protect the victims?

Radical feminist theory posits that our patriarchal social system is the foundation for the oppression of women in our society (French, 1985; Daly, 1978; Daly, 1973; Firestone, 1970; Millet, 1970). Millet (1970) argues that the patriarchy defines all power relationships by the male-female relationship. This ideology of patriarchy is strengthen the institutions of school, church and government, which justify the subordination of women as normal and natural. If women
refuse to adhere to patriarchal norms, men will resort to coercion to force them to comply. Tong (1989) writes,

Male violence against women is normalized and legitimized in sexual practices through the assumption that when it comes to sex, men are by nature aggressive and dominant, whereas women are by nature passive and submissive. Because male dominance and female submission are the norm in something as fundamental as sexuality, they become the norm in other contexts as well. As most radical feminists see it, women will never be men's full political, economic, and social equals until heterosexual relations are entirely egalitarian (p. 110).

Feminists define marital violence as wife beating and deny that the problem is one of mutual combat. From their perspective, it is gender abuse and they pose the question "Why are women considered to be the appropriate object for men's violence in our culture?" Feminist theorists see the issue of conjugal violence as intimately intertwined with the larger social issues of male power and dominance (Breines & Gordon, 1983).

Social exchange theory, which defines the family as an economic unit, suggests that power in relationships is directly related to the individual's ability to acquire material goods for the family. Both feminist theory and social exchange theory suggest that domestic violence is related to women's lack of economic resources and their resulting lack of power and prestige within their dyadic relationships.
Limitations

This study develops two regression models to examine levels of marital violence using a variety of social and demographic predictors. The regression results are presented in Table 8 and Table 9. Although the model is statistically significant, unfortunately, it has little substantive significance. The analysis explains less than 10 percent of the variance in the dependent variable, leaving more than 90 percent unexplained. With the exception of the variables age and substance abuse, none of the predictor variables are strongly related to the dependent variable, marital conflict.

Early childhood experience with violence was not included in this model because it was not possible to explore this dimension using these data. This may be a significant factor in domestic violence and inclusion of this construct might have increased the overall quality of the model.

Because this study relied on available data, the scope of the inquiry was somewhat limited. It was not possible to adequately address attitudes toward violence or the belief that it is natural and appropriate for men to be aggressive toward women. In addition, this study did not address how either the victim or the aggressor interpreted the abusive behavior or how patterns of abuse change within dyads over time.
In spite of the failure of these data to provide a strong explanation of the causes of marital violence, they do provide an important piece of the puzzle. Because this study uses information gathered from a very large probability sample of American households, it does provide an opportunity to examine social/demographic aspects of marital violence and test theories that have been proposed to explain its prevalence. A second wave of these data, which are currently being collected from these respondents, will allow researchers to examine these issues longitudinally in the future. The National Survey of Families and Households survey has provided a unique opportunity to study the issue of conflict resolution within a large number of marital dyads from a variety of perspectives.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

This study examined the interrelationships of belief in fundamentalist Protestant religious doctrines, affiliation with a Protestant denomination, agreement with fundamentalist Protestant moral values and dyadic violence. The study found that, for men, neither religious beliefs nor identification with a Protestant denomination had a significant relationship to levels of marital violence. It was hypothesized that fundamentalist Protestants, who subscribe to a more
traditional male-dominated family structure, would have a higher levels of marital violence. This was based on the assumption that fundamentalist Protestant men, who have been socialized to believe that they have a natural, God-given right to dominate women, would feel more justified in using force to maintain their superordinate position in the family. Protestant women, who are taught that divorce is wrong and that women must submit to their husbands, were assumed to be more apt to remain in violent relationships.

Although the formal, polmetric, teachings of conservative, fundamentalist Protestants place strong emphasis on male authority and hierarchical family structures, this rhetoric, according to McNamara (1985), seems to have less influence on these respondents than the less formal, pastoral teachings that encourage "...loving, nurturing and caring" (p. 454) family interactions.

Agreement with the set of basic moral/family values that are the core of the fundamentalist Protestant tenets, was found to be significantly related to reduced levels of marital violence for the couples in this study. It is possible that these respondents were simply less forthcoming about violence in their relationships, however, these data indicate that individuals who agree with the moral teachings of the fundamentalist Protestant
ideology are less apt to be in abusive or violent dyadic relationships. The basic family/moral values, presented in the pastoral teachings, appear to lessen the potential for violent interactions within these marital dyads. This supports McNamara's (1985) argument that the pastoral teachings of the more fundamentalist Protestant sects tend to promote more harmonious family relationships.

These pastoral teachings stress the love relationship between husband and wife and the importance of providing a tender, caring home in which children can grow and flourish. Abortion, divorce, sexual immorality and women's participation in the workforce are opposed because they are seen as threats to family stability. The importance of maintaining the family unit, even at the expense of personal fulfillment, is a reoccurring theme. The family is conceptualized as a reflection of the greater cosmos, with the husband representing God. Because he represents the supreme father, the husband must be respected and obeyed. In return, it is his responsibility to exercise his authority with compassion and understanding (McNamara, 1985).

Although Helson and Picano (1990) found some evidence that women who assumed a traditional family role "...had not shown the gains in independence and assertiveness evidenced by (the non-traditional women in
their sample) and had increased their already high level of impulse control" (p. 318), they found no conclusive evidence that the traditional role was inherently bad for women. In spite of the high value placed on women's independence and assertiveness by feminists, it is a mistake to assume that everyone admires and values these traits equally. Women may find alternative traits and behaviors that empower them and protect them from marital abuse.

The relationship of women's economic dependence to marital violence was gender related for the couples in this sample. Dependence, the relationship between the wife's income and her husband's, was a significant factor only when the woman's other economic and social variables were included in the model. Its relationship to marital violence was not significant when the model controlled for the men's social and economic factors.

Although the distribution of economic resources is a powerful tool for creating inequality within a marriage, it is subject to the expectations of the individuals within the dyad. If wives are not expected to assume the role of provider in the relationship, then women's economic dependency becomes much less problematic (Stafford, 1984).

As work has become sex-segregated in the market place economy, men have consistently assumed the provider
role while women have retreated to the household (Hood, 1986; Bernard, 1981) and become, according to Hood "the Housewife-Mother" (p. 351). The ideal that men should be the economic providers while women remain responsible for family caretaking is a paradigm which many American couples hold as an abstract ideal (Hood, 1986).

Identification with traditional gender roles and the assumption by men that they have an innate duty to furnish economic support provides an important balance in dyadic relationships for women who are economically dependent. This same ideology, however, may increase levels of marital violence for economically distressed couples, especially those who depend heavily on the wife's income. Husbands who are unable to provide an adequate level of family income may react violently to their own perceived failure.

Bowen (1988) proposes that "satisfying family relationships may be conceptualized as equitable reciprocal exchanges based on the ability of family members to jointly realize family-related values in behavior" (p. 459). Gender identity is intimately linked to the roles that we assume and their meaning in our culture. Feelings of performing a natural and agreed upon role may increase an individual's feelings of power and serve to ameliorate discord and violence in their relationships.
Economic dependency also does not appear to predispose women to abuse, particularly for those who also identify with conservative, Protestant family values. Independence and assertiveness are behaviors that may be strongly valued by many women, however, those who choose a more traditional life path are not necessarily predisposing themselves to violence or abuse. This study confirms the reality that acquiescence to the norms of the power structure and acceptance of its restrictions provides a measure of personal safety for subordinate individuals.

Although feminist theory posits that the traditional role of women, as defined within the patriarchy, is the basis for the subjugation, exploitation and abuse of women in our culture, this study indicates that the relationship may not be this straightforward and simple. It appears that accommodation to patriarchal norms, as expressed by conservative Protestant religious discourse, may provide a degree of protection from abuse for some women.

This study also confirmed the findings of many earlier researchers that conjugal violence, like all other forms of violence in our society, is a problem of young adults. This finding comes as no surprise, however, it does lead to some interesting questions that need to be explored further. Although the aggregate level
of violence is negatively correlated with age, what is the relationship between extreme violence and age? Do violent couples find more appropriate, less violent ways to solve their conflicts as they get older or do they separate? What is the relationship between violence in a first marriage and violence in later relationships. Do victims continue to be abused in subsequent relationships and do abusers continue to abuse? These questions must be addressed using longitudinal data that follows specific individuals over time. What factors in our culture allow or encourage young adults to act violently and what causes the apparent decrease with age? This question is relevant both to the issue of domestic violence and the larger issue of crime in our culture.

Poverty, unemployment, race and social class are often cited for their association with domestic violence. These issues are complex and their relationships are often interwoven in a way that makes it difficult or impossible to separate them. This study found some relationship between low-status, blue-collar employment for women and domestic violence. In addition, low-family income was significantly related to marital violence. Although domestic violence is a serious problem for all social classes, the strains of minority status, poverty and inadequate family incomes seem to place a special burden on lower socioeconomic couples.
In order to fully understand the issue of relationship violence, the psychological level must also be addressed more clearly. Early psychological studies of marital violence often focused on the question of why a woman would stay in an abusive relationship. Although this question needs to be addressed in order to remove barriers that prevent victims from leaving, it is of less importance than determining why the abuser abuses. Rather than "blaming the victim" as many of the earlier studies are guilty of, researchers, law enforcement personnel and social service providers must clearly assign the responsibility for the behavior to the actor. The person who hits is clearly responsible for his or her own actions and must be held accountable. Further research focused on the reasons that abusers give for their actions as well as the consequences could provide an important understanding of this problem. Although cultural and social factors are often implicated in conjugal violence, it is important to remember that it is one individual who is abusing another. The personal level of this problem must also be explored.

It is important to note that the social and demographic variables included in this model are those that are consistently cited in the literature for their important connections to marital violence, however, these data, gathered from a large probability sample of married
couples, failed to support the assumption that these factors adequately explain the presence of dyadic violence in our culture. Because many of the findings were statistically significant, it is tempting to make policy recommendations based on these results, however, any policy built on such weak findings would be of questionable value.
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