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A study of domestic violence and patriarchal ideologies in popular men's magazines

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A Study of Domestic Violence and Patriarchal Ideologies in Popular Men's Magazines

An Honors Program Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Arts and Letters
James Madison University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Bachelor of Science

by Annika Marie Wilcox

Spring 2015

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Justice Studies, James Madison University, in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science.

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Abstract

This study examines the prevalence and nature of the portrayals of domestic violence in popular men's magazines. The sample consists of 20 articles drawn from five popular men's magazines. The small size of the available sample exemplifies that articles discussing domestic violence continue to be relatively uncommon. Through the qualitative method of continuous comparative analysis, this study identifies four common perspectives that are exhibited within articles on domestic violence: gender symmetry, feminist, GS-Neutral, and F-Neutral. The most common perspective, gender symmetry, was exhibited by 45% (9 of 20) of the articles, and is characterized by an ignorance of the context of domestic violence and a lack of criticism of the occurrence and handling of the issue. The second most common perspective, feminist, was exhibited by 25% (5 of 20) of the articles, and is identifiable by its fair discussion of the context and criticisms of domestic violence.

Keywords: domestic violence, patriarchal ideology, gender, media

Introduction

Many individuals live under the assumption that gender inequality is a thing of the past. However, one such form of gender inequality, domestic violence, continues to affect many people. For example, while some studies show that domestic violence victimization has decreased in the years since the domestic violence shelter movement, this likely reflects an overly optimistic vision of reality (Stark, 2007). Kimmel (2002) states that, “domestic violence has emerged as one of the world’s most pressing problems” (p. 1332). Indeed, (men’s) violence against women continues to be a critical public health issue (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise & Watts, 2006), although dominant cultural discourse surrounding these issues often obscures this reality. This can be seen in the discourse surrounding “domestic violence,” which pushes a generic, or gender symmetrical, analytic lens (for a review, see Kimmel, 2002). And although such discourse is supported by some empirical research, a much more convincing body of feminist research has uncovered a different reality.

Research has shown that (in heterosexual relationships) men commit the majority of acts of domestic violence, targeting women as their victims (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Hunnicutt, 2009; Tjaden & Thoenes, 2000). Worldwide, it is estimated that between 20% and 50% of all women have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of intimate partners (past or present) or family members (see Kimmel 2002; Leeman, 2000; United Nations Population Fund, 2000). This extreme prevalence of domestic violence targeting women, and the comparative lack of domestic violence targeting men, leads one to question the possible foundations of this gendered disparity. This paper will examine the underlying ideological and structural supports of gendered domestic violence. As the media is a forum for public discourse and a source of the maintenance of dominant ideologies (such as the patriarchal

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ideologies that underlie domestic violence), examining its discussion of domestic violence may be informative to our understanding of how this issue continues. Focusing on the media as a simultaneous source and reflection of mainstream ideology, this study focuses on recent, popular men's magazines. The frequency of domestic violence articles in men's magazines, as well as their content and tone, are examined in order to foster an understanding of the malestream discourse surrounding the issue. First, the paper gives a discussion of relevant background information, followed by a review of the existing literature on this topic. This is followed by a methodology section describing the specifics of the research conducted. The paper then discusses the results of this study. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion on the findings along with suggestions for future research in this area.

Background Information & Review of the Literature

Before discussing the ways in which magazines may have an impact on the beliefs, and consequently, actions of men, it is necessary to discuss some background information that is highly relevant to this study. The current condition of gender inequality in the U.S. must first be addressed, followed by the relationship between domestic violence and the gender of its victims. Subsequently, the position of domestic violence as a widespread social issue will be explained along with its underlying ideological supports, patriarchy and its gender roles. Individual characteristics related to the perpetration of domestic violence, which can be socially learned and highly relevant to the publications of magazines, will next be discussed. Finally, an overview of similar, previously conducted studies will be given.

Patriarchy

Hunnicutt (2009) argues that patriarchy is a system that focuses on gender, where men maintain power over women in a hierarchy of domination through social systems. Hunnicutt supports Dobash and Dobash (1979) in contending that the perpetuation of patriarchy happens both ideologically and structurally: social systems and institutions exhibit and reinforce patriarchal attitudes, perpetuating gender inequalities throughout society. At the most basic level, patriarchy is the system of male domination of women. Allan Johnson (1997) outlines three criteria for a society to be categorized as patriarchal: societies are patriarchal if they are male-dominated (men fill positions of authority), male-identified (ideas about what is good/preferable are associated with norms of masculinity), and male-centered (attention is focused on men and their actions).

It has long been known that patriarchy exists in the U.S., where women are subordinates to men. Many individuals, however, are either unaware of this or assume gender equality has

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been achieved and patriarchy is a thing of the past. The position of women has indeed changed in the last century, but in reality, “this highly publicized progress supports an illusion of fundamental change” (Johnson, 1997, p. 12). Although women’s positions within the patriarchal system have improved, these improvements are relatively minor. By many people, patriarchy simply goes unnoticed. Gender inequality is often difficult to come to terms with and much easier to ignore in everyday life. Johnson (1997) argues that one of the reasons societal male domination continues is due to the inability to acknowledge its existence. Many are uncomfortable admitting or acknowledging that inequalities exist between men and women, because they live and work so closely together through the often-held assumption that they are “equals.” Lorber (1994) states that the very fact that “men” and “women” are two distinct social categories proves that there is inequality between them, for distinction is unnecessary if between equals. Johnson (1997) gives a powerful explanation of gender inequality that may help some come to terms with this continuing issue in the U.S.:

Gender privilege [...] appears in countless patterns of everyday life in family and work, religion and politics, community and education. It is found in family divisions of labor that exempt fathers from most domestic work even when both parents work outside the home, and in the concentration of women in lower-level pink-collar jobs and male predominance almost everywhere else. It is the unequal distribution of income and all that goes with it, from access to health care to the availability of leisure time. It is in patterns of male violence and harassment [...] in the unequal distribution of power that makes oppression possible. (p. 87)

Though the existence of patriarchy in the U.S. is difficult to come to terms with for many, it is a significant factor that must be acknowledged prior to any discussion of domestic violence. The

aforementioned ideological and structural perpetrators of patriarchy will become a recurring theme throughout this paper.

Domestic Violence and Gender

Once the existence of gender inequality has been acknowledged, it is useful as a lens through which to view domestic violence. Numerous researchers have uncovered the gendered nature of domestic violence, in which men are most often the perpetrators and women are most often their victims (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Davies, Ford-Gilboe & Hammerton, 2008; Hunnicutt, 2009; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson & Daly, 1992; Johnson, 1995; Johnson, 2005; Kimmel, 2002; Stark, 2007; Tjaden & Thoenes, 2000; Varcoe, 1996; Websdale & Johnson, 1997; Yodanis, 2004). In a study of data from the National Violence Against Women Survey, (NVAWS), Tjaden and Thoenes (2000) found that, “Women were 22.5 times more likely to report being raped, 2.9 times more likely to report being physically assaulted, and 8.2 times more likely to report being stalked by a [...] partner at some time in their lives” (p. 151). These findings are consistently supported in a variety of studies, past and present (see DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2011; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dobash et al., 1992; Johnson, 1995; Kimmel, 2002; World Health Organization, 2013).

DeKeseredy (2011) explains that when discussing domestic violence, it is important to note whether one is using broad or narrow definitions of the issue. Narrow definitions of domestic violence “focus mainly on physical abuse or sexual assaults involving forced penetration” (DeKeseredy, 2011, p. 5). Narrow definitions minimize men’s violence against women¹, stipulating that a woman must be physically abused or raped before being considered a

¹ As Katz (2006) has argued, the term “men’s violence against women” is much more accurate than simply “violence against women”, as it does not overlook the perpetrators of such violence.

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victim of domestic violence. Proponents of narrow definitions might include “right-wing father’s rights groups and other anti-feminists who claim that women are as violent as men”

(DeKeseredy, 2011, p. 6). These individuals may feel threatened by broad definitions, and have something to lose if they use them. DeKeseredy states that narrow definitions of domestic violence do not acknowledge that gender plays a key role in the perpetration of it. Further (this is especially so when used in “objective” research studies), narrow definitions can perpetuate domestic violence stereotypes and myths. By limiting the acts considered to be “domestic violence” so severely, narrow definitions aggravate the issue of underreporting, and also discourage abused women from seeking help (DeKeseredy, 2011).

Broad definitions, DeKeseredy (2011) argues, acknowledge that domestic violence extends far beyond physical abuse and penetrative sexual assault. Broad definitions are extended to also include feelings of entrapment and powerlessness caused by psychological abuse, economic abuse, spiritual abuse, and/or stalking (DeKeseredy, 2011). Among the researchers of domestic violence, there is a consensus that violence is used by men as either a form of control, or as a tool to regain control that may seem to be dwindling (Anderson, 1997; Davies et al., 2008; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hunnicutt, 2009; Johnson, 1995; Johnson, 2005; Kimmel, 2002; Stark, 2007; Walker, 1989; Websdale, 2010; Websdale & Johnson, 1997). In this paper, the discussion of domestic violence will focus on that of coercive control. Narrow definitions do not acknowledge this devastating, long-lasting, and prevalent form of domestic violence that is perpetrated overwhelmingly by men against women. It is a tactic used to control one’s partner, which “uses various means to hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate, and dominate the victims” (Stark, 2007, p. 5). Johnson (2005) discusses coercive control through the analogous name of “intimate terrorism”, arguing that it is likely to be recurring and inflict serious harm on

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the victim. This is the type of crime typically envisioned in public discussions of domestic violence (Johnson, 2005), and the stereotypical form that most imagine when they hear the concept “domestic violence.”

Those that use narrow definitions often define domestic violence as being perpetrated equally by men and women. However, this argument can only be made if the focus is on violence within relationships that arises due to *isolated* arguments or conflicts, as this kind of violence is perpetrated by both men and women, and is not gendered (Johnson, 2005). However, rather than focusing on isolated acts of domestic violence such as this (which are not necessarily the primary concern when discussing domestic violence), it is important to focus attention on the type of violence that takes place over the course of relationships due to power imbalances between two partners (coercive control). Coercive control is indeed gendered (Johnson, 2006; Stark 2006; 2007). Researcher Evan Stark (2006) asserts, in his research that spans over a decade, that he has, “never encountered a case of [coercive control] with a female perpetrator and male victim” (p. 1024). Thus, in order to note the gendered nature of serious domestic violence, it is imperative to distinguish between isolated violent incidents and continuous coercive control. Many researchers have examined the gender symmetry argument against the gendered nature of domestic violence arriving at similar conclusions. It is agreed that there is a relationship between gender and domestic violence (in the most prevalent form of coercive control), and that it is sometimes missed due to unclear definitions (those which see no difference between situational violence used by both sexes and coercively controlling violence used by men) (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007; Dobash et al., 1992; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Kimmel, 2002). Even within isolated violent incidents, though, men tend to have an advantage. Johnson (2005) notes that in gender-balanced domestic violence, male violence is much more

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harmful than female violence, such that females are more likely to be fearful of (and sustain greater injuries from) their partners' violence than males are.

The use of violence as a means of control occurs in patriarchal societies. Johnson (1997) states that, "what drives patriarchy as a system [...] is a dynamic relationship between control and fear" (p. 26). Men are expected to hold control (especially over women), and violence is a means to obtain and maintain that control. However, violence is not necessarily caused by expectations of male control. Rather, control is a main contributing factor to the use of men's violence against women, though not the only one (Anderson, 1997; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Websdale, 2010).

Domestic Violence: Not an Individual Issue

Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) theorized that individuals socially construct their own reality as they act in the world, and that typification occurs when people classify other people as belonging to particular groups. Typification is essentially stereotyping, an act that has a major impact on the perpetuation of men's violence against women. The issue with stereotypes is that they are social constructs, having no objective truth to support them. Carmody (1998) equates stereotypes of domestic violence with social myths because they blame victims for the perpetration of domestic violence, drawing support from the patriarchal ideologies that permeate society. A social construction (or stereotype) of domestic violence is a portrayal that many individuals take to be an accurate depiction of reality (Carmody, 1998). As many researchers have argued, battered women tend to be considered at fault for the abuse they receive (Berns, 1999; Ferraro, 1996; Renzetti, 1994), or responsible for not preventing the abuse done to them (Nettleton, 2011). This skewed perception that lacks an understanding of coercive control happens within the context of patriarchy – it names violent men as criminals and battered women

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as mentally ill (Ferraro, 1996). As the perpetration of domestic violence is regarded as solely a criminal issue (Websdale & Johnson, 1997), the context in which it occurs is ignored. Placing responsibility on the individual that commits domestic violence is warranted. However, we must also address the larger societal structure and culture that these acts take place within if we want to take steps towards preventing this type of violence in the future (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009). DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009) state that, “a substantial number of injurious male actions, values, and beliefs are microsocial expressions of broader patriarchal forces [...] all [men] live in the same society” (p. 33). Johnson (1997) agrees that the behavior of individuals is shaped by the social context in which they live. The issue of domestic violence cannot be completely addressed if the context in which it takes place is ignored.

Domestic violence is considered to be a pressing public health issue (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; Heise, 1993; Kimmel, 2002). DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009) state that male-to-female abuse (including physical, psychological, and sexual forms of abuse, among others) has become fixed in the American population, as it occurs on such a large scale that it can no longer be considered isolated. It is argued that American culture “simultaneously perpetuates and hides” domestic violence against women (Davies et al., 2008, p. 28) by relying on individual explanations for domestic violence. It may be difficult to acknowledge, but domestic violence is a deeply rooted societal issue (Davies et al., 2008; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009; Hunnicutt, 2009; Varcoe, 1996; Yodanis, 2004). Despite this reality, however, the arguments of groups and individuals with vested interests in misrepresenting this reality is partly to blame for why domestic violence is still viewed by some as isolated incidences and while others might view it as both isolated and non-gendered.

Gender Roles, Patriarchal Ideology, and Social Life

Gender is acquired through interaction with other people: it is learned behaviors and attitudes that are not inherent (West & Zimmerman, 1987). It separates people into two groups, men and women, dictating the ways in which each group should be (Lorber, 1994). Gender roles are the ways in which individuals are expected to act, based on their sex (male or female). In patriarchal societies, women are expected to be nurturing, kind, and sympathetic, while men are expected to be aggressive, independent, and powerful (Heilman, 2001). Women are expected to be passive, while men are expected to be the decision makers, and to always get their way. Gender roles are socially constructed based on the idea that differences between men and women naturally exist, though differences between the sexes are practically negligible (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender roles portray men and women as “oppositional, with members of one sex seen as lacking what is thought to be most prevalent in members of the other sex” (Heilman, 2001, p. 658). However, the fact that we must *learn* how to act appropriately for our given gender exemplifies how unnatural gender really is. Lorber (1994) argues that we cannot live in a society that teaches gender and prevent ourselves from becoming involved in it. It is so expected that those who are genderless are treated as outcasts. Even though gender is not inherent, it is something that individuals must maintain, or else face the social consequences (West & Zimmerman, 1987). West and Zimmerman (1987) consider gender to be something that is continuously acted out by individuals. Fulfilling gender roles equates with constantly reasserting one’s gender. However, constantly having to prove ones gender can have its repercussions.

Johnson (1997) sees acceptance of gender roles as a custom that plays a large part in the perpetuation of patriarchy. In the U.S. (and patriarchal cultures more generally), aggression is

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gendered in that it is portrayed as a way for men to exhibit their masculinity (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Kimmel, 2002; Sugarman & Frankel, 1996). This normalizes male aggression, producing the idea that men's violence against women is a "natural" product of male socialization (Hunnicut, 2009). Anderson and Umberson (2001) affirm that, "violence is (at least temporarily) an effective means for batterers to reconstruct men as masculine and women as feminine" (p. 375). Batterers may see violence as socially expected. This may not be unfounded: from the point of view of many individuals, violent behavior performed by men is seen as normal (Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Katz, 2003). Conversely, because men and women are socially constructed as total opposites, violent behavior performed by women is seen as deviant. Men are permitted to be violent whereas women are not.

Gender roles are supported by patriarchal ideologies. Websdale and Alvarez (1998) define patriarchal ideology as, "[the] system of beliefs and ideas that justify or legitimate the power of men over women" (p. 137). They go on to argue that patriarchal ideologies portray current gender relations as biological and, thus, unavoidable. No individual can avoid exposure to patriarchal attitudes in American society (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009), because they are so entrenched in every social institution. Accordingly, men's violence against women can be seen as partially a product of structure and society (Hunnicut, 2009): it is related to recurring "structures of male dominance" (Yodanis, 2004, p. 673). Structurally, males are allowed more power than women through the social organization of patriarchy (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009). This power is maintained with patriarchal ideology, or the idea that women are *meant* to be inferior (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009). The belief that men should naturally hold power and control over women permeates societal institutions including the family, the economy, and

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the government (Yodanis, 2004). Social institutions are an outlet through which gender roles are maintained.

Nettleton (2011) states that perpetrators of domestic violence receive less legal punishment than do other perpetrators of assault. Because men dominate social institutions, institutional policies and practices are most likely to reflect the ideals and beliefs supporting the dominance of men (Yodanis, 2004). It is argued that, in patriarchal societies, women live with the constant feeling of fear (Yodanis, 2004). This is because male violence towards women is so common that women are afraid regardless of whether they have experienced it personally. Furthermore, male dominance allows for multiple forms of men's violence against women (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, emotional abuse), and forces women to constantly feel even more vulnerable to men (Lorber, 1994). However, in a patriarchal society, the experiences of women are marginalized (Johnson, 1997). The experiences of women are treated as unimportant (Johnson, 1997), and women are offered little solace for the violence that they must deal with throughout their lives.

Domestic violence against women arises in the context of the society in which they live. The context of patriarchy and gender inequality is not irrelevant to the perpetration of domestic violence. It is necessary for the structural and ideological roots of this social problem to be examined in order to make progress towards providing a society where women no longer have to live with men's violence (or the threat of it) (Anderson, 1997; Berns, 1999; Davies et al., 2008; Ferraro, 1996; Renzetti, 1994; Varcoe, 1996).

Individual Characteristics Related to Domestic Violence

It is important to consider how social attitudes and beliefs internalized by individuals may play a role in their personal perpetration of domestic violence. Attitudes play a considerable

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role in men's violence against women in three main areas: "the perpetration of violence against women, women's response to this victimization, and community and institutional responses to violence against women" (Flood & Pease, 2009, p. 126).

Flood & Pease (2009) maintain that individuals form attitudes towards violence against women through a wide range of social processes. They list gender roles/relations as one of the main influences on attitudes, along with "other forms of social difference associated with ethnicity and class" (p. 126). Many researchers agree that there is a relationship between gender attitudes and domestic violence, as men that have internalized gender role attitudes (that are negative towards women) are more likely to commit domestic violence (Heise, 1998; Flood & Pease, 2009; Hunnicutt 2009; Johnson, 2005). Using knowledge of gender role prescriptions, it makes sense that patriarchal gender role beliefs support acts of male dominance. When men internalize these beliefs, it can have enormous implications for their behavior. Beliefs are a significant factor in the decision to enact behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). Ajzen (1991) argues that examining beliefs allows us to see why one person may enact a certain behavior and why another person may behave completely differently. Patriarchal beliefs do not cause men to commit domestic violence, but they do play a role in its perpetration by creating a culture in which gender norms perpetuate expectations of male dominance and female subordination.

Although not all, or even most, men engage in acts of domestic violence against women, it is telling that perpetrators' excuses and justifications for domestic violence are shaped by dominant cultural norms (Anderson & Umberson, 2001). It is within institutional and ideological patriarchy that gender attitudes are learned. Flood and Pease (2009) state that, "Gender is a consistent predictor of attitudes that support use of violence against women" (p. 127). Essentially, men that live under patriarchy are more likely to agree with myths that support

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violence against women (Flood & Pease, 2009). In addition, men are also more likely to see fewer behaviors as violent, to blame the victims of violence, and to see acts of men's violence against women as less harmful (than women do) (Flood & Pease, 2009). This could be due to the socialization of men, who are taught through gender roles that aggression is expected, and may internalize this in such a way that it leads to a rejection of empathy. Consequently, men may have difficulty seeing why men's violence against women is an issue. As Johnson (1997) reminds us, patriarchy is a system that devalues women, making their lived experiences unimportant and sometimes ignored.

Finally, it has been found that there is an association between beliefs supportive of domestic violence and the perpetration of such violence (Sugarman & Frankel, 1996). When considering gender roles, which postulate standards of behavior for each sex, it is interesting to note that behaviors and attitudes that are more supportive of violence are generally considered "masculine", while behaviors and attitudes that are less supportive of violence are generally considered "feminine". If males internalize the definition of masculinity, believing that violence is a masculine trait, they may be more likely (than women) to act in violent ways and become batterers.

Why Media Portrayals of Domestic Violence Matter

It is argued that there are six areas of influence that shape attitudes (that individuals hold) towards domestic violence: gender, culture, individual factors, organizational factors, community factors, and societal factors (Flood & Pease, 2009). Societal factors, in this situation, are defined as mass media, social movements, and criminal justice policies/law reform (Flood & Pease, 2009). It is contended that the media, in addition to displaying prevalent social and cultural values, also plays a role in shaping them (Nettleton, 2011). Some researchers believe that the

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media has a large influence on the public perception of social issues (such as domestic violence), and view the media as a supplier of social constructions (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, & Sasson, 1992; Gillespie, Richards, Givens, & Smith, 2013). Put simply, the media is an important source of socialization (Arnett, 1995; Silverblatt, 2004). It plays an important role in the shaping of attitudes and values of individuals. Thus, there is evidence to suggest the media plays a large role in public perceptions of domestic violence.

The media is a social institution (Silverblatt, 2004): an institution that is argued to “legitimate men’s cultural domination” (Lorber, 1994, p. 100). The media plays a role in the perpetuation of patriarchy through gendered ideologies. The movie and advertising industries are considered two important sources of the social construction of (aggressive) masculinity (Katz, 2003). News stories often perpetuate gender stereotypes (Bullock & Cubert, 2002), and media representations of crimes targeting women may perpetuate negative attitudes towards women (Carmody, 1998). In a content analysis of 336 relationship advice columns in popular men’s magazines, Spalding, Zimmerman, Fruhauf, Banning, and Pepin (2010) found that “men’s magazine advice columns encompassed the attitude of reinforcing men’s masculinity in American society” (p. 219). Studying media outlets may give insight into how gender attitudes and patriarchal ideologies are sustained.

Specifically, magazines may be very informative to study. Spalding et al. (2010) argue that it is “important to study the advice given in men’s magazines to understand modern-day social norms about masculinity” (p. 205). Nettleton (2011) believes that the discourse in popular magazines typically supports patriarchal ideology, regardless of the intended target of women or men. Nettleton also argues that magazines instruct individuals on how to conduct social interaction. Studying magazines may make apparent some of the attitudes and beliefs that are

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continuously being taught to individuals. Unfortunately, there has been little research on whether magazines fit the criteria for perpetuating gender attitudes and/or patriarchal beliefs. The following section will focus on the few studies that have addressed this particular area.

Empirical Research on Portrayals of Domestic Violence in Magazines

Berns (1999) conducted a qualitative study of women's magazines (sampling *Essence*, *Glamour*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Mademoiselle*, *McCall's*, *Redbook*, *Seventeen*, *Teen*, and *Vogue*) that were printed between 1970 and 1997, attempting to answer the question, "Who is being held responsible for solving the problem of domestic violence?" (p. 86). The focus was on articles that listed domestic violence as the main topic, allowing for a total of 111 articles to be examined.

Berns developed four different frameworks to illustrate where the responsibility for domestic violence was placed: individuals (victims and/or their abusers); institutions; cultural and structural factors (such as gender roles, attitudes, or the economy); and finally, an integration of these three. This allowed for the placement of articles into groups depending on their frame of responsibility. Berns found that almost two out of every three articles placed the responsibility for domestic violence on the individuals involved. Individual frames of responsibility encouraged intervention (rather than prevention) as the primary means of dealing with domestic violence. Of the articles focusing on individuals, the majority (40 out of 72) placed responsibility solely on the victim. Only four articles placed the responsibility solely on the batterer – in all other articles, the victim was held either entirely or partially accountable. Berns found that institutions (most often the legal system) were held responsible in one out of five articles, focusing yet again on intervention rather than prevention of domestic violence. Eight articles placed responsibility for domestic violence on cultural and structural factors, and eight more on

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an integrational framework. The cultural and structural framework emphasized prevention rather than intervention, and tended to explain how domestic violence continued to be permitted. The articles within the integrational framework focused on how domestic violence occurs in the midst of interactions between individual, institutional, and cultural/structural factors. This framework focused on both intervention and prevention, calling for intervention in current cases of domestic violence while simultaneously prevention of future occurrences.

Berns' findings in "Degendering the Problem and Gendering the Blame" inform us that in women's magazines between 1970 and 1997, the dominant discourse on domestic violence placed responsibility on the victim. Though there were a small number of articles focusing on cultural/structural factors or an integrational framework, these were uncommon. It is curious, though not surprising, that women's magazines during this time supported what continues to be a common belief: that the (female) victims of domestic violence should be held accountable for fixing their own private problems.

Nettleton (2011) conducted a qualitative study of ten men's and women's magazines (sampling *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire*, *Redbook*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, *Shape*, *Sport's Illustrated*, *Rolling Stone*, *Esquire*, *Men's Health*, and *Popular Science*) printed between 1998 and 2008. Nettleton (2011) examined the coverage of domestic violence, using narrative analysis to observe, "how the story is told – and, in this case, also on how the story is *not* told" (p. 147). The number of articles studied totaled 77 from men's magazines and 101 from women's magazines.

Nettleton identified four main themes within these articles. Firstly, women's magazines endorse the belief that women are responsible for all aspects of domestic violence, while men's magazines encourage the belief that men cannot be held responsible for domestic violence; they

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just cannot help themselves. Secondly, women's magazines discuss domestic violence as an extremely terrifying experience, while contrastingly; men's magazines portray domestic violence in a playful and humorous regard. Thirdly, men's magazines contend that statistics about male's violence are deceptive; that they incorrectly portray men as perpetrators and women as victims. Finally, women's magazines encourage women to get involved in the issue of domestic violence by buying symbolic jewelry or adornments and by helping victims to overcome their problems. Nettleton (2011) states that, "Women are represented as a contradictory blend of victim and responsible party, and men are represented as inept at managing their emotional lives and unable to contain their actions to fit within the bounds of civility" (p. 154). Among other things, Nettleton found that no articles supported resistance to blaming the victim; no articles held men accountable for domestic violence; and no articles placed domestic violence in the context of a culture of male dominance. The fact that gender inequality is at the root of domestic violence continues to go completely ignored (Nettleton, 2011).

These two articles provide a strong basis for research into the attitudes that are portrayed by men's magazines. These attitudes may be explicitly stated, or may be implied by word choice or tone. It is necessary to delve deeper into taken for granted aspects of U.S. society, examining the implications of seemingly "meaningless" media information. Dealing with a problem as deeply rooted as domestic violence requires thoughtful insight into the forces that drive socialization and shape the broader cultural constructions about a social problem as deep as domestic violence.

Methodology

This study focuses on domestic violence articles in popular men's magazines. The answers to three general questions are sought: 1) how prevalent are articles on domestic violence, 2) when present, how is domestic violence framed/presented, and 3) what patriarchal ideologies are presented (if any)? This study seeks the answers to these questions through utilization of a qualitative interpretive analysis, attempting to identify common contexts through which domestic violence is presented. Additionally, it critically assesses the possible ideological discourses on domestic violence.

This study functions as a continuation of the research conducted by Nettleton (2011), who built upon Berns (1999) work. While Berns sampled solely women's magazines, Nettleton sampled both men's and women's magazines. This study goes in a slightly different direction, sampling solely men's magazines. Nettleton states that, "Scholarly exploration of how popular magazines portray domestic violence exists but is limited, and there is even less investigation of domestic violence representations among magazines aimed specifically at men" (p. 139). This study allows for a more in-depth examination of men's magazines, focusing solely on domestic violence articles aimed at men, in an attempt to understand what kind of ideologies men are regularly subjected to.

The sample for this study includes the five popular men's magazines previously sampled in Nettleton's (2011) study: *Men's Health*, *Rolling Stone*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Popular Science*, and *Esquire*. Though not all of these are explicitly "men's" magazines, they all, arguably, contain male-centered content. As Nettleton (2011) affirms, at the time of her study, these magazines were the top men's magazines (based off circulation rates) that were available in electronic databases. These magazines continue to be popular, with a paid circulation rate of at

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least a half million weekly². In addition, the selection of these magazines is, again, partially due to convenience. Each one is easily accessible on the James Madison University online periodical locator. Though it would be desirable to include additional men's magazines in the study (e.g. *GQ*, *Maxim*) these magazines are not easily accessible.

This study samples articles that were published between January 2009 and November 2014. As Nettleton's (2011) study sampled articles that were published between 1998 and 2008, this sample begins in January 2009 in order to pick up where Nettleton's study left off. November 2014 was selected in an effort to sample the most recent articles for when this study began.

To select specific articles, the chosen magazines were searched using the databases Academic Search Complete and MasterFILE Premier. This study draws on DeKeseredy's (2011) definition to define domestic violence as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, spiritual abuse, and/or stalking between current or past intimate partners. In order to find "domestic violence" articles, each magazine was searched for a wide variety of terms, including, but not limited to, "domestic violence" "family violence" "domestic abuse" "wife assault", and "violence against women." A total of sixteen terms related to domestic violence were used to search for articles within each magazine. Articles written on the topic of domestic violence, or articles that discussed domestic violence as an area of focus, were chosen to be included in the sample. In order to be included, articles were required to contain four or more sentences on the

² In the first half of 2014, *Men's Health* circulation was approximately 1.8 million, *Rolling Stone* was approximately 1.5 million, *Sports Illustrated* was approximately 3 million, *Popular Science* was approximately 1.3 million, and *Esquire* was approximately 750,000 (Alliance for Audited Media, 2014).

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topic of domestic violence. In an effort to include as many articles as possible, articles containing only one or two sentences on domestic violence were permitted, as long as the focus of the article was an issue directly related to domestic violence. For example:

“Hitting a woman is not something a real man does,” President Obama said last month of indefinitely suspended Ravens running back Ray Rice. The President was stating the obvious but also raising the question, what does a Real Man do? (Rushin, 2014, p. 68).

This article by Rushin (2014), discussing what makes one a “Real Man,” focused on an area closely related to the topic of domestic violence (gender and masculinity), and contained two sentences specifically addressing domestic violence. This article was included in the sample. Articles that briefly mentioned domestic violence (in less than four sentences), while concentrating on an unrelated topic, were not included.

This study uses an interpretive framework to understand the underlying meaning of the media discussion of domestic violence. Using a method of continuous comparative analysis, this study develops common themes and ideologies underlying men’s magazine articles that discuss domestic violence.

Results

With the use of the sixteen search terms, a sample of 20 articles was identified. Interestingly, the majority of articles found (17) were published in *Sports Illustrated*. In contrast, only 2 articles were found in *Rolling Stone*; 1 article in *Men's Health*; 0 in *Esquire*, and 0 in *Popular Science*. In *Sports Illustrated*, though there were 17 articles that discussed domestic violence, some issues contained more than one article, such that 13 issues of *Sports Illustrated* contained articles discussing domestic violence. Table 1.1 shows the number of issues (of each magazine) sampled, the number of articles within which discussed domestic violence, and the percentage of the number of issues (of each magazine) that contained domestic violence articles. Each issue of *Sports Illustrated* that contained multiple domestic violence articles was only counted once in the calculation of the percentage of issues that discussed domestic violence.

Table 1.1

	Number of Issues (01/2009-11/2014)	Number of Articles Discussing DV	% of Issues with DV Articles
<i>Men's Health</i>	58	1	1.7%
<i>Rolling Stone</i>	139	2	1.4%
<i>Sports Illustrated</i>	306	17	4.2%
<i>Popular Science</i>	70	0	0%
<i>Esquire</i>	61	0	0%

In the search for domestic violence articles, some of the publications (e.g. *Rolling Stone*, *Sports Illustrated*) exhibited articles addressing the issue of rape. Unfortunately, these articles do not fall within the scope of this study (unless the discussion was on intimate partner rape). However,

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it must be noted that men's magazine articles discussing rape (and the framing of this discussion) could make an interesting topic for future studies.

Discussion

As the primary question of this study involves the prevalence of articles on domestic violence, this issue is given priority. This study searched for articles on domestic violence within five different men's magazines, published over the course of almost six years, and found only 20 articles with any discussion of domestic violence. Of the publications that were searched, 2 (*Popular Science* and *Esquire*) returned no articles that were related to domestic violence. Of the three magazines that did return appropriate articles, 17 came from *Sports Illustrated*, while two were published in *Rolling Stone*, and one in *Men's Health*. The topic of domestic violence is one that, at least in these magazines, is often ignored. The fact that *Sports Illustrated* has published 17 articles on the topic (12 of which were just published in 2014) shows that, at least in the past year, there has been some media attention to the issue of domestic violence. Of course, much of the recent news surrounding domestic violence has involved professional athletes, which may explain why the majority of these articles were published in *Sports Illustrated*. However, domestic violence is a widespread issue that is not limited to players of professional sports. Though one cannot expect men's magazines to publish an abundance of articles on this topic, it seems that the number of articles discussing domestic violence in the past years has been surprisingly, and unfortunately, low.

The lack of articles addressing domestic violence in men's magazines seems to be part of a continuing trend. Nettleton's (2011) study, which examined the same five publications as this study (though from the years 1998-2008), identified 77 men's magazine "articles" that discussed domestic violence (similar to the present study, some of these articles were in editorials and were not necessarily 'news articles'). However, the sample that Nettleton identified in her study was collected according to more inclusive criteria, as she sampled all articles that included even a

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“brief mention” (p. 146) of domestic violence. Further, Nettleton selected articles that were published over a time span of ten years, rather than just five. As Nettleton was able to identify only 77 articles that discussed domestic violence (56 of which were identified as “brief mention” articles), and this study was able to identify only 20, one may ask the question of why more articles are not published on the topic. The most obvious explanation is that perhaps domestic violence continues to be seen as a private issue. This explanation would hold the most credibility if this study were to exclude *Sports Illustrated*, as this magazine published the majority of the articles in the sample (n = 17) while the other four magazines collectively published just 3 articles. However, the prevalence of articles in *Sports Illustrated* does not necessarily disprove this hypothesis regarding the view of domestic violence as a “private issue.”

Despite the fact that *Sports Illustrated* published many more articles on domestic violence than any other magazine in the sample, only 7 of those articles were published between 2009-2013. Given that *Sports Illustrated* publishes 56 issues a year (more than twice as many issues as every other magazine included in the sample), 7 domestic violence articles over a period of almost five years seems to be inadequate. *Sports Illustrated* hardly gave the topic any coverage until 2014, when multiple National Football League (NFL) players were sanctioned for committing acts of domestic violence, creating news headlines that were extremely relevant to the content of the publication. During 2014, there were many news articles written on the perpetration of domestic violence by professional athletes. Some of these articles noted that, in recent years, domestic violence cases involving NFL players have been strangely common: cases involving players Dez Bryant, Erik Walden, and Chris Cook took place in 2011 and 2012 (Schuppe, 2014); A.J. Jefferson was arrested for domestic assault in 2013 (Martinez & Riojas, 2014); Daryl Washington pled guilty to aggravated assault of his ex-girlfriend in 2014

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(McManus, 2014), and additional cases involving Greg Hardy, Ray Rice, and Ray McDonald also took place during that same year (Schuppe, 2014). While domestic violence is not limited to NFL players, these cases exemplify that there was much to be written on this topic, especially by *Sports Illustrated*. Also, the 7 articles published by *Sports Illustrated* from 2009-2013 (and the 10 published by *Sports Illustrated* during 2014) do not seem very significant compared to the number of high-profile cases that occurred. Only time will tell if the rise in domestic violence articles published in *Sports Illustrated* will continue. In general, the reason behind the lack of articles on this topic remains unclear. Additional research into the prevalence of articles discussing domestic violence in men's magazines is needed.

In order to compare the content of the articles within the sample, articles were split into categories depending on the tone exhibited, and common themes were identified. The "tone" was the perspective that the author brought to the article: either feminist or gender symmetry. Though the tone was not obvious in many of these articles, it was implied through the authors' discussions of domestic violence: their examination (or lack thereof) of the context of domestic violence, and their criticisms (or lack thereof) of the issue. At the outset, pro-feminist wording or gender-symmetry wording was also included as a coding scheme to help determine the tone of each article. However, almost every article in the sample, no matter the tone, was found to use gender-symmetry terms (e.g. "spouse abuse", "domestic violence", "domestic assault") rather than pro-feminist terms (e.g. "wife abuse", "violence against women", "woman abuse") when discussing domestic violence. Thus, the authors' lack of pro-feminist framing of domestic violence outside of the gender symmetrical lens was consistent. After all, pro-feminist language is likely to alienate consumers of "men's magazines."

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Of the tones that were first identified, the gender symmetry perspective discussed domestic violence with no mention of context or criticisms of the act, while the feminist perspective discussed the context and also gave criticisms. However, most articles were somewhere in between these two perspectives: neither “feminist” nor “gender symmetry”, but somewhat of a mix of the two. In the course of the analysis, two more “perspectives” were identified: gender symmetry-neutral (GS-neutral), and feminist-neutral (F-neutral). The GS-neutral perspective was less permissive of acts of domestic violence than the gender symmetry perspective (though it also did not discuss context). Similar to the typical feminist perspective, the F-neutral perspective discussed the context of domestic violence (and was also critical of it), though in more offhand and uninformed ways. Table 1.2 takes note of the four perspectives identified and the characteristics of each perspective. The following sections will explain each of the perspectives in a more detailed manner, discuss the quantity of articles that fell within each of these perspectives, and examine common themes that emerged from the two main perspectives.

Table 1.2

	# of Articles Showing Each Perspective	Characteristics of Each Perspective
Gender Symmetry	9	No discussion of context/criticisms
Feminist	5	Discussed context/criticisms
GS-Neutral	3	Less permissive of DV, no discussion of context
F-Neutral	3	Discussed context/was critical in an incomplete/uninformed way

Gender Symmetry

The gender symmetry perspective was the most common perspective identified, amounting to 9 out of the 20 articles (45%). Some articles simply reported events of domestic violence without mentioning the context or without critiquing the event, the perpetrators involved, or the organizations involved (e.g. criminal justice system, athletic associations) (5 of the 9). There were obvious instances where a discussion of the context of domestic violence would be beneficial. For example, a piece on professional football player Brandon Marshall's domestic violence noted, "Charged in the alleged stabbing of Dolphins receiver Brandon Marshall, his wife of one year, Michi Nogami-Marshall, who told police that she injured her husband in self-defense last Friday evening at their Broward County, Fla., home." ("For the Record", 2011, para. 6). In this case, it would have been very informative to explain that female victims of domestic violence are very often arrested for harming their partners in self-defense. However, failing to note this does not imply any hidden agenda of the author, it simply shows that they were interested in nothing more than a surface discussion of domestic violence. Some articles, in contrast, made explicit anti-feminist statements (4 of the 9) in addition to ignoring discussions of context and criticisms. Among these four articles, some common themes emerged: downplaying acts of domestic violence, praising domestic violence offenders or saying their violence was surprising, and blaming the victims.

Acts of domestic violence were downplayed in various ways, such as understating the crime (i.e. calling a domestic homicide a "death" instead of a "murder"³) or writing in a

³ Some individuals may not understand why this is considered downplaying the crime. In 2013, the World Health Organization stated that globally, physical or sexual intimate partner violence has harmed 30% (and in the U.S., 23%) of all women that have ever been with an intimate

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dismissive tone to make perpetration of domestic violence seem less serious than it is. One article on professional boxer Floyd Mayweather, Jr. focused on his boxing success, mentioning his domestic violence perpetration as only a side note:

with a determined and well-schooled opponent (Miguel Cotto) in front of him and a life-altering distraction (an 87-day prison sentence stemming from a charge of domestic violence) ahead of him, Mayweather delivered perhaps the finest performance of his career. (Mannix, 2012, p. 52).

The only other mention of his perpetration is at the near end of the article (which is a multi-page piece of writing praising Mayweather's skills) and is discussed only in parentheses:

“Mayweather pleaded guilty to misdemeanor domestic- violence and harassment charges stemming from an argument with his former girlfriend, Josie Harris, in front of their two children in 2010” (Mannix, 2012, para. 12). As the author finds time to state, “Mayweather is the greatest defensive fighter of his generation, perhaps of all time,” (para. 13), it does seem curious that his history of domestic violence was glossed over in such an unconcerned manner. This theme (of downplaying domestic violence) was exhibited in 75% (3/4) of the anti-feminist gender symmetry articles, and 33% (3/9) of the total gender symmetry articles.

The implication of victim blaming was another common occurrence among the gender symmetry articles. This was often implied through a discussion of the victim's failure to exit the

partner. In other words, about a quarter of all the women in the U.S. that have ever been in an intimate relationship have been violently abused by a partner. In this context, calling the murder of a woman (who was victimized by a past intimate partner) a “death” comes off as an inconsiderate way to soften the heinousness of the crime.

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relationship or seek help. For example, while discussing a woman who was in an abusive relationship that ended in attempted murder by means of arson, one article stated, “On several occasions Winters had filed domestic battery charges against Komlo only to refuse to cooperate with prosecutors” [...] “no matter how vicious their fights became, she always went back to him” (Wertheim, 2009, para. 8). Similarly, another article on the murder of a collegiate female lacrosse player by her boyfriend who was a lacrosse player at the same university said, “School officials claim to have no record of Love's seeking help regarding her ex-boyfriend” (Wertheim, Lemire, & Staples, 2010, para. 15). As the research has shown, female victims of domestic violence often avoid seeking help and/or attempting to leave the relationship because they are essentially trapped, among other things, by fear and lack of control (DeKeseredy, 2001; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009; Garcia & McManimon, 2011). The tendency for gender symmetry articles to imply that victims of domestic violence are somewhat at fault for their own victimization is not only inconsiderate, but also oblivious to the context and realities of domestic violence.

Another theme found within the gender symmetry articles was praise for the domestic violence offender or statements of surprise in regards to their violence. While the authors did not actually praise offenders for their criminal acts, they did make general statements about the success of offenders while ignoring their involvement in domestic violence. For example, one article discussed ex-professional football player, Jeff Komlo, that purportedly committed arson in an attempt to kill his girlfriend, yet also stated that Komlo “was a success in sports, business and love” (Wertheim, 2009, para. 1). While this contradictory form of writing does not explicitly advocate for the use of domestic violence, it implies tolerance of the issue by ignoring their perpetration of domestic violence and singing their praising for their “triumphs” in life.

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Similarly, some articles implied that it was surprising that certain men committed domestic violence, such as an article on Jovan Belcher (who murdered his wife before committing suicide), “If Belcher needed urgent help, none of the people who spoke with SI knew it” (Epstein, Evans, Thamel, Dillon, Trotter, & Gagne, 2012, para. 26). This type of discussion seems to imply that the only men that commit domestic violence are those that “need help” with other issues, and are in some way different. However, one cannot assume this. As Hunnicutt (2009) explains, men’s violence against women arises in a context of ideological and structural patriarchy that all men live under. To reduce domestic violence to something committed by only aberrant men is to misrepresent the scope of the issue.

Again, it must be stated that these themes arose from the 4 explicitly antifeminist articles out of 9 articles that fell into the gender symmetry perspective. The remaining gender symmetry articles simply failed to discuss context or criticize domestic violence, resulting in thoughtless portrayals of the issue.

Feminist

The second most common perspective was the feminist perspective, which was demonstrated in 5 of the 20 articles (25%). Articles that showed the feminist perspective discussed the context of and were critical of domestic violence. Instead of simply glossing over the issue of domestic violence by focusing on facts and the circumstances of individuals, these articles went much deeper in their discussions, sometimes even noting that our society condones domestic violence. An example of this can be seen in an article on professional football player Ray Rice’s assault of his then fiancé:

If something positive can possibly come of Ray Rice's punching his then fiancée unconscious in that elevator, and the feeble first response by law enforcement and the

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NFL, it's the light now being shone on “domestic violence,” a softening phrase for a brutality taken too lightly for decades—from *The Honeymooners* to the wifebeater undershirt to Pacers star Paul George's just last week tweeting-and-deleting an LOL about the subject. (Rushin, 2014, p. 68).

One feminist article explicitly discussed context that the gender symmetry articles had consistently ignored, “Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of the dynamics of domestic violence knows that victims often defend their abusers for a variety of reasons, including fear. That Rice’s wife spoke up in his defense should be considered in that context.” (Taylor, 2014, p. 64). The fact that some articles took time to discuss the context of domestic violence demonstrates that the underlying context is, at the very least, appropriate to mention. While one feminist perspective article only touched on the topic of domestic violence, even it managed to give an insightful discussion of the context of the issue. This article contemplated the question of what a “Real Man” (Rushin, 2014) is and isn’t, discussing the expectations of masculinity (that actually plays a role in the perpetration of a lot of violence by men). Rushin (2014) even mentions the masculine expectation to be in control, “the Real Man soldiers on, refusing to cross his legs when sitting, never letting his wife drive him, clinging tight to his supremacy” (p. 68). The ability of some articles to tackle the most important underlying aspects of domestic violence draws sharp contrast to others that cling to shallow discussions that do little to inform their readers about the realities of intimate partner violence against women.

Among the feminist articles, criticizing the NFL for its handling of players (that were perpetrators of domestic violence) was a common theme that emerged in 4 of the 5 articles. This criticism appeared, in some articles, through implied comments, though in other articles it was more straightforward. For example: “The league’s handling of the matter shows how much more

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education is necessary on the issue of domestic violence, especially in the NFL, in which brutality is an essential part of the culture.” (Taylor, 2014, p. 14). These feminist articles criticized the NFL for being lenient with the perpetrators of domestic violence. In contrast, the gender symmetry articles often made statements that seemed tolerant of its perpetrators.

Another theme found in the feminist perspective articles was a discussion of the challenges to women, or the inequalities that women face. Three articles mentioned gender inequality, and implied that a changing of inequitable attitudes towards women could help to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence. One feminist article made this argument in a very direct way in challenging the athletic leagues response to domestic violence by stating, “Something has to change, beginning with the attitude toward domestic violence in the league office. Another day, another example of a woman’s mistreatment. It didn’t end in that elevator.” (Taylor, 2014, p. 64). Another article discussed masculinity, and the relationship between attitudes and actions:

Last week James Brown [a broadcast sports journalist] on Thursday Night Football called for “an ongoing, comprehensive education of men about what healthy, respectful manhood is all about. And it starts with how we view women. Our language is important. For example, when a guy says, 'You throw like a girl' or 'You're a sissy,' it reflects an attitude that devalues women.”(Rushin, 2014, p. 68).

These articles discussed the context of domestic violence by addressing a major factor in its perpetration: underlying attitudes and/or ideology. Out of the entire sample, these articles were the ones that portrayed domestic violence and its context in the most appropriate ways.

Unfortunately, they made up a very small minority of the sample.

GS-Neutral

The GS-neutral perspective was one of the least common perspectives (exhibited by only 3 of the 20 articles, or 15%). This perspective was less permissive of domestic violence than the gender symmetry perspective, but at the same time, did not discuss the context of the issue. All 3 articles involved discussions of the events that took place in the NFL, noting the strangely common occurrence of domestic violence perpetration by NFL players, but failed to mention the widespread occurrence of domestic violence outside of the NFL. These articles took a stance in opposition to domestic violence by questioning the decisions of the NFL authority figures and applauding individuals that have taken action against domestic violence. One article stated, “How can a league that has seen its credibility shredded when it comes to disciplining players accused of violent acts move on?” (Wertheim & Kaplan, 2014, p. 49-50). Another article nominated a pro-football player as “sportsman of the year” (Bishop, Keith, & Shore, 2014, p. 26) for being a good player and starting a charity to raise awareness about domestic violence, among other things. However, though taking an anti-domestic violence viewpoint, these articles made no attempts to discuss domestic violence beyond its surface. There was no examination of why domestic violence is a common issue, why it often goes ignored, or how it could be dealt with more appropriately. There was no discussion of how to go about reducing its perpetration in the future. Though the discussions had a tone of disapproval towards domestic violence, they had no more than that. In short, there was no context.

F-Neutral

The F-neutral perspective was the second of the two least common perspectives identified, exhibited in 3 of the 20 articles (15%). These articles took a critical view towards domestic violence and discussed some context surrounding the issue, but did so in a somewhat

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incomplete and/or uninformed manner. One article discussed the current state of football in the NFL, arguing that the consequences of having a game centered on violence are finally coming to the attention of the general public. Referring to domestic violence, the author stated, “I can't help but wonder [...] if the violence between the white lines can't help but spill into everyday life” (Layden, 2014, para. 9). The article made an obvious attempt to discuss the context of domestic violence, but did so in an ineffective manner. It focused on the possible link between football and domestic violence, but did not analyze this possible link effectively. By portraying violence that takes place in football as equivalent with domestic violence perpetrated by football players, the author ignores the reality of domestic violence, including its widespread scope (that extends far beyond professional football players) and gendered nature. Though the intentions of the author were good, the reality of domestic violence was misconstrued. Another article contained an infographic noting professional athletes that could have, in the past, been subjected to the new NFL “lifetime” ban because they were charged with domestic violence. This infographic was able to show some of the context of domestic violence, demonstrating that it happens more frequently than most people might remember. Yet this article hardly discussed the image, leaving it to be interpreted by the reader, therefore missing out on a major opportunity to effectively consider the context of domestic violence. This was the general theme of the F-neutral perspective: while the authors obviously wanted to examine the context of domestic violence and grasp an understanding of it that went deeper than the surface, they were unable to do so in an effective manner. A likely reason for this was that all of the articles focused on domestic violence solely within the NFL, giving a very narrow outlook on a wide-ranging issue.

Interestingly, the four perspectives identified in this sample, with the exception of the gender symmetry perspective, are solely demonstrated in *Sports Illustrated*, a publication that

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included 17 of the 20 articles sampled. The articles published in *Rolling Stone* and *Men’s Health* (a total of 3) demonstrated the gender symmetry perspective only. Thus, the gender symmetry perspective was the sole perspective that was displayed by each of the magazines (of the magazines that had published articles on domestic violence). This is important, as there is no way to note from this study whether the three additional perspectives are unique to *Sports Illustrated*, or if they are indeed present in men’s magazines more generally. This would make an interesting topic for future research studies. Table 1.3 summarizes the perspectives found in each magazine.

Table 1.3

	# of DV Articles	Perspective(s) Exhibited
<i>Sports Illustrated</i>	17	Gender Symmetry, Feminist, GS-Neutral, F-Neutral
<i>Men’s Health</i>	1	Gender Symmetry
<i>Rolling Stone</i>	2	Gender Symmetry

Conclusion

Past researchers have proven that women are systematically targeted as the victims of domestic violence. While it is considered by many to be a pressing matter of public concern, this issue continues to be severely misunderstood. As one element of the media, men's magazines can be seen as a simultaneous source and reflection of mainstream ideology. This study found, through a sample of five popular men's magazines, that the topic of domestic violence is often avoided, and that when it is discussed, it is most often misunderstood. A gender symmetry perspective was the most common perspective found in the sample, shown in 45% of the domestic violence articles. This perspective tended to give inconsiderate portrayals of domestic violence, and some articles within this perspective were guilty of completely misrepresenting its reality. In contrast, the second most common perspective, shown in 25% of the articles, was feminist. This perspective gave domestic violence a just portrayal, though it occurred in only one out of every four articles on the topic, and was exhibited only by *Sports Illustrated* magazine. This study found that the collection of domestic violence articles recently published in men's magazines are not in agreement, and that they are separately both supporting and refuting ill-informed perceptions of domestic violence. This suggests the possibility of a changing public perception of the issue.

This study is important primarily due to the extreme lack of research in this area. The studies conducted by Berns (1999) and Nettleton (2011) are the only other two studies to have examined the content of articles published on the topic of domestic violence in popular magazines. However, this is not for lack of significance – the articles published by popular magazines lend insight into public opinion surrounding certain issues. In an era of seemingly increasing support for gender equality and feminism, it is important to study how the media

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discusses topics that are interconnected with this, to better understand the possible transformation of widespread beliefs and attitudes.

It must be noted that this study is not without its limitations. As the magazines included in the study were selected partially due to their availability in the James Madison University database, this may not be a perfectly representative sample of popular men's magazines. Also, when studying magazines, it is important to note that the general topic of magazines may influence the study results. For example, as *Popular Science* covers primarily science and technology, it is much less likely that it would publish articles on domestic violence than, for example, *Men's Health* would. Further, as this study was able to identify a sample of only 20 articles, the generalizability of this study to all popular men's magazines may come into question. More research into this area is needed, and research that is able to identify a larger, more representative sample would be beneficial. In the future, research examining both online and print versions of magazines would be ideal, as the prevalence of print magazines is likely to decline. It would be interesting to note, in the coming years, whether there is a pattern surrounding the publication of articles on domestic violence (in *Sports Illustrated* especially). One could examine whether the prevalence of domestic violence articles is related to the prevalence of domestic violence cases in popular sports (in any given year), or one could examine whether the publication of domestic violence articles increases over time. When taken into account along with Nettleton's (2011) study, this research suggests that authors that write for men's magazines are increasingly taking on the topic of domestic violence. Only time will tell if this is true.

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