

CRIME IN THE NEWS:
REPRESENTATIONS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
IN THE GEORGIA PRESS

DR. SUZANNE ENCK-WANZER
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

DEFINITION

Domestic violence is a learned pattern of behaviors used by one person in an intimate relationship to control another person.



KEY QUESTIONS

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- What public vocabulary exists for understanding “domestic violence”?

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- How do language and visual images combine to create and reinforce discourses of “domestic violence”?
- How do our metaphors for understanding “domestic violence” affect how we respond to this problem?

THESIS

Configured through the metaphor of CRIME, domestic violence is situated as identifiable (physical) acts of abuse against particular women (primarily wives) for which particular men (primarily men marked as otherwise deviant) are held accountable.

PREVIEW

- What does thinking of this as a metaphor get us?
- What does domestic violence as Crime look like?
- Implications of the Crime Metaphor

METAPHORS

METAPHORS WE LIVE BY

- Language can never be neutral--it's always attitudinizing and persuasive
- "The very systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another will necessarily hide other aspects of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor." (Lakoff & Johnson)

METAPHORS WE LIVE BY

As a critic, unsettling the calcified metaphors and examining how metaphors intersect offers insight into our cultural attitudes and motives.

“DOMESTIC VIOLENCE” AS METAPHOR

How we represent “domestic violence” culturally will necessarily convey cultural attitudes regarding:

- Who/what is valued (who deserves “help”)
- Who is expected to act in what ways
- Our expectations of “reasonableness”
- Our cultural/communal complicity

3 METAPHORS

I argue that there are three overriding metaphors structuring our cultural understandings of and responses to systems of intimate abuse.

- Disease
- War
- **Crime**

CRIME METAPHOR
IN THE NEWS

BODY OF EVIDENCE

WHAT CONSTITUTES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

“Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury for girls and women in Georgia. In 2006, there were more than 54,000 reported incidents of family violence in Georgia, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.”

BODY OF EVIDENCE

WHAT CONSTITUTES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

- "Ga. ranks 7th in men who kill women; domestic violence"
- "Husband Charged in Wife's Killing"
- "LAW & ORDER: Two Separate Murder-suicides Leave Five Dead"
- "A Turn for the Worse; Homicide Rate Keeping Pace with Recent Trend Upward"
- "Gwinnett Homicides Double '06 Pace"
- "Detective: Woman Knew Her Killer"
- "A Month Later, No Progress in Solving Slaying; Woman was Bound, Throat Slashed"

BODY OF EVIDENCE

WHAT CONSTITUTES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

“Bynum, 48, filed her divorce petition last week in Gwinnett and was granted a mutual restraining order. She has accused her husband of beating, choking and stomping her to the ground during an alleged attack in a hotel parking lot on Aug. 21.

Weeks, 40, was charged with felony aggravated assault, felony terroristic threats and simple battery in connection to the incident.”

BODY OF EVIDENCE

WHAT CONSTITUTES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

“She's one of the real faces of domestic violence. The everyday woman whose smile masks a terrible secret. Hers is chilling. Wilkerson, 34, a Medicaid investigator, and her 4-year-old son, Austin Tyler Hayslip, were shot by the man who asked to marry her.”

BODY OF EVIDENCE

WHAT CONSTITUTES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

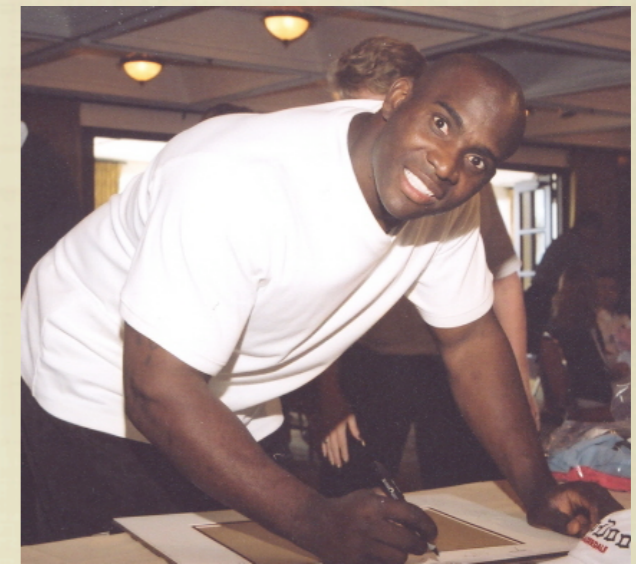
“The officer on the scene saw no bruises or marks on her face or neck, and noted that her clothing did not look as if she had been in a struggle. Both had a moderate odor of alcohol, according to the report.”

CRIMINALS IN THE HOME

DEVIANT/OTHERS



BISHOP THOMAS WEEKS



GREG LLOYD



JOHN MARK KARR



ASHLEY AMBROSE

CRIMINALS IN THE HOME

DEVIANT/OTHERS

Colts players charged with assaults on women

Here are the players who have been with the Indianapolis Colts during at least part of this season who have been convicted of or arrested and charged with assaults on women:



- **Name:** Cornelius Bennett.
- **Date:** May 18, 1997.
- **Place:** Buffalo, N.Y.
- **Charges:** Rape, sodomy, sexual abuse and unlawful imprisonment.
- **Disposition:** Pleaded guilty to misdemeanor sexual abuse. Sentenced to 60 days in prison. Served 36 days, fined \$1,000, ordered to pay \$617.26 of victim's hospital bills, perform 100 hours of community service and undergo anger-management counseling.



- **Name:** Andre Royal.
- **Date:** March 18, 1998.
- **Place:** New Orleans, La.
- **Charges:** Simple battery, public drunkenness and failure to pay for food and drink.
- **Disposition:** Charges dismissed after Royal paid his bill.



- **Name:** Tony McCoy.
- **Date:** Nov. 20, 1989.
- **Place:** Gainesville, Fla.
- **Charges:** Kidnapping, two counts of sexual battery by use of threat of a deadly weapon, four counts of aggravated battery and two counts of battery.
- **Disposition:** Charges dismissed.



- **Name:** Tito Wooten.
- **Date:** April 27, 1994.
- **Place:** Monroe, La.
- **Charges:** Disturbing the peace by using profane language/threats, disturbing the peace by fighting, simple battery, simple battery on a police officer, resisting an officer by violence and damage to property.
- **Disposition:** Pleaded guilty to simple battery on a police officer. Received 30-day suspended sentence. Fined \$200 and assessed court costs of \$58. Other charges dismissed.



- **Name:** Steve Muhammad.
- **Date:** Oct. 28, 1999.
- **Place:** Indianapolis.
- **Charges:** Three counts of misdemeanor domestic battery.
- **Disposition:** Pending.

- **Date:** Aug. 18, 1996.
- **Place:** Hackensack, N.J.
- **Charge:** Simple assault.
- **Disposition:** Charge dismissed.
- **Date:** Dec. 7, 1997.
- **Place:** Hasbrouck Heights, N.J.
- **Charge:** Simple assault.
- **Disposition:** Charge dismissed.

CRIMINALS IN THE HOME

“Pennington believes the city's crime increase is part of a national trend. Police commanders attribute the rise to increased drug trafficking, juvenile delinquency, domestic violence and an unsteady economy.”

WHO CAN BE A VICTIM?

According to the Violence Against Women Act:

The term "domestic violence" includes felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse, by a person similarly situated to a spouse...

IMPLICATIONS

DEFLECTS CYCLE

Reliance on exceptional physical harm deflects attention away from broader cycle of power and control that enables such physical assaults in some violent relationships.

REINFORCES EXPECTATIONS OF CRIMINAL DEVIANCE

- Assumes a set of social stereotypes that marks some men as deviant and therefore beyond the scope of typical masculinity.
- Protects hegemonic masculinity as a system of power from being critiqued.

PROVOCATION...

“Police were called to the home in the Linden Park subdivision ... after Trina Pierre-Louis, 27, called 911 to report that she had been pistol-whipped by her husband and that he was threatening to kill the family. Henry police Sgt. Palmerin Thomas said detectives had not had a chance to interview her to find out what led to the confrontation.”

VICTIM AGENCY

Report Crime • Arrest Criminals • Press Charges