IN POST-WORLD WAR II ENGLISH-SPEAKING CANADA: BLAMING WOMEN FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WIVES

By

DIANE BARBARA PURVEY

Bachelor of Arts, University of British Columbia, 1982
Masters of Arts, University of Victoria, 1990

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES (Department of Educational Studies)

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 2000

© Diane Purvey, 2000
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced
degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it
freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive
copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my
department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or
publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written
permission.

Department of Educational Studies

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date December 1970
ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an analysis of perceptions of family violence in English-speaking Canada focusing on the fifteen years after the Second World. As Canadians collectively adapted to the postwar world, authorities urged them to create strong, united families as the foundation upon which the nation depended. An idealized vision of home and family domesticated and subordinated women, and served to entrench and consolidate the dominance of white, middle-class, heterosexual, and patriarchal values. The normalization of these domestic ideals shaped responses to family violence. Three sources were studied and evaluated for their presentations of family violence: popular and academic/professional English-language magazines and journals, social work dissertations from the University of British Columbia, and Vancouver newspaper scripts of violence from 1947. What emerged was a remarkable consensus: although domestic violence receives little direct mention, it pervades the sources in subtle ways. Women were blamed for men's violence. Experts and commentators pathologized women who failed to fulfill their "normal" spousal and maternal responsibilities and urged them to sublimate their needs to those of their husband, their family and, indeed, the Canadian nation.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td></td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold War Context</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of Chapters</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: “Safeguarding the Family”: Presentations of Family Violence in English Language Canadian Magazines, 1945 to 1960</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: “You Have to Have an Instinct For It”: Theory and Practice of Social Work and Attitudes Towards Family Violence in Vancouver, 1945 To 1960</td>
<td></td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: “Woolridge Driven to Kill Wife”: Press Reports and Depictions of Violence in Postwar Vancouver To 1960</td>
<td></td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td></td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX ONE</td>
<td></td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX TWO</td>
<td></td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.1</td>
<td>Total Fertility Rate, Canada, 1931-1961</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.2</td>
<td>Marriage Rate and Average Age at Marriage for Brides and Bridegrooms, Canada, 1931-1961</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.3</td>
<td>Net Family Formation*, Canada, 1931-1961</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.1</td>
<td>Yearly Incidence of Selected Popular Magazine Articles Referring to Domestic Violence, 1945-1960</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.2</td>
<td>Yearly Incidence of Selected Academic/Professional Magazine Articles Referring to Domestic Violence, 1945-1960</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.3</td>
<td>Circulation in Canada (in thousands)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.4</td>
<td>Origins of the Population, Canada, 1941-1961</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.5</td>
<td>Mother Tongues of the Population, Canada, 1941-1961</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.6</td>
<td>Divorce Rate, Canada, 1931-1961</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1</td>
<td>Select Theses on Violence From English Canadian Universities</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.2</td>
<td>University of British Columbia Master of Social Work Theses on Marital Violence</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1</td>
<td>Homicide Rates for British Columbia, 1945-1960</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research and writing of this thesis was such a long and fragmented process, that I was able to complete it only with the support of my family, friends, and colleagues. I owe a special thanks to Nikki Strong-Boag for her constant belief in the value of this project. I benefited enormously from her prompt and incisive comments on the many drafts of this thesis, and from her vast range of historical knowledge. I have also been influenced and helped by both Jean Barman and Deirdre Kelly, and I am indebted to them for their wise counsel. FREDA (Feminist Research, Education, Development and Action, Simon Fraser University) came through with funding to support the research of this thesis on two occasions. I am most appreciative. I thank the University College of the Cariboo for providing me with a welcoming home over the past two years. Thanks especially to John Fudge and Sandra Bruneau. Jackie Atkins and Charlotte Conken have been very supportive through this process. I am extremely grateful to Stormie Stewart and Kim Thachuk for their treasured friendship; and to Brent at the Colourbox, who always made me feel gorgeous. Ben Belshaw, Simone Belshaw, and Andrew Belshaw came into my life midway through this project and I thank them for their generosity. My parents, Barbara and Ralph Purvey, who have provided me with support far beyond the call of duty, are no doubt delighted that I have finally made it through school.

John Belshaw's critical thinking created an atmosphere of excitement, challenge and intellectual energy. This thesis would not have been completed without him. His steadiness continues to provide me with a level of support I never knew possible. I am lucky and grateful for his companionship, sharp wit, and fine culinary skills.

The greatest endurance for this project was demanded of my three children. This thesis is dedicated, with love, to Natalie Ord, Ian Ord and Gabriel Ord.
CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates dominant understandings of family violence in English-speaking Canada in the Cold War era. An analysis of presentations of family violence reveals its relatively common incidence. Between 1945 and 1960 the etiology of family violence was attributed to individual complexes for which the wife/mother was commonly blamed. In search of security, white middle-class Canadians embraced a model vision of home and family in which marriage was a partnership, combining men’s waged labour in the public sphere and women’s unwaged labour in the home to create an ideal environment for the nuclear family. These ostensibly equal but different roles constrained and subordinated both men and women, but in very different ways. Marriage ultimately privileged men and subordinated women to the good of the family. Advice to women regarding their responsibility in maintaining modern, companionate families converged with experts’ insistence on female self-denial. As family togetherness was the domain of wives, they were rebuked for creating the conditions in which their husbands would be “driven” to displays of physical aggression. In this way, domestic ideals shaped and distorted interpretations of family violence. In detailing and critiquing perceptions of family violence from 1945 to 1960, a related goal of this thesis is to further clarify postwar concepts of womanhood and manhood which were constructed through the prism of postwar values and articulated by professional commentators.
Family, or domestic, violence is a relatively recent term referring to different types of abusive behavior between kin. Domestic violence consists of sexual coercion or threats, the use of intentional physical force with the aim of causing injury, or neglect.¹ This definition includes various types of family violence, from infanticide and murder to rape, spousal abuse, sibling violence, abuse of the elderly, incest, sexual molestation of children and child neglect (that is, failure to provide food, clothing, medical care or adequate supervision of children). Unless otherwise indicated, in this dissertation the definition of domestic violence is limited to wife beating. As will be seen in this study, the most acknowledged form of domestic violence in the 1945 to 1960 period was physical abuse against wives within the parameters of legal, therefore heterosexual marriage.

This introduction serves multiple purposes. First, a description of the methodological approach is provided. Second, it critically examines literature relevant to the history of domestic violence, drawing on both the American and Canadian historiography. Third, it provides a context for the 1945 to 1960 period. Recent literature on postwar Canada is summarized and briefly reviewed. Postwar social and demographic changes which served to usher in regulatory presentations of the family are also examined. The introduction closes with an overview of the structure, aims and goals of the thesis.

Methodology

This thesis aims to uncover the meaning of domestic violence in the postwar period, specifically between 1945 and 1960. Decisions around locating and choosing appropriate sources proved to be my biggest challenge in the conceptualization and research stages of this thesis. There were many dead ends. In briefly highlighting these unsuccessful avenues of research, my purpose is to alert the reader to the difficulties and pitfalls of researching the hidden problem of domestic violence, and also to develop a context for understanding why I ultimately chose the sources I did.

I began my research examining the records of the Department of Veteran’s Affairs (DVA). My rationale for considering these sources was my understanding that the DVA undertook to assist those veterans and their families who were experiencing difficulty in the postwar adjustment period. I thought that the juxtaposition between the soldiers’ experience of the violence of war and the postwar concern over domestic harmony (the lack of violence) was fascinating. Violence was part and parcel of the wartime experience. What about violence on the domestic front? How, I wondered, was domestic violence in postwar family life understood or presented? Again, the aim here was not to document the experience of domestic violence, but rather to trace the ways in which it was understood or perceived. I reached an impasse. Concerns of confidentiality prohibited access to these records. As well, a search of veterans associations, such as legions, proved fruitless. Either the records do not exist at a local level, or they were not available to me. I then attempted to obtain the names of DVA padres, individuals who often acted as counselors for veterans and their families. Due to the age of these
individuals, survival became a concern and I was unable to locate and interview any padres.

When I attempted to locate social workers, judges, lawyers or others who would have been in contact with families experiencing violence in the postwar years, many were dead. In other cases old age created its own problems for interviews. Confidentiality is also a concern. Professionals are unable to disclose information on their clients. Similar concerns regarding confidentiality render case files unavailable. Organizations offering social work services to troubled families in the 1945 to 1960 period, such as Vancouver's Family-Welfare Bureau, would not allow me access to their case files.

I contemplated interviewing female survivors of domestic violence and conducted three interviews of abused women. This experience afforded me two observations regarding this methodology: one, that interviews enabled me access to wives’ experiences of abuse, more than the perceptions of violence by middle-class commentators (which is what I am after), and two, that the frequently raw emotion of the interview caused me and those interviewed considerable distress. Thus, oral histories of women who experienced violence in their marital relationships is a potential avenue of investigation, but one I decided to forgo.

Other sources, such as some magazines, novels, and newspapers, were silent on domestic violence. Although noting the silence surrounding domestic violence is revealing of the lack of attention paid to this issue, it is difficult to extend this silence to anything but a footnote or brief observation (this I do in the evidential chapters when appropriate). Domestic violence as a category simply did not exist. It was
unnamed and did not crop up in the language around families and postwar re-adjustment. However, as indicated in the thesis, family violence was encoded in other concerns, and it is in the margins of these other concerns that we glimpse attitudes towards intrafamilial violence. This rather circuitous route to family violence is discussed separately in chapters two through four.

One more methodological issue needs to be addressed. This dissertation pays attention to categories of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation in two distinct ways: categories which are articulated in the source material, and categories which are absent. For example, much is made in the postwar discourses of the gendered roles and expectations of men and women. The presentation of these roles is detailed and their meanings are analysed here. On the other hand, although sexual orientation is rarely mentioned in the sources, the present study questions its absence, and critically examines the assumptions underlying the silence surrounding sexual orientation. In showing that in the postwar period some behaviors, ideals, and values were marginalized and others were legitimized and naturalized, this dissertation contributes to English Canadian family violence scholarship.

Literature Review

Canadians have long adhered to the myth of their country as one committed to law and order and notable for its deference to authority. In her study of the making of law and order in British Columbia in the colonial period Tina Loo sums up this faith: "Canadians committed fewer crimes, did not engage in the same active policy of cultural genocide towards the indigenous population, and were
generally more accepting of state authority than their neighbours immediately to the south.”² This myth has particular resonance as a foil to the vigilantism and institutionalized violence believed by Canadians to characterize the United States. In the late 1960s the commonplace perception of Canada as a peaceable kingdom was reconsidered by some Canadian historians and found wanting. The initial “discovery” and framing of the term violence was narrow, existing exclusively in the public sphere, and was closely connected to labour history.³ Rather than enjoying a peaceful evolution from colony to responsible government to independence, Canada, according to these historians, encountered violence as a well-integrated component of its social growth, of its constitutional evolution, and of its policy-making processes. Violence, they maintained, was very much part of both the frontier and settlement experience, albeit on a much reduced scale than in the United States. Of considerable significance to this study is their defence of violence. In sympathizing with workers’ frustrations and situating violence in a class and ethnic perspective, these authors tended to romanticize male violence; describing mutilations, beatings, and murders as spectacular, exciting, playful and, ultimately,

² Tina Loo, Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871 (University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 4.
³ For example, see Kenneth McNaught, “Violence in Canadian History,” in Studies in Canadian Social History Michiel Horn and Ronald Sabourin, eds. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) and other essays contained within this volume; Michael S. Cross, “The Shiners’ War: Social Violence in the Ottawa Valley in the 1830s,” Canadian Historical Association LIV, 1 (March 1973), pp. 1-26; Michael S. Cross, “Violence and Authority: The Case of Bytown,” in Law and Society in Canada in Historical Perspective, D. J. Bercuson and L. A Knafia, eds. (University of Calgary, 1979); and for more recent studies along this line see Victor Howard, ed. Creating the Peaceable Kingdom and Other Essays on Canada (Michigan State University Press, 1998) and Judy M. Torrance, Public Violence in Canada (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986).
masculine. For example, in his study of the Shiners, Irish immigrant raftsmen, in Upper Canada the 1830s, Michael Cross describes their savage assault on the daughters of a farmer. Cross attributes the "prank" to idleness, frustration, anger, and the Celtic temperament. If violence was a reasonable male character trait in certain situations, how might these rebels treat their own female family members? Neither Cross nor other historians of this category tell us. These first analyses of violence in Canadian history are notable in that they continue to influence our understandings of violence in three ways. They identify that: one, Canada does, indeed, have a violent past even if this violence was not as pronounced as in the United States; two, violence is particularly a function of the public sphere; and three, violence becomes a form of acceptable, or at least understandable, masculinity, often in confrontation with "class" enemies. These themes are threaded throughout this dissertation.

Only in the 1980s did Canadian historians begin to widen their conceptual framework to include violence within the private sphere of the family. The move to

---

4 Cross, "The Shiners' War."

study domestic violence was influenced by women’s history that emerged in part from activist movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Historical analyses of domestic violence as they originated in the 1980s were very much rooted in developing understandings of women’s lived oppression, specifically experiences with violent men, and in exposing the institution of patriarchy. In this way a dialogue arose between activist feminists and women’s historians (oftentimes one and the same). This reciprocity – the political and emancipatory edge to family violence histories – exists today, and stands as a hallmark of historical investigations of family violence.\(^6\)

A consequence of activist-inspired research is that historians have tended to gravitate towards periods when family violence is most visible. So, for example, the temperance-led campaign against wife beating, wherein women were principally perceived as victims of male depravity and in need of protection, is an area that has received a fair bit of scrutiny on both sides of the border.\(^7\) For all scholars, but for activist researchers especially, who reject an analysis of family violence as a recently discovered phenomenon and recognize its historical construction, the appeal in studying the temperance campaign is that this was a time period when family

---

6 An indicator of this is the tendency for family violence historians to discuss their active political engagement with current family violence work. This can be seen as a way to legitimize their research and to make it politically relevant to activist feminists. For example, in the introduction to David Peterson Del Mar’s recent monograph, What Trouble I Have Seen: A History of Violence Against Wives (Harvard University Press, 1996) he states: “I have explored the relationship between historical and contemporary social problems more personally than most academics. My research for this book included working as a counselor for a year with groups of indigent men who had been found by the courts to have assaulted their women partners.” (p. 7)

7 Kathryn Harvey, “To Love, Honour and Obey,” (1990) and “Amazons and Victims,” (1991), as well as Gordon, pp. 264-267. The point here is that temperance advocates failed to analyse the gendered power relations inherent in the family structure.
violence was openly discussed. Conversely, the postwar period has not been a fertile site for historical investigations of abuse because during this time family violence was all but invisible.

A monograph on the history of domestic violence in Canada has yet to be written. Existing scholarship on family violence history in Canada is sparse, residing in article form or constituting part of a larger study on, for example, women and law in nineteenth-century Canada. Family violence history is not solely the domain of historians, as criminologists and sociologists are examples of active researchers in the field. And within the community of historians, those studying labour, the law, women, gender, the family, immigration, welfare and sexuality are examples of the many specialists who are interested in family violence. The most salient feature characterizing Canadian family violence histories is its close relationship to American investigations, historian Linda Gordon’s work in particular. Partly due to this influence, and partly due to availability of sources, two main themes further distinguish Canadian scholarship: an emphasis on power relations with specific attention paid to women’s agency in resisting abuse, and a focus on the working class. The structure of this dissertation moves from the general to the specific, and so too does this literature review. I begin with an analysis of the impact of the American literature, discuss women’s resistance and

---

8 Backhouse, Petticoats and Prejudice.
the working class in turn, all the while moving from east to west, from Ontario-specific studies to research on the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia.

Despite self-congratulatory comparisons to the United States that infuse earlier investigations of public violence in Canada, today's family violence historians indicate little distinction between Canadian and American studies. For example, in her review of the historiography of wife assault in Canada, Carolyn Strange moves between Canadian and non-Canadian references with no acknowledgment of specific location. Similarly, in her analysis of wife-beating in Alberta between 1905 and 1920 Terry Chapman refers in a general way to-American scholarship without considering the particulars of the Canadian West. There are several possible reasons for Canadian historians' uncritical mingling of sources. First, the Canadian literature is so sparse that a critical mass that might allow the luxury of keeping the references within national boundaries is not feasible. That being said, this dearth of general studies of family violence does not prohibit historians from highlighting the supposed similarities and distinctions between Canadian and American contexts. Historians have successfully specified and

---


11 Chapman, "‘Til Death do us Part."

12 This is precisely the criticism offered up in a recent review of Doug Owram's *Born at the Right Time*. In noting Owram's limited discussion of how young Canadians differed from young Americans, reviewer Paul Notley (University of Toledo) identifies the scarcity of Canadian research requiring the use of American experiences and sources. Owram often has to piggyback on studies on the United States. Notley criticizes Owram for this (*Born at the Right Time* reveals much, but nothing so much as the limitations of a certain stage of Canadian historiography, p. 131), and then goes on to discuss the obvious convergence between the American and Canadian experiences of youth. *Left History*, Spring 1997, pp. 129-131.
analysed divergences in the Canadian and American experiences of, for example, suburbia. Canadian historians of family violence need to apply similar comparative critical rigour to their analyses. Another reason for the Canadian dependence on American family violence histories may be because temporal space is more important than physical space. Most family violence histories, in both countries, examine the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries. The focal point in these studies is the time period, not the site. Thus we have a burgeoning of studies on the link between temperance and wife abuse, as mentioned above. An additional reason for Canadians' indiscriminate use of American literature is perhaps because there simply is no need to discriminate. Similarities shared by the American and Canadian contexts preclude differentiation and facilitate easy cross-border comparisons, building on a North American-based understanding of family violence. This study often refers to American scholarship, in part because sometimes a comparable Canadian reference does not exist, but also because the American reference is relevant. Popular and academic beliefs shaping the Cold War environment in English Canada were likewise influential in American society. These include but are not limited to, the authority of nationalist rhetoric in the face of a perceived communist threat, the idealization of home and family, the gender-

---

bounded norms of womanly and manly demeanor, and the expert articulation of normal and deviant behaviours. In this thesis analyses developed by American scholars are evaluated and applied to the Canadian context. More research on the history of family violence in Canada, to which this dissertation aims to contribute, will enable scholars to better evaluate the distinctions and similarities between the two nations’ experiences.

A theme of central importance to family violence historians is arbitrary social power. Early scholarship on the history of family violence focused on the dominance of patriarchal power. Socialist feminists in particular sought to expose the agency and resistance of working class or minority groups and articulated the intersection of patriarchy and capitalism. Linda Gordon’s influential work, Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston, 1880-1960, exemplifies this socialist-feminist stance. As it is the key study referred to by Canadian family violence scholars, it deserves extended explication and analysis here. Gordon’s examination of case records of social work agencies in Boston from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s indicates that these social work agencies became increasingly powerful in their ability to frame the discussion of what was considered family violence, what the state’s role in correcting it was, and who its victims were. Gordon prompts her readers to rethink the family. Rather than conceptualizing families as quantifiable aggregates, harmonious and homogenous units, she emphasizes intrafamilial conflict. Family members’ individual lives must be examined, Gordon contends, exposing their structural roles and relational
positions within the family – children, siblings, mother, father, for example.\textsuperscript{15}

Arguing that family violence usually arises out of power struggles in which family members contest real resources and benefits, Gordon believes women’s abuse is emblematic of the sex/gender inequalities in our society. Besides being a site of male control, families are negotiated terrain.\textsuperscript{16}

Gordon asserts that too often we believe that outcomes of family violence are deterministic and predictable, that women and children resign themselves to helplessness and victimization under the undifferentiated tyranny of their abusers. Some family violence victims were totally defeated, she admits, but others never stopped strategizing for a better life for themselves and their children. Some ended with better lives and autonomy for themselves, but most did not. Some battered women, in turn, abused those with even less power than themselves: their children. Others were complicit in male abuse of family members.\textsuperscript{17} Gordon reviews resistance to wife abuse: use of the courts, the social service agencies, female physical aggression, and, albeit rarely, desertion. She argues that few women kept their problems to themselves, most often relying on informal networks for protection. When discussing the agency of women and children Gordon is aware of the public policy conclusions that can be drawn from her findings; she cautions that

\textsuperscript{15} Gordon, p. vi.

\textsuperscript{16} Hareven articulates historians’ perception of the family changing from a static unit to a dynamic process changing over the life cycle of individual family members, as well as the family as a collectivity. See, Tamara Hareven, “The History of the Family and the Complexity of Social Change,” \textit{American Historical Review}, LXVII, 4 (December 1991), p. 96.

\textsuperscript{17} Gordon, p. 262-263.
just because some women were able to resist their abusers successfully, this does not mean that contemporary family violence victims can rely on their own individual strategies to help themselves. Here again we see the strong connections between present political discussions and historical scholarship. Gordon states that her purpose in discussing agency is to gain insight into the extremely complex struggles and negotiation that exists within families.¹⁺

Recent Canadian historians have focused with particular enthusiasm on women's agency. In her study of women's resistance to male abuse in working-class Montreal between 1869 and 1879, historian Kathryn Harvey demonstrates that assertive women who publicly chastised their husbands or castigated them for failing to fit the breadwinner role could appear as "Amazons" or "husband beaters," both of which were pejorative terms.¹⁻ In interpreting reports such as these, scholars document the agency of women who supposedly had no power, but proved otherwise. A notable case is that of Angelina Napolitano, an abused wife and recent immigrant who killed her husband in 1911. Although many observers of the time assumed that corroborated evidence of "wife torture" would provide Napolitano with a full defense, she was convicted of murder and sentenced to hang. In their examination of press and judicial accounts of the trial Franca Iacovetta and Karen Dubinsky illustrate how Napolitano's advocates refashioned her into a victim.²⁺¹⁻

¹⁺ Gordon, p. 3.
the international campaign for Napolitano's clemency, her murderous act was perceived as a desperate means to resist a dangerous and ignorant "foreigner" – her husband. Classism and racism were also invoked to explain why Napolitano axed her husband in his sleep – she, too, was a "hot-head" who could not control her impulses, a trait characteristic of her “race.” Noteworthy here is that few of her supporters used the incident to argue that some women such as Napolitano suffered as a result of their powerlessness within marriage. Her victimhood was acceptable only within a paradigm of class and race. Cases such as these have inspired historians to challenge and “unpack” understandings of victimhood.

Certainly women like Napolitano were active, and deadly, agents. The study of violent women points to the language governing our historical understandings of violence and is hence complementary to this study, but for several reasons women assailants receive limited treatment in this thesis. The most obvious reason is that I found very few references to violent women in the bodies of evidence I examined (this does not necessarily mean that violent women did not exist in the postwar years). This silence is interesting in and of itself. A possible reason why the Cold War era sources I examined did not reveal violent women is because the nature of their crimes, especially if it involved infanticide, transported them beyond available understandings of women’s deviance. Due to the gendered conception of social order, these women were labelled criminally insane by the male medico-legal establishment and were institutionalized. In British Columbia during the Second World War and after, the numbers of women labeled as criminally insane began to rise appreciably. Female admissions to the province’s mental health services finally
surpassed that of males in the fiscal year 1953-1954. Criminologists Robert Menzies and Dorothy Chunn argue that women who inflicted dramatic acts of violence on the children and men in their lives were more likely to be characterized as mad than bad. "These women were seemingly propelled into the hospital by a resounding explosion of madness and endangerment." Women who killed their male partners followed a different trajectory. As with Napolitano, they were routinely held accountable for their actions and subjected to criminal sanctions. Violent women, according to Menzies and Chunn, were removed from public culture; indeed, they did not appear in the sources I examine. An additional reason why violent women do not receive attention in this dissertation is that, although violent women are often abused women, this is not always the case, and female violence must be understood as a separate though related category. In order to do so a different theoretical base and methodological approach than employed in this thesis is required. The scope of this study is narrowly conceived to focus on women who were beaten by their husbands.

Another volume by Iacovetta also challenges understandings of victimhood. She examines the immigrant experience of southern Italian peasants who settled in the industrial metropolis of postwar Toronto before 1965. In studying women

22 Menzies and Chunn, p. 250.
within the Italian family, Iacovetta rejects what she sees as a tendency among feminist scholars to perceive immigrant women as victims: that immigrant women were ghettoized in dead-end jobs, that they lacked access to language and retraining programs, and that they endured the triple oppression of being immigrants, women, and workers. In *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* Iacovetta details how women coped under these conditions and, especially, how they gave meaning to their lives. Admitting that the patriarchal organization of the southern Italian family and the cultural mores of southern Italian society significantly shaped gender relations both inside and outside the family unit, Iacovetta argues that the presence of patriarchal structures did not render women passive and powerless victims. For it was within the private sphere that women could wield influence over their families. For example, some women regularly hid from their husbands money that they earned selling goods such as eggs, produce, or embroidered linen. They would then purchase a few essentials for themselves or their children. This manipulation illustrates Gordon's argument regarding the necessity of viewing the family as negotiated terrain.

Iacovetta's work also examines the relations between the post-war immigrant women and social service case workers. In this she has much to tell us about the professionalization of social workers and the limits to their powers. Although

---


26 Iacovetta, p.84.
counselors, almost exclusively female, sought active intervention in the lives of the immigrant clients to ensure the newcomers’ assimilation into Canadian society, the counselors themselves were rarely successful in reshaping their clients’ lives, in large part due to the "selective and pragmatic approach" many of these immigrant women adopted towards the agency. Resembling Gordon’s conclusions, Iacovetta found that many of the social work agency’s female clients took advantage of the services offered by the agency to meet their needs as they defined them. And on occasion the counselors were compelled by their clients to assist them in ways that they, as "experts", did not necessarily condone. For example, counselors might accept a battered woman's desire to be a single mother, rather than preserving the family at all costs which was the prevailing notion of the time. Iacovetta’s work encourages scholars to re-examine simplistic conceptualizations of power as exercised from the top of the social hierarchy to those inhabiting the lower rungs. For example, she shows that a complete understanding of social class needs to be far more complex and subtle than simply a case of the elite oppressing the less powerful.

The issue of social class has provoked debate amongst family violence historians. Almost everything we know about the physical abuse of women in the past derives from social work records, criminal court records and divorce proceedings. This creates certain constraints. These records are partial and biased in that they reflect the “worst” cases – those which came to the attention of the criminal or civil justice system and those deemed the most terrible from the

---

Iacovetta, 'Making 'New Canadians',' p.264.
perspective of legal authorities. This type of evidence is useful in charting some women’s actual experience of violence in periods when perceptions of wife abuse and responses to it were different from today, but it does not necessarily document change in the dominant society’s attitudes toward violence against women. An added problem with evidence of this sort is that it may reproduce classist and racist understandings of domestic violence because “... working class violence between the sexes was an open secret, known to all members of the household, neighbours, clerics, and beat cops [or their equivalents].”^{28} The case of Angelina Napolitano is illustrative of this. Additionally, James Snell’s study of women’s use of divorce courts in the first four decades of 20th century Nova Scotia reveals that it was most often working-class women who appealed to the courts for recognition of sexual cruelty as a ground for divorce.^{29} We know from contemporary research that violence is far from exclusively a working-class phenomenon, and it makes sense that this was the case in the past. Evidence of middle-class domestic conflicts is comparatively rare, reflecting the reality that they were better kept secrets. Intra-familial assaults were private family matters for the respectable, public spectacles for everyone else. In this way the source material most commonly available to family violence historians frames wife abuse as a problem confined to intimate relations among the poor and minority groups.

^{28} Strange, p. 299. Italics in original.

Historians have not sufficiently recognized the class bias in studies of family violence. In her broad survey of American social policy against family violence from colonial times to the 1980s Elizabeth Pleck rarely discusses or analyses class. She briefly mentions the class dynamics between the "reformers" and those they sought to reform: "Highly educated people have frequently offered solutions for social problems that did not directly affect them." She does not, however, develop this point. In her chapter on child abuse and the attention paid to this "epidemic" in the 1960s and 1970s, she alerts the reader to the medical community's positioning of abusive families as "classless" so that in perceiving their own vulnerability to this tragedy, middle-class families would support federal spending on anti-abuse programs. However, her mention of class is limited to this brief section of her book.

Canadian family violence scholars are also remiss in explaining their use of class-based terms. For example, Karen Dubinsky's Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929, the first academic treatment of sexual violence to combine the dangers of sex with an acknowledgment of its pleasures, is based on an examination of criminal case files on sexual crime from twenty-five rural Ontario counties. Dubinsky concentrates on the working class, or the "socially marginal", as she puts it, although this term is not adequately explained. She contends that historians can find out about the lives of those who have historically

---

30 Pleck p. 7.
31 Pleck, p. 172.
32 Dubinsky, p. 7.
been "less powerful" through examining criminal case files. Who are these people? By what criteria are they categorized as working class? She mentions immigrants, farmers, domestic servants, hired men, factory workers, miners and loggers as examples of the types of people who appear in the records, yet she does not shed light on how she formed her definitions.33

Aside from her reticence to define class, Dubinsky's analysis of sexual violence has relevance to this thesis. She purports to study the history of sexual crime in order to understand more fully the forces that have shaped sexual danger, in particular, the linkages between masculinity, sexuality, and domination. As Dubinsky states: "The question we should ask is not why women persist in seeking heterosexual adventure and companionship, but rather why male rage is turned so often on women."34 Like other historians of violence, Dubinsky believes that sexuality is constructed both socially and historically. By examining the sexual politics of a given period, we begin to see how violence is understood, individually and socially. Sexual danger and sexual pleasure are intimately linked. In this assumption, Dubinsky reiterates ideas expressed in an earlier article by Linda Gordon and Ellen DuBois in which they state that feminist politics must seek both to protect women from sexual danger and to encourage their pursuit of sexual pleasure.35 Sexual violence does not mechanically reflect and express male

33 Dubinsky, p. 7.
34 Dubinsky, p.3.
dominance. To believe this would be to conclude falsely that all heterosexual relationships are violent.

Although examining overlapping but essentially different time periods, Dubinsky's work on sexual crime shares much with Constance Backhouse's *Petticoats and Prejudices: Women and Law in Nineteenth Century Canada*. Backhouse argues that the nineteenth century legal system reflected and re-ordered systemic power imbalances based on gender, class, and race. An example of this is her reading of seduction laws. Seduction laws protected the father, as it was he, in fact, who had the right to sue his daughter's seducer, generally for " loss of services" for the time during which she was incapacitated due to pregnancy and childbirth. Action by the seduced woman herself was barred. Reformers in the late nineteenth century criminalized seduction, indicating that seduction was perceived as a crime against society, rather than one that occurred within the narrower confines of the family. Backhouse sees this as a "hollow victory" because the criminal law, with its focus on deterrence and punishment, could not compensate its victims as previously.

These reforms were thus a symbolic achievement, as seduction was considered a sexual crime against women themselves, not the damaging of property belonging to their fathers.

Backhouse's monograph is heavily dependent on narrative, but is less informed by theory. This weakness sometimes lends a prurient tone to her work.

36 She also applies this double standard to the treatment of battered wives, in that they were seen as either the property of their spouses or their fathers, but not independent beings. Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice*, pp. 167-181.
37 Backhouse, p.80.
Petticoats and Prejudice is compelling, but more so for the sensationalistic stories it tells than because of convincing analysis. She does not contextualize her narratives and does not ground her stories in an analytic framework that would allow her to deconstruct more fully the dichotomies of the social construction of masculinity and femininity, public and private, pleasure and danger, for example.

Happily, Dubinsky's work provides a rich, incisive context for understanding sexual crimes. For example, when Dubinsky examines seduction, although she agrees with Backhouse's premises, she links the legal tradition of seduction to the historical construction and regulation of desire, pinpointing the gendered complexities of these regulations, which were based on an assumption of the oppositional tendencies of women and men. In this way the narratives are a vehicle by which Dubinsky is able to make her point concretely, not an end in themselves. Thus, while listening to personal, intimate stories we also learn about standard codes of propriety and sexual mores in society. These codes and mores are those of the dominant, middle-class, white society. Her attention to discourse and who has the power to define and reinforce these discourses informs arguments made in this dissertation.

While a goodly number of available studies of family violence are historically situated in central Canada, very few studies focus on the Pacific Northwest. Oregon state divorce records spanning two centuries (beginning in the 1840s) form the backbone of Del Mar's What Trouble I Have Seen. A shared western frontier heritage, comparable economic orientations, and similar regional influences make his study of particular relevance to this thesis. Curiously, although Del Mar
provides a thorough discussion of the pros and cons of using such sources,\textsuperscript{38} he too pays scant attention to social class. Indeed, he describes Oregon’s population, from the mid-nineteenth century to today, as “overwhelmingly Euro-American, native born, and middle class.”\textsuperscript{39} Just what middle class meant or the ways in which the term evolved over the 150 years his study covers, is never explained. We might want to ask, for example, how is middle class defined? He does not ponder the typicality of the divorce applicants who disclosed family violence. Who had access to divorce? Did this change over time? Regrettably, social class is raised as a consideration only on those few occasions when he explicitly draws attention to the working class. For example, he suggests that in the years after World War II working-class men living in the Pacific Northwest may have felt threatened by women’s growing financial autonomy and that this vulnerability may have led to an increase in wife beating.\textsuperscript{40} His failure to define both middle class (his default assumption) or working class weakens his argument. Del Mar treats race/ethnicity in much the same way, by means of omission: the subjects are regarded as homogeneous in every respect.

The strength of Del Mar’s monograph is that it affords a fine example of how court records not only portray the incidence of violence but may also be used to point to sweeping cultural and social shifts. Like Gordon he depicts the changing definitions of family violence, analysing these changes as a product of shifting

\textsuperscript{38} Del Mar, pp. 1-3.
\textsuperscript{39} Del Mar, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{40} Del Mar, p. 151.
metanarratives. Del Mar observes that the history of violence against wives in the western United States has been profoundly influenced by two long-term cultural transformations. He argues that whereas the production-oriented ethos emphasizing self-discipline in late nineteenth-century Oregon made wife beating less acceptable, in the twentieth-century the culture of consumption undercut the practice of self-restraint and violence against wives became more widespread and severe. Descriptions of wife abuse culled from court records are contextualized within the parameters of these cultural transformations. In this way, violent men are not perceived as highly deviant or unusual: "The extent and context of wife beating in Oregon changed because of cultural and social shifts that all the state's citizens experienced, and the wife beater expressed, albeit in exaggerated form, anxieties over women shared by his non-violent counterpart."41 In the chapter of his book on the post-World War II period (a time span which he maintains covers 1945 to the 1980s, but which in fact ignores almost completely the years between WWII and the early 1960s),42 Del Mar argues that the incidence of violence against wives increased. Again, Del Mar situates this within the broad cultural transformation of heightened individualism, in which marriage became increasingly insular, and

41 Del Mar, p. 5.
42 Pleck also virtually ignores wife abuse in the 1945 to 1960 period. She discusses three reform epochs of attention to family violence: The Puritan response, 1640 to 1680; the era of the creation of societies for the prevention of cruelty to children, 1874 to 1890s; and the most recent period, 1964 to the 1990s, initiated by the medical community's attention to child abuse and the women's liberation movement's rediscovery of wife beating. When she mentions the 1950s, it is solely in terms of child abuse (see chapter 9). Here again is an example of the attention to wife abuse in the 1960s eclipsing previous decades' recognition and understandings of marital violence, and the fact that the language around wife abuse in the 1945 to 1960 period, masked the incidence and attention actually paid to this issue.
general self-restraint further eroded. Although my study covers a narrower time frame – in fact, the period he neglects – and does not examine long-term cultural influences, I share with Del Mar the belief that family violence must be understood largely in terms of political and social narratives. The narratives governing Canadian family life in the 1945 to 1960 period offered a particular model of appropriate female and male behaviour which was vigourously promoted by experts. I do not know if violence against wives increased during the postwar period in English-speaking Canada. Awareness of the unreliability of quantitative historical evidence documenting intra-familial violence makes me wary of forming judgements about trends in the actual incidence of domestic violence. Although the reportage of domestic violence may have increased in the postwar years (after 1960, though not between 1945 and 1960) making family violence more “visible,” I believe we should resist claims about historical trends.

When it comes to the British Columbia context there are few sources to which we can turn. However, an important monograph on the legal history of British Columbia before Confederation is Tina Loo’s Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871. She argues that Canada’s criminal and civil law and their enforcement was and continues to be implicated in the production and reproduction of a racist, classist, and sexist system of domination, privileging the rights of the few over the many. She explores how law and order in British Columbia were constituted through the discourse of nineteenth-century liberalism. In this she believes that law and order were not simply imposed; rather, that the achievement of an orderly society involved the socialization of British Columbians
to a particular kind of authority, and this did not occur without conflict and
negotiation. Loo states:

The construction of the colonial legal system and its administration proved to be a site of struggle among a number of norms, and it is through those conflicts that the values which the law reflected and created become visible and the limits of a liberal order it made in creating the justice British Columbians sought are revealed.\textsuperscript{43}

Loo examines not only the construction of the law and the making of an orderly society, but also the geographical, historical, and material contexts which shaped European British Columbian's expectations of law and authority. In identifying the liberal discourse shaping British Columbian law and legal institutions, she cautions that this discourse did not in any causal way determine action, nor was it the only factor that shaped responses. Similarly, my study of the perceptions of family violence does not investigate the experience of violence nor how abused women resisted violence or refashioned the discourses to suit their needs as they defined them. That research remains to be done.

Current scholarship on the history of family violence suggests an exciting but still rather slim field. Our understanding of the history of family violence in English-speaking Canada is incomplete. We know the most about wife abuse at the turn-of-the-century amongst the working class in central Canada. And we know a fair bit about how women resisted or fought back against this abuse. Canadian studies rely heavily on American family violence scholarship. From American

\textsuperscript{43} Loo, p. 4.
studies, Canadian scholars have accepted that family violence is politically and historically constructed and re-constructed, and in certain periods is more "visible" than in others. Historical change in our understanding of family violence has much to do with the political and social contexts or demands of the day. These needs are defined by the powerful. Canadian historians of family violence ought to expand their research to include a view of changing power relations among classes, sexes, and generations, as well as within and between regions.

This dissertation fills in a few lacunae in Canadian family violence historiography. Three aspects of this study are unique: time period, location, and subject. Family violence histories have heavily favoured the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, the years 1880 through the 1920s are perhaps the fifty most studied years in Canadian history, particularly amongst social historians. This is partly due to availability of source material and partly due to the importance of the time period. These decades witnessed dramatic social tensions which accompanied massive economic shifts as Canada experienced the transition to industrial capitalism and as Canadians first attempted to construct a nation. Gender identities were adjusted, modifying traditional labour at home and creating specific markets for women in the work force. The impact of changing political, economic, and social realities on the constitution of and emotional landscape within families is an important theme in family violence historiography, yet it is rare when these historians move outside of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This study takes as its boundaries 1945 to 1960, the immediate postwar adjustment period. Existing in the shadow of the 1960s, this fifteen year period is commonly
perceived today as an era of traditional values. Only recently have historians begun to challenge and dispel the myths associated with the beginning of the Cold War era."

I begin this study in 1945, the year in which WW II ended. With the return of peace Canadians had the opportunity to reconstruct notions of the family and the place of the family in the new postwar world. Canadians were keen to secure stability following the economic and social dislocations of the Depression era and the war. The family was to play a pivotal role in this re-adjustment. This study concludes at the end of 1960, at the opening of a decade that witnessed the articulation of domestic violence as a societal problem. In the same years the medical community expressed concern about child abuse, elevating this one kind of domestic violence as a major public issue. The decade also saw the beginning of the second wave women’s movement that drew attention to domestic violence, specifically husbands’ abuse of wives. Feminism was part of a broader constellation of popular movements that offered social critiques identifying violence

44 An extended discussion of this recent literature is provided on pages 35-53, this chapter. The 1945-1960 period was the first half of the Cold War. In these sixteen years, the presence of a nuclear standoff represented a new phenomenon. There was a clear manifestation of nuclear fear in popular culture and official rhetoric. Later, in the 1960s, organized movements against the arms race served to channel people’s anxieties over the Cold War.

45 In North America, the battered women’s movement was influenced most specifically by the women’s liberation movement. Beginning with a focus on the status of women made it possible to turn attention to wife battering as a social problem, rather than an issue of individual deviance, and to move from consciousness raising to social action. See R. Emerson Dobash and Russell P. Dobash, Women, Violence and Social Change (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 25-28.

46 For example, the medical community identified child abuse as a major public issue in an article in a prominent medical journal (1964). Pleck, p. 171.

47 For a general overview of the women’s movement in Canada, see Alison Prentice et al., Canadian Women: A History (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), pp. 343-366.
and oppression, both public and private. In the 1960s feminists and others introduced a counter-discourse highlighting a variety of types of violence, including domestic violence. In its positing an institutional analysis and critique of violence and oppression, this counter-discourse to some degree, although never completely, challenged and supplanted individual, victim-blaming analyses. It was to gain authority in the wider society through the 1960s.

The geographic focus of extant family violence histories have heavily favoured Ontario. Historians need to move beyond this boundary to examine other areas of Canada. This study seizes this challenge and endeavors to apply insights from family violence histories, both Canadian and American, to British Columbia, a province often overlooked by this nation's historians. While some British Columbian historians quite rightly identify 'The West Beyond the West' as having a distinctive character, my analysis shows that, by and large, perceptions of family violence in postwar English Canada transcended provincial boundaries, perhaps even national and continental ones. Certainly more work needs to be done in this area before a more assured analysis of the particularity of family violence narratives can be claimed. Also, it may well be that the actual experience of family violence in British Columbia was and continues to be distinctive to this province. The structure of this thesis moves from the broad to the specific. It focuses on English-Canada, but progressively narrows in on British Columbia, specifically Vancouver. It begins with presentations of popular and professional/academic magazines and journals that

31

had a pan-Canadian distribution, moves on to an examination of social work theses from the province’s largest university, the University of British Columbia, and concludes with a detailed study of understandings of violence as exhibited in Vancouver newspapers during a specific year.

The history of family violence, for evidential reasons, has largely been the history of intra-familial relations amongst poor and other minority families. Other, more privileged families need to receive the same scrutiny. Although I began this research with the aim of examining the middle class, regrettably much of this thesis analyses middle-class commentators’ discussions of violence in working-class families. I found, as have other historians, that court records or those of social service agencies are dominated by stories of the working class. Increasingly, even these records are difficult to access. A study of perceptions of family violence presents, in contrast, an opportunity to examine middle-class values, although these values framed the lives of all Canadians. I will consider the class dimensions of family violence issues as they pertain to the sources and subject of each chapter.

---

49 Although there are many competing definitions of class, the central core elements which will be applied here are Marxist-inspired. Working class means those who depend for a living on a wage, and the institutions and ways of life surrounding that situation. Middle class means those who own or control significant accumulations of wealth and people who through professional associations (mainly achieved through educational opportunities) or governmental organizations wield social, economic, and political power. The middle class, too, surround themselves with institutions that organize their power and their way of life. I acknowledge that this definition is gendered, ignoring unwaged housewives, for instance. It also pays insufficient attention to the structure of the marital framework, whereby wives often find themselves unable to leave violent husbands because of women’s economic dependency and vulnerability. Although conceptions of class are broadly framed in this dissertation, a more nuanced understanding of women’s individual situations, like the above example, will be explored where appropriate. I am indebted to Robert Connell’s explanation of social class in his Teacher’s Work (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), p. 8.
Regardless of the class location of the women and men who appear in the narratives, the ideals being promulgated are those of the middle class.

In the period under study, some female and male identities were acknowledged and overtly regulated, whereas others were almost wholly absent from postwar presentations of the family (a form of regulation in and of itself). This disparity has much to do with the context of the Cold War. This next section aims to describe and analyse the central political, demographic, social, economic, and ideological changes experienced by Canadians in the immediate postwar years.

Cold War Context

Pervasive myths abound in contemporary popular consciousness about the post-World War II family. These myths serve a function: denying past diversity is often coupled with a refusal to admit variety today. The fact that many people presently regard an idealized generation of the 1950s as the "norm," and hence lament the contemporary "breakdown of the family", is a powerful indicator of just how widespread and enduring the dominant ideology of that era continues to be.\(^50\) Most researchers agree that this myth was promoted so vigourously precisely because society did not conform to its own prescribed notions.\(^51\) As Bettina Bradbury states:

\(^{50}\) Stephanie Coontz provides an excellent account of this kind of nostalgia in her *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

The more rapidly economic, social, or ideological changes occur, the more likely the kinds of family that are believed to have predominated before will appear to be traditional. When traditional images are presented as ideal, a simplification invariably occurs.\textsuperscript{52}

The normative notion of the post-World War II family was nuclear and privatized, resting on distinct gender-defined roles and bound together with love and affection. This held that since the "modern" family had lost or was in the process of surrendering most of its traditional economic, social and cultural responsibilities - mainly to the expanding public institutions of the state - its primary function or "essence" was the maintenance of close, affective ties between family members. While men assumed the breadwinner role, housewives and mothers were to have a pivotal place in the creation and sustenance of happy, united families.

The stereotype of women as "happy homemakers, winsome wives, and magnanimous mothers"\textsuperscript{53} was reinforced, not only by advertisers, journalists and magazine editors, but by medical experts and other professionals, such as specialists in obstetrics and gynecology. The influence of expert opinion in the postwar years was vast.\textsuperscript{54} In the mass media, as well as in the schools, the courts, and social service offices, experts were increasingly evident as mediators of everyday life. In their


\textsuperscript{54} The literature on the increasing intervention of “experts” in family life, beginning after the Great War, is substantial and will receive attention in Chapter Three. For a brief overview, see the recently published, Cynthia R. Comacchio, The Infinite Bonds of Family: Domesticity in Canada, 1850-1940 (University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 95-98, 153-155. That expert discourse permeated postwar life is discussed in the scholarly accounts of postwar families, cited below.
negotiation of the everyday, Canadians heard, read, and were otherwise subjected to, the pronouncements of professionals. And, within the general category of 'the expert', some authorities were more revered than others. Mental health professionals, namely psychologists and psychiatrists who as a group had gained tremendous influence during the Second World War, were granted particular authority and power. These experts determined the extent to which their female patients accepted themselves as women. Roots of most interpersonal problems were sought in individual pathology, not in structural arrangements. The "feminine mystique" created by the media, psychiatric and medical professionals, among others, and reinforced judiciously by lawyers and judges, articulated norms of sex roles that pathologized women's individual distance from these prescribed norms. Most of the professional commentators whose articulation of normal will be detailed and critiqued in this dissertation espouse a liberal perspective, although a continuum of responses to women's and men's roles from the conservative to the more left-leaning existed.

56 For a historical analysis of experts' advice to women see Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts Advice to Women (New York: Anchor Books, 1978), chapter 8.
57 In her best-selling feminist polemic, The Feminine Mystique, published in 1963, journalist Betty Friedan argued that the postwar era witnessed the promotion of a conservative ideal in which women's happiness derived solely from marriage, motherhood, and family. This ideal, claimed Friedan, damaged women and trapped them in suburbia. Importantly, although The Feminine Mystique drew attention to women's discontent, Friedan also flattened women's postwar identities by reinforcing the stereotype that all postwar women were middle-class, domestic, suburban, and non-wage-earners. In other words, she caricatured the popular ideology that she said suppressed them; she did not challenge the stereotype. Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Norton, 1963).
In the Canadian post-WW II era women were urged to create modern families characterized by internal family democracy and equal partnerships between husbands and wives. This social ideology is the product of an era that followed six years of war preceded by a decade of economic depression. In the late 1940s and 1950s Canadians worried about the Cold War and the fragility of world peace. At the same time, the unprecedented postwar economic boom led many social critics to claim that affluence promised a progressive future that would incorporate everyone, thereby ending economic inequalities. The combination of fear and hope served to orient Canadians to home, family, and, therefore, stability. The promotion of tight, emotionally fulfilling families was essential to the pursuit of the personal and political security that characterized postwar rhetoric about Canadian families. To stray from this ideal threatened the stability of individuals, the family, and even the nation as a whole.

Deviance from certain prescribed norms was often regarded as a crime, if not actual, then moral. The Cold War enemy without—the Russians—was distant and intangible. Some Canadians were fearful as their world changed and they needed to focus their anxieties on a more palpable villain. The enemy within—the deviant—provided this focus. The deviant became the (moral) criminal, as the cipher for the absent, real enemy.

Sociological theory on social control sheds some light here, both in terms of the theoretical conceptualization and its ability to provide direction for inquiry. In

her work on American audiences and their reactions to teenage pregnancy, Constance Nathanson points to two periods of sustained public attention to the management of young women's non-marital sexuality: during the Progressive Era (1885 to 1920) and more recently, from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. Nathanson believes these episodes can be conceptualized as moral boundary crises, "events that represent the reassertion of society's moral order against the threat of deviant behaviour." As well, she argues that these episodes move beyond disapprobation of individual deviance, and may be defined as social movements, conscious and collective attempts to bring about or to resist or reverse social change. A moral crisis (also referred to as a "moral panic") occurs when a problem of individual transgression is transformed into a symbol of social and moral disorder. Typically, social movements are preceded by social upheaval – war, increased immigration, rising unemployment, rapid urbanization, fraught race and gender relationships, for

---


60 The scholarship on moral panics is rather well developed. The bulk of the research in this area covers the 1900-1914 period in Ontario's past; a period that witnessed large-scale, non-British, and non-Protestant immigration, as well as rapid urbanization. For example, in Canada, see Mariana Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991), pp. 89-99; Carolyn Strange, Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930 (University of Toronto Press, 1995), chapter 4; Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, Making Good: Law and Moral Regulation in Canada, 1867-1939 (University of Toronto Press, 1997); and, Karen Dubinsky, Improper Advances, chapter 2. Valverde defines moral panics as-"[when] a moral issue that appears to be singular serves as the site for social debate on a number and important and interrelated issues." (p. 90) The treatment of women who were scrutinized for transgression from moral codes certainly fall within this definition. In her study of the politics of teenage pregnancy, Kristin Luker posits a perspective on moral panics that parallels Valverde's. She suggests that although some social science theories subscribe to the view that the public is subject to moral panics which are in large part irational, moral panics are also a response to real and rapidly changing world conditions, in which the moral panic, in her case the story of teen pregnancy, serves to provide a logic and a human face to these revolutionary changes. See Kristin Luker, Dubious Conceptions: The Politics of Teenage Pregnancy (Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 86.
example. Applying these insights to the Second World War and immediate postwar period, due to women's assumption of male occupations during the war authorities were insistent at war's end that women be relegated to their "traditional" roles. The postwar period was a time during which morality was heavily regulated. Order and stability are represented by the family, more particularly, by the mother; disorder is represented by unsanctioned sexuality and constitutes a potential moral crisis.

Sexual activities outside of the legitimacy of heterosexual marriage were suspect. This included adultery, bigamy, and homosexuality. Anti-Communist wrath targeted homosexuals in particular. Homosexuality, perceived as a character weakness and suggestive of individual susceptibility, came to be associated with spying and treason. Initially, security screening in Canada focused on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board and then branched out so that every homosexual in the entire civil service feared discovery and dismissal. Hundreds lost their jobs due to the "character weakness" of homosexuality.

Much of the anxiety of the era focused on women. Women who violated hegemonic gender roles were likely regarded with suspicion and even fear. Many North Americans believed that the Russians could destroy their continent not only by atomic attack but through internal subversion. As issues around civil defense merged with concern over family security, professionals advised women to create successful families. Success was defined as the ability of parents to stay together

---

61 This is well documented in Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire*. See also his "'Character Weaknesses' and 'Fruit Machines': Towards an Analysis of the Anti-Homosexual Security Campaign in the Canadian Civil Service." *Labour/Le Travail* 35, (Spring 1995): 133-161.

62 Kinsman, p. 121.
and not divorce, and to rear children who would avoid juvenile delinquency and stay in school so that they, as educated Canadians and future leaders of the country, would continue the struggle against the Russians in the Cold War. Within this context, female sexuality represented a potentially destructive and disruptive force and needed to be repressed. Women's increasing economic and sexual emancipation was recognized (and indeed had changed dramatically during the Second World War), but their economic and sexual power needed to be channeled positively into the family. Misdirected, these forces could wreak havoc on the family and the nation. Celibacy was equally out of the question for the normal citizen. Alfred Kinsey, with precise scientific detail, shocked the American nation in 1948 and 1953 with his documentation of widespread premarital intercourse, homosexual experiences, masturbation and extramarital sex among American men and women. In Canada, the Kinsey Reports received wide circulation and were a central reference point for sexual policy-making and discussion in the postwar years. The reports legitimized the discussion of sexuality in the popular media. And what was discussed was not the denial of sexuality, but the means to harness it. Marriage was seen to be the appropriate container for the unwieldy male and female libidos. In light of Kinsey, it is not surprising that Canadians were urged to marry young. And once married, they were to remain married. The alleged dangers of sexual promiscuity might be avoided by adhering to family values.

---

64 Kinsman, p. 113.
In a provocative American study, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War*, Elaine Tyler May connects Cold War anti-communism and the "domestic revival." She looks to foreign policy, specifically containment, for what she argues is the central metaphor of the age: just as communism was to be contained, the forces that threatened American domestic stability – women's independence and female sexuality – had to be contained and transformed into sources of strength for the family and thus for the United States as a whole. In this way, Cold War ideology and Americans' postwar emphasis on domesticity were "two sides of the same coin." May ably demonstrates the influence of prescriptive and cultural norms in shaping sex roles.

In recent years Canadian historians have begun to study the postwar period, many using popular culture as resource material. For example, Doug Owram's *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* employs newspaper articles, magazines, polls, and government documents to chart the life-course and accompanying social changes of baby boomers from birth in 1946 through the 1950s and 1960s to 1973. Owram stresses the importance Canadians placed on creating and maintaining happy, contented families built on equality and companionship, psychology and love. He acknowledges this was a middle-class ideal, bearing little

---

resemblance to the lives of many Canadians. Emphasizing psychological factors, Owram notes that a generation of Canadians who had fought hard for the idea of home and who had known nothing but instability, were searching for stability through the symbol of home. The vision of the family was romanticized and idealized, and also strengthened as the importance of marriage was “exalted” to new levels in the postwar period. As Owram states: “The main goal of youth was to get married. The main goal of adults was to stay happily married.” And this was predominantly the responsibility of women, who were thought to be largely driven by the marriage instinct. Men, too, although by nature free-roaming animals, were expected to overcome these urges and settle down to married life. Owram uses psychological factors to explain other postwar developments such as women’s flight from waged labour and the installation of families to the suburbs. As Alvin Finkel perceptively notes in his incisive analysis of recent literature on postwar Canada, however, Owram’s psychological explanation misses a political context. Although Owram claims his monograph is a social and cultural history, not a political one, the material that would provide both a political framework and more depth to his study are absent.

---

67 That being said, Owram has been justly criticized for his exclusion of immigrants, those living in non-urban areas, and the poor; nor does he pay attention to regional differences. For example, see Notley, left history, p. 129.

68 Owram, p. 13.

69 Alvin Finkel, “Competing Master Narratives on Post-War Canada,” Acadiensis XXIX, 2 (Spring 2000), pp. 188-204.
The dichotomous positioning of political and social history is precisely the point Finkel makes in his review essay. He describes the landscape of postwar historiography as occupying “two solitudes.” On one side are those works, exemplified by Owram, which are characterized by their compartmentalization. Written by “conventional” historians, these investigations examine both political and social histories, but never at the same time. Thus a study of political policies in the postwar era would rarely detail the everyday lives of ordinary people, whereas a social history of the sixties generation and drug culture would render political structures and elites invisible. Finkel very much situates himself in the other camp, the “left-leaning” side. This group aggressively works to tease out the relationship between daily life and political structures. Ordinary people and elites are studied.

In his review of the polarization of postwar historiography, Finkel establishes a forum to attack Owram; he balances this by praising other historical works, such as Whitaker and Marcuse’s Cold War Canada, which receives substantial attention below. Curiously, missing from Finkel’s otherwise excellent article is mention of a small number of superb monographs on the regulation of sex and gender in postwar Canada. These three books, exemplars of some historian’s refusal to decouple daily life and political structures, are briefly discussed in turn.

Mary Louise Adam’s The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality links the postwar concept of normality with the social construction of adolescent heterosexuality. As youth were the driving force of

---

70 Mary Louise Adams, The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality (University of Toronto Press, 1997).
progress, their sexual development was seen as central to the nation’s security. Through the entrenchment of a heterosexual norm young people would marry, form families, and soon thereafter, have children. Heterosexuality was embedded in a host of codes, from dresswear and style, to demeanor and choice of social activities. To fall outside of the normality of heterosexuality, to fail to subscribe to a certain heterosexual presentation, was to be labeled an outcast. Adams convincingly draws on both traditional and non-traditional sources, such as popular culture, to make her points.

Margaret Little’s ‘No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit’: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1997, although not solely about the postwar years, is instructive in detailing acceptable standards of behaviour for women and mothers in postwar Canada. Using case files and oral histories, Little examines the history of single mothers on social assistance in Ontario, from the establishment of the Ontario Mothers’ Allowance in 1920 to its demise in the late 1990s. During the Second World War and in the immediate postwar years, the federal government introduced new universal welfare programs, and shortly following the war, the province of Ontario expanded its welfare policies, including the mothers’ allowance. Yet, expansion meant increased scrutiny and counselling, and as Little clarifies, since “the single mothers who applied for [the allowance] were the antithesis of the postwar ideal [they] therefore provoked enormous

---

anxiety. Besides regulating single mothers both financially and morally, an enhanced administrative infrastructure allowed for the aggressive promotion of the heterosexual nuclear family ideal. Thus this period witnessed regulation of the deviant on one hand, and promotion of the ideal on the other. However compelling Little’s descriptions of the plight of poor mothers and the shortcomings of OMA, a more nuanced understanding of the impetus behind and the consequences of postwar social security would allow us to view mother’s allowances as more complex than solely a blunt instrument of social control.

Mona Gleason’s Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Post-War Canada examines how popular psychological discourse shaped attitudes towards family life in the postwar period. Her important study focuses on the normalizing power of psychological discourse and how its pervasive influence on postwar Canadian families permeated their everyday lives. It both identified the ideal family, which Gleason argues was largely unattainable, and pathologized those families that fell outside of the narrow construct of normal. Linking the psychological discourse to the needs of social leaders, Gleason argues that the postwar debate on the health of the Canadian family signified a reaction against the rapid changes and transformations wrought by the war and postwar reconstruction, and not a reaction against familial breakdown per se. In this way, while detailing and deconstructing the psychological discourse Gleason also indicates why this discourse was so compelling to postwar Canadians.

72 Little, p. 138.
These three volumes clearly link the varied experiences of everyday postwar Canadian life to the nation’s political structures. Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse’s substantial analysis of the impact of the Cold War in determining the boundaries of social acceptability in Canada is also instructive here. Unlike Owram who believes that Canadians were psychologically predisposed towards home and security, Whitaker and Marcuse argue that it was principally but not exclusively the political context which served to orient Canadians toward home. First off, the Second World War laid the foundations for the Cold War, wherein “the war-time propaganda of heroes and villains was now readily carried over into the more ambiguous and perplexing postwar era of atomic diplomacy and controlled international rivalry.”

The faces of the wartime Russian and Chinese allies were pasted over the faces of the former enemies who now became allies. Whitaker and Marcuse see two other factors facilitating this transformation: the increased role of government in the mobilization and manipulation of public opinion and the continuity of anti-communism throughout the twentieth century, emblematic of a deeply entrenched conservatism. The Gouzenko Affair well embodies these factors.

On September 6, 1945 Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk from the Russian embassy in Ottawa, sought asylum in Canada. Documents in his possession proved that the Russians had established a seventeen-person spy ring to obtain secrets of North American technology (namely, the atomic bomb) shortly after the Russian

---

74 Whitaker and Marcuse, p. 9.
embassy opened in the nation’s capital in 1942. Gouzenko’s revelations prompted a secret commission of inquiry under the War Measures Act. A host of arrests and interrogations followed and, in a bevy of official reports, scores of Canadians were named as suspected spies, although most were never charged or convicted. The limited notion of civil liberties held by government leaders in the postwar period is striking, albeit hardly surprising.

Whitaker and Marcuse persuasively argue that, had there been no genuine Gouzenko affair, the security services would likely have invented a near equivalent to alert the country to the new era of international crisis. The government was “not simply responding to public opinion but were also guiding public opinion and even, to an extent, constructing public opinion.”75 Fueling this fear was insecurity: the economic insecurity of those who remembered the Great Depression, and the international insecurity that led to the search for armed strength from 1939 to 1945, and the uneasy stalemate thereafter of the Cold War.

The dark underside of the rather colourless, conformist, buttoned-down world that had taken shape by the mid-1950s was gnawing anxiety about the dangers – real and imagined – lurking half-hidden on the margins of the black-and-white TV-tube image of the suburban middle-class family bungalow with its working dad, domestic mom, kids, dog, and latest-model car. Somewhere out of the corner of the eye there always seemed to be shadowy, elusive threats: inflation, unemployment, crime, juvenile delinquency, Soviet aggression, Communist subversion, and, always, the threat of nuclear war.76

75 Whitaker and Marcuse, p. 262. Italics in original.
76 Whitaker and Marcuse, p. 22.
Fear was focused not only on the outsider, but within the nation and home as well. And this was a constructed fear. Those groups who effectively used Cold War arguments participated in a process that often silenced their opponents and attempted to control and contain the troublesome forces of social and familial change. Cold War debates were hegemonic struggles for control of the symbols of legitimacy in Canadian society.

In her analysis of women's postwar experiences in suburbia, Veronica Strong-Boag effectively dispels myths of their idyllic, uncomplicated lives, and details the strategies they employed to help cope with isolation. She agrees that in order to understand the lives of Canadians in the postwar era it is imperative to analyse relations between the state and its citizens. Anxious over changes in the world around them, experts sanctioned the belief that collective happiness and security were most likely when women concentrated their energies in the private sphere. "Stable families, fulltime mothers, and the benefits they produced in sound citizenship were to provide the first defence against the 'Red Menace' symbolized in Canada by the Gouzenko affair." Strong-Boag's analysis suggests that in postwar Canada, the separate gendered private and public spheres of Canadian life intersected, but only metaphorically.

Such historians in Canada have set out to dispel many myths surrounding family life after the war, notably that families were not as uniform, uncomplicated

---

and contented as many social commentators promoted. Although still a relatively new field, it signals the beginning of what will hopefully be a robust debate regarding methodological and theoretical perspectives. These studies complicate and revise our understanding of the postwar years. I concur with Finkel’s observation that the best of these analyses tie changes in the social landscape with dominant political structures. My study aims to achieve this integration.

What were some of these tremendous social and economic transformations experienced by Canadians in the Cold War era? The 1950s witnessed striking changes to the family structure. A high marriage rate combined with both a minor fall in the age of marriage (this was more significant for men than for women) and in the age of childbearing to produce a dramatic upsurge in the number of comparatively young conjugal families. An unprecedented increase occurred in the birth rate that lasted well beyond the immediate postwar years (Table 1.1).79 Moreover, the post war peak had been preceded by relatively high but falling birth rates through the 1920s which declined sharply during the Depression, thus accentuating the increase in the birth rate after World War II. It needs to be emphasized that the increased fertility rate was largely due to changes in marriage

79 Leacy, Series B1-14: Live births, crude birth rate, age-specific fertility rates, gross reproduction rates and percentage of births in hospital, Canada, 1921 to 1974. Note that for those women in the older age range the fertility rate peaks most sharply immediately after W.W.II, while younger women have babies later in the baby boom era: ages 35-49, the peak occurred in 1946; ages 30-14, the peak occurred in 1954; and for women between the ages 25-29, 20-24, 15-19, the peak occurred in 1959. This suggests that after years of economic depression followed by the dislocation of war, older women who desired children were socially impelled to reproduce as soon as possible, given their age.
Table 1.1: Total Fertility Rate, Canada, 1931-1961
(Live births per thousand women aged 15-49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>2,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>3,374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>3,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>3,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>3,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>3,840</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

rates (Table 1.2): a high proportion of Canadian women were getting married (albeit this share declined between 1946 and 1961), marrying young, and concentrating births in the early years of marriage. Although the immediate postwar years in Canada witnessed a "baby boom" among women under 30 and especially under 25, after 1959 the birth rate began its decline in all age groups. The net family formation rates (Table 1.3) reflect this trend as they increased sharply at war's end, slowly but significantly declining to 1961, perhaps serving to fuel fear regarding the (in)stability of the home.

---

80 Leacy, Series B75-81: Number of marriages and rate, average age of marriage for brides and bridegrooms, number of divorces and rate, net family formation, Canada, 1921 to 1974. It needs to be noted that these are aggregate statistics. If the statistics are broken down by type of residence, it is evident that rural women (farm or non-farm) marry earliest and that the average age at marriage increases with the size of the urban centers. Similarly, the more educated the woman, the longer the postponement of nuptuals. That educated urban women married later has relevance to this study in that the discourses examined are largely intended for urban audiences. As well, professional women such as social workers and journalists, married later than most of their clients or readers. See Jacques Henripin, Trends and Factors of Fertility in Canada, (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1972), pp. 129-145.

81 By the mid 1950s women were waiting a mere 1.5 years after marriage before having their first child. See Henripin, pp. 311-328.

82 Henripin, p. 19.

83 Leacy, Series B75-81: Number of marriages and rate, average age at marriage for brides and bridegrooms, number of divorces and rate, net family formation, Canada, 1921 to 1974.
Table 1.2: Marriage Rate and Average Age at Marriage for Brides and Bridegrooms, Canada, 1931-1961
(Marriage rate per thousand population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Brides</th>
<th>Bridegrooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.3: Net Family Formation*, Canada, 1931-1961
(thousands of families)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This figure includes the number of marriages, plus married female immigrants, less deaths of married persons, less married female emigrants, less divorces.

Concomitant with high marriage rates and increased birth rates (statistics which might suggest women’s relegation to the home) was a vibrant and growing economy in which women’s employment played a key role. In the first fifteen years after the end of the war, the “baby boom” converged with women’s slow but steady absorption into the labour force. The 1941 census indicates only 4.5% of married

84 Del Mar corroborates this employment trend for Oregonian women in What Trouble I Have Seen, p. 139.
women were employed; the 1961 census indicates that 21.0% of married women were in the labour force. This radical restructuring of the labour force could not help but have a direct impact on the family. Veronica Strong-Boag claims that this shift in married women's work experience generated either "dire forecasts" or "happy prognostications" about the meaning of women's paid labour in the Anglo-Canadian popular press between 1945 and 1960. Whether championing or opposing married women's paid labour, commentators assumed an image of a homogenous white middle-class womanhood, in which women chose to take on paid labour or work within the home. Women's labour, the popular press indicated, meant that more and more families could aspire to the middle-class dream of consumerism. Critics cautioned against the negative impact on family life, while defenders maintained women's labour helped secure happy families. Missing from this contemporary debate are two key points: many poor and immigrant women worked outside the home due to economic necessity rather than choice and, despite the opportunities of the postwar period, a majority of Canadians remained unable to purchase the prerogatives of the middle class, even with a combined family income. Thus, although "[i]n the 1940s and 1950s Canadians confronted and debated the desirability of married middle-class women staying at home and/or returning to

---


employment\textsuperscript{87}, the debate was founded on specious assumptions. Most married women worked because they had to. The idealized image of the normal family was really a middle-class illusion.

Strong-Boag concurs with Jane Ursel in the latter’s presentation of a complementary perspective on married women’s postwar employment. Ursel maintains that the predominantly part-time and flexible nature of women’s work obscured the underlying reality that the increasing absorption of women in the labour market amounted to an intensification of female labour.\textsuperscript{88} She concludes that such factors as a buoyant economy, an unlimited supply of labour, the high birth rate, and the perceived compatibility of women’s employment with familial responsibilities meant that not until the 1960s did the consequences of women’s employment began to be felt by men.\textsuperscript{89} In this way the halcyon days of the postwar era represented a time bomb, one that was to explode in the 1960s and find voice in the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967.

Shifting our gaze to the West, British Columbian and Vancouver contexts underwent similar changes in the postwar period. The population of the province and its largest city boomed, becoming more ethnically and racially diverse. In Vancouver, the influx of war workers, the postwar relocation of thousands of serviceworkers to the West Coast, and the rise in the number of marriages and births


\textsuperscript{89} Ursel, p. 238.
all contributed to the sharp rise in population. This is detailed extensively in Chapter Four.


Whitaker and Marcuse, p. 287.

Whitaker and Marcuse, pp. 287-290.

tightly prescribed gender roles – this constellation of experiences was also the reality of the postwar Canadian society. Why, then, was this era preoccupied with a quintessential but untenable notion of family life? Perhaps the ideal family was embraced precisely because of the diversity of Canadian life. Differentiated along lines of class and/or ethnicity, or by the dichotomies of rural/urban, ethnic, north/south, and French/English, or by a loosening of gender roles during the Depression and World War II, the reality of the postwar family tended to defy a homogenous ideal. The possibility of a broader definition of the family, including more egalitarian gender roles, always existed, but fear of familial disruptions, particularly in light of the larger context of the Cold War, led directly to the powerful ideology of the post-war modern family. Nationalism and domestic ideals became intertwined. Even to acknowledge violence within the home as a serious problem worthy of attention was to threaten the nation’s security.

Introduction of Chapters

Historians are happiest when they uncover a substantial source of records from which the bulk of their analysis may flow. No such source has yet been identified to uncover family violence in the postwar period. What at first appeared to be a limiting factor may in the end be an advantage. A key strength of this dissertation is its original and innovative use of three main data sources: popular magazines and academic/professional journals, social work dissertations, and newspapers. This rather disparate group of sources each necessitated a specific methodological approach, outlined separately in the three evidential chapters. What they reveal is two-fold: a remarkably broad-based consensus on a dominant
ideology of womanhood, one in which women were blamed for their violent husbands, and, existing in the margins of this literature, portraits of women whose lives were punctuated with violence.

What did being a good wife mean during the postwar period? Normal women were assumed to want to be dutiful wives and nurturing mothers. Within this gendered framework, male violence within marriage was almost acceptable as one, albeit unfortunate, aspect of true manhood. Male violence was both masked by and justified by alcohol, a legitimate symbol of masculinity. The alternative male model, much to be feared, was the weak man. The weak man could not be exposed, as he was vulnerable and represented a potential threat to family stability and national strength. Male violence against wives took many forms, the most severe of which was homicide. Women were encouraged to cover up and take responsibility for male violence. Women who did not conform were reminded of their duty to their husband, their family, and to Canada, or alternatively, blamed or pathologized. The overarching theme— that women’s and men’s roles within marriage were constructed in such a way that male violence against their wives was accepted and female submission to male violence was encouraged— is articulated in three chapters.

Taking a pan-English Canadian perspective, Chapter Two analyses key popular and academic/professional magazines for evidence of and attitudes toward domestic violence: *Queen’s Quarterly, Maclean’s Magazine, Chatelaine, Saturday Night, Canadian Forum, Canadian Welfare,* and the *Star Weekly.* These sources suggest that domestic violence was a reality in some women’s lives. Importantly,
they focus on white middle-class women. This preoccupation is glimpsed through
the narratives of concern about family breakdown, most notably in articles on
divorce and alcoholism. Popular and expert observers repeatedly instructed women
on their appropriate roles, identities which ensured the stability of the home as well
as the nation. The persistent ideal of domestic, quiescent and suburban womanhood
encouraged women to examine themselves for reasons why they might be
instrumental in provoking their husbands to violence.

Narrowing the focus to the westernmost province, Chapter Three investigates
University of British Columbia Master of Social Work dissertations on family
breakdown in Vancouver between 1945 and 1960. The dissertations reveal the
incidence of violence amongst the mainly white, working-class families who turned
to the agencies for assistance. As well, the studies detail the presentation and
understandings surrounding the violent acts. Influenced by the need to
professionalize the field of social work, the dissertations reveal the methodology,
language and analysis of academe, especially sociology, psychology, and psychiatry.
Although caseworkers were predominantly female, men generally sat at the top of
the medico-legal hierarchy and tended to define the issues and set the social welfare
agenda. These experts helped construct the middle-class domestic ideal in postwar
English Canada, just as they did the dominant public perception of the working
class. Middle-class social workers regularly blamed women for their abuse and
reminded them of their duty to keep the family intact, subsuming women’s
individual needs to those of the family.
Situated exclusively in Vancouver, Chapter Four analyzes newspaper coverage of violence in Vancouver for the year of 1947 to reveal the ubiquity of violence. Postwar increase in homicides, the most violent of crimes, reached a zenith just prior to 1947. Despite the fact that Vancouverites were surrounded by images of violence, the newspapers also articulate a contradictory impression of a violence-free city. This is achieved through the technique of perceiving violence as existing predominantly in the domain of the “other.” Just what this means and how it was maintained and strengthened is explored. As well, this chapter focuses on a 1947 murder trial at the conclusion of which a husband, who shot his wife during a domestic dispute, was not punished largely it seems because his wife did not fit prevailing idealized notions of womanhood. A review of the civic newspapers over the sixteen year period from 1945 to 1960 revealed this homicide – the Woolridge murder – as one of the rather more publicized domestic homicides in which masculine and feminine codes of acceptability are identified. In newspaper texts of the court trial we see courtroom society drawing a line between normal and deviant behaviour within the context of postwar Vancouver. In this way, court trials serve to link law with general culture. Dominant forms of both masculinity and femininity are revealed through an analysis of the deviant forms of these identities. Women who defied sexual conventions were vilified. In the midst of Cold War anxiety, independent women were regarded and portrayed as threats to the social order.

That a significant number of women experienced domestic abuse during the postwar era is amply displayed in the following chapters. Yet, public attention to
family violence problems was at a low ebb. Female victims of violence were
condemned and pathologized, advised to commit themselves to a life of abnegation
and self-denial. The priority of women, they were oft-told, should be to forge family
togetherness. The ascendant form of femininity in mid-twentieth century Canada
was constituted in a dichotomous fashion: the prescriptive literature established the
ideal, whereas a set of negative female identities demonstrated the opposite, that is,
"bad" examples of womanhood. The magazine articles indicate appropriate female
behaviour. The dissertations reveal wives who, in seeking social workers' assistance
for souring marriages, renounced their responsibilities to their families and the state.
Press reports of the Woolridge murder trial vilifies the dead woman for her blatant
disregard for decorum and decency. In the midst of Cold War fear, beaten and
bruised women found little support and empathy for their violence-afflicted lives.
CHAPTER TWO:
“SAFEGUARDING THE FAMILY”:
PRESENTATIONS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE CANADIAN MAGAZINES, 1945 TO 1960

This chapter analyses articles on domestic violence written in both popular and academic/professional Canadian English language magazines and journals between 1945 and 1960. Not surprisingly, given the longstanding reluctance to acknowledge its prevalence, violence, especially as seen in the private, familial sphere, is rarely explicitly mentioned. What is nevertheless fascinating is that anxiety over the breakdown of the family permeates the magazines. Located in the margins of narratives on family breakdown reside documentation and discussion of family violence. Magazine rhetoric concurs with placing responsibility for the sanctity of the family with the wife and mother. Women alone are accountable for family harmony or family dislocation. Abused women are urged to surrender their own needs and concerns to their family. In so doing, they ensure the stability and safety of the Canadian nation. Reading this concern over the modern family recovers glimpses of the perception of family violence, and importantly, its silencing.

A variety of magazines and periodicals were searched and read: Queen's Quarterly, Maclean's Magazine, Chatelaine, Saturday Night, Canadian Forum, Canadian Welfare, and the Star Weekly. These seven magazines and periodicals

---

1 All sources are readily available in either print or microfilm form in most academic or public libraries, except for the Star Weekly. The highest in circulation of all I examined, the Star Weekly is available only at the Toronto Public Library on microfilm. For an annotated bibliography of these sources, consult Diane Barbara Purvey, Violent Matters: An Annotated Guide to Selected English continued...
were selected because of their prominence and popularity. They generally had a pan-English Canadian distribution, and were well-known academic/professional and popular Canadian publications. I intentionally selected sources I believed were read by middle-class Canadians, purposefully eschewing the more sensationalistic (and Ontario-specific) sources like The Toronto Telegram. I also desired a range of political perspectives, from the more socialist Canadian Forum, to the conservative Saturday Night. I selected a professional magazine, Canadian Welfare, because its readership largely consisted of social workers. Queen’s Quarterly, one academic source among several consulted, offered presentations of domestic violence. Chatelaine was chosen as it is a popular magazine targeted to women, Maclean’s was picked due to its position as Canada’s foremost newsmagazine, and the Star Weekly was included because of its wide readership and tabloid-style, “exciting” presentation. There are many other sources that could also have been part of this study. My challenge was not so much to find sources, but to limit them. I selectively chose magazines and periodicals that reflected a diversity of groups within the Canadian population, albeit within a range of middle class opinion.

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 set out the number of articles related to domestic violence contained within each magazine. The initial intent was to choose articles only if they referred directly to domestic violence, but this definition was soon expanded. It


Two other academic journals were read for their articulation of violence during this period; these are Dalhousie Review and the University of Toronto Quarterly. In the end, these journals are not included in my analysis because of their silence on the topic.
Table 2.1: Yearly Incidence of Selected Popular Magazine Articles Referring to Domestic Violence, 1945-1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Chatelaine</th>
<th>Maclean's</th>
<th>Saturday Night</th>
<th>Star Weekly</th>
<th>Yearly Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL: 55  57  23  56  191

became apparent that references to domestic violence were embedded within other themes, such as alcoholism or divorce. Examples include a presentation of an alcoholic husband who beats his wife or of a woman who attempts to divorce her spouse due to his cruel treatment. Themes such as alcoholism or divorce were “red flags” or “codes” in which domestic violence might be discussed, in however tangential or muted a fashion. Thus, the relative obscurity of domestic violence required a shift in approach, with the key words guiding my search changing from “domestic violence” to “alcoholism” or “divorce”, for example. Similarly, an article on juvenile delinquency may trace the cause of the youth’s problems to an overattentive mother, which in turn may be analysed as owing to the mother’s lone
Table 2.2: Yearly Incidence of Selected Academic/Professional Magazine Articles Referring to Domestic Violence, 1945-1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Canadian Forum</th>
<th>Canadian Welfare</th>
<th>Queen's Quarterly</th>
<th>Yearly Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

parent status as a result of her husband’s desertion of the family. In detailing the marriage prior to the husband’s flight, domestic violence may be subtly alluded to. Thus, references to family violence were almost always circuitous, in this last example, from juvenile delinquency to a domineering mother, on to male desertion, marriage breakdown, and finally to wife abuse. The interconnections and overlaps among these categories or themes are as meaningful as the slim references to domestic violence themselves. These themes and their connectivity will receive substantial attention in this chapter.

Prior to analyzing the articles themselves, I begin by identifying the history and readership of each magazine. I next examine ways in which the magazines may
be “read”. As a clear demarcation emerged between articles on domestic violence in the scholarly or professional periodicals and those in the popular magazines, each category is examined separately.

The more academic sources – Queen’s Quarterly, Canadian Forum, and Canadian Welfare – generally had far less coverage of violence and family life than the more popular sources. Differences also exist within this category. The main distinction is between the scholarly (Queen’s Quarterly) and the activist/professional magazines (Canadian Welfare and Canadian Forum). Queen’s Quarterly contained a scant four articles (see Table Two). It falls into a category of scholarly journals appealing to more middle and upper class English speaking Canadians. Among the main intellectual and literary journals of the day, most were founded earlier in the century as both an expression of and concern over the establishment of an English-Canadian national cultural identity.³ Queen’s Quarterly is affiliated with the Kingston, Ontario, university and was established in 1893. As a more highbrow periodical, it provides a point of entry into the academic mind.

³ Maria Tippett provides an analysis of the existence of English Canadian cultural activity in the early decades of the twentieth century in Making Culture: English Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission (University of Toronto Press, 1990). Paul Litt examines the Massey Commission (1949) and subsequent Report (1951) in his The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission (University of Toronto Press, 1992). He closely identifies the cultural nationalist ideology and interest group politics behind the Commission and attempts to deconstruct the national symbolism of the Report, preferring instead to view the Report and subsequent recommendations in a more critical light, as a statement of cultural elitism and promotion of aristocratic high culture. Concern over the viability of Canada’s magazines, in the face of television and the incursion of American magazines in the Canadian market, is what prompted the establishment of the Royal Commission on Publications, 1961, sometimes referred to as the O’Leary Commission, after its chair, Grattan O’Leary. The commission’s Report and recommendations are virulently anti-American in tone. The establishment of the Massey Commission and the Commission on Publications are an indication of the importance placed on English-Canadian cultural development at this time and an important subtext to this analysis of the magazines English Canadians were buying and reading during the postwar period.
The two remaining magazines, although very different from each other, generally had more coverage of violence. *Canadian Forum*, established in 1920 as a journal for discussion of the arts, and closely tied to the left-wing intellectual movement (supported by the C.C.F.), published sixteen articles on violence between 1945 and 1960. *Canadian Welfare*, also of an activist slant but primarily a professional journal for those in the social services, principally social workers, was published from 1924 to 1977. It contained the vast majority of articles on violence in the non-popular sources: thirty-one. Still, as a whole, these magazines engaged in discussions of violence far less than the popular magazines. Whereas most of the academic or professional magazines deal largely with national public issues, and only infrequently and inconsistently discuss family breakdown except as it impacts on public policy, popular magazines are consumed with domestic, private, familial concerns on an individual or personal level. This chapter makes visible the similarities, tensions, and distinctions between popular culture and academic/professional culture.

Similarities exist among all the popular magazines included in this study – *Maclean's*, *Chatelaine*, *Saturday Night* and the *Star Weekly*. As newsmagazines, coverage of certain events, such as the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, are

---


5 I puzzled over the placement of *Saturday Night*. Although in 1952 it was perceived as an “intellectually stimulating journal of opinion” (Sutherland, p. 211), prior to and after this date it oscillated between being news-oriented and a magazine of comment. Certainly, *Saturday Night* was less popular and less news-focused than *Maclean's*, yet it was still a general interest magazine appealing to a mass audience, hence its placement in the “popular” magazine category.
common to all. Yet each source is also unique. They display differences in content, tone and structure, and were directed to specific groups of readers. All magazines underwent changes in the course of the sixteen years under study. Most often these were shifts in format, yet sometimes a change in focus occurred. These alterations may reflect new stewardship at the magazines, but the magazines both influenced and were influenced by the immediate concerns of the dominant society. In particular, this will be seen in the magazine articles’ change in focus between 1945 to 1960.

Partly because fairly detailed information exists on these four popular magazines, and partly because, in comparison to the academic periodicals, they contain the bulk of examples referring to domestic violence in the popular press, these magazine are examined in greater detail. All head offices of the popular magazines were located in Toronto or the surrounding conurbation, the centre of Canada’s publishing and media industries. Maclean’s, founded in 1905, was first a monthly then twice-a-month publication, and in the period under study, appeared fortnightly. Saturday Night, the oldest of the newsmagazines, was founded in 1885 and was a weekly until May 1955, after which it appeared fortnightly. In operation since 1910, the Star Weekly was a weekend supplement to the Toronto Daily Star.

---

4 French language editions of Chatelaine and Maclean’s were founded in 1960 and 1961, respectively.
and its affiliated newspapers throughout the period under study. Chatelaine, established in 1928, was a monthly magazine. This women's magazine falls into a distinctive category and will be analysed in particular detail later in this chapter. Chatelaine warrants this special attention as it has been studied intensely by feminist scholars who see it as a window into the private world of the family. As a women's magazine, its treatment of domestic violence differs, although only quantitatively, from the other publications being studied.

Circulation statistics are seen as an indication of the level of public acceptance of a magazine. Although circulation refers to the number of copies distributed, each copy of a magazine is assumed to be read by more than one person. For example, the second Canadian Consumer Publications Report, September 1957, indicated that Maclean's had 3.4 readers per copy and that Chatelaine had 2.8 (interestingly, Time's Canadian edition had a very high rate of readership, with 5.5). Figures for per annum circulation are thought to provide the best measurement of a magazine's input, but are not a perfect indication of the relative positions of magazines, because frequencies of issues differ. As shown in Table 2.3, three of the popular magazines experienced substantial growth from 1950 to 1959. Saturday Night's per annum circulation decline is a drop attributed to becoming bimonthly (its readership rose during this period by 37%); this shift in regularity of publication, in turn, may have

---

8 *Saturday Night, Maclean's and Chatelaine* were owned by the notable Canadian magazine entrepreneur John Bayne Maclean. See Mary Vipond, *The Mass Media in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Co., 1989), pp. 21-22.

9 Royal Commission on Publications, 1961, p. 16.

10 Royal Commission on Publications, 1961, p. 16.
Table 2.3: Circulation in Canada (in thousands)$^{11}$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Per Issue</th>
<th>Per Annum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatelaine</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maclean's</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday Night</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Weekly*</td>
<td>- unavailable -</td>
<td>46,290</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Aggregate statistics for both the Star Weekly and Weekend magazines (both newspaper supplements).

been due to the competition of television, to the tidal wave of American culture besieging Canadian shores,$^{12}$ or perhaps it was a marketing strategy in response to the success of Maclean's and Chatelaine. The American based Time's “Canadian” edition was seen as the magazine’s main competition. According to the 1961 Royal Commission on Publications, “[Saturday Night] seeks a “quality” audience without the resources necessary for the provision of material competitive with that in American “quality” magazines aimed at a similar audience.”$^{13}$ Saturday Night was also a more conservative magazine from its beginnings and its decision to publish bimonthly may be rooted in the problems the magazine had in expanding beyond its elite Toronto base. Yet, The Star Weekly also originated as a geographically limited

---

$^{11}$ These statistics are culled from the Royal Commission on Publications, 1961, pp. 19, 21, and 231.

$^{12}$ Canadian nationalism came to mean resisting this tidal wave. See Royal Commission on Publications, 1961, and an analysis of the Commission in Sutherland, pp. 183-188.

publication. Between 1910 and 1934 the magazine was sold in Ontario only, going national in 1934 in an attempt to capture western markets. In this it met with success. By 1948 The Star Weekly claimed to reach 40% of English-speaking families in British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island averaged closer to 30%. Still, the bulk of The Star Weekly readers resided in Ontario, where the magazine had captured 55% of the English-speaking readers by 1948.\footnote{For a thorough analysis of the circulation of The Star Weekly see Lorraine Caroline Snowden, "Constructing the Canadian teenager: The Star Weekly Magazine and representations of the young during the late 1940s" M.A., University of British Columbia, 1997, pp. 8-12. My statistics are from this source.} Certainly the magazine's association with The Toronto Daily Star contributed to this pan-national representation. While published and sold separately, The Star Weekly reached its readers through the distribution lines of the leading newspaper. Like Saturday Night, the weekly supplement was decidedly middle-class, although more liberal than Saturday Night, and this, despite the fact that its coverage was preoccupied with urban Ontario, as indeed were all the magazines, might well explain its massive increase in popularity in the postwar years.

Magazine narratives do not merely reflect the trends of their readership; they actively construct meanings for their readers. As a form of cultural understanding, magazines devise and mediate perspectives on social reality. Narratives are never stable or monolithic. Different readings depend on historical conditions and the reader's orientation. In a cogent analysis of the role of both the text and visual images of Life magazine in constructing the identity of its readers, Wendy Kozol...
argues that in postwar America Life's narratives promoted the reproduction of a particular set of values and norms that formed a national culture around the dominant middle class.\textsuperscript{15} And she warns against assuming that there was a priori an audience of nuclear families for the magazine to address. Audiences, she maintains, are disorganized and disparate communities. Not that Life created idealized yet untenable nuclear families either, for many Americans in these years lived in family forms resembling the families depicted on the pages of Life. Kozol argues that, despite the strong images of nuclear families as the ideal, “even these people lived complex and multiple constructed lives, and their identification with a specific ideological position, religion, political party, or ethnic group varied according to the context.”\textsuperscript{16} Through active reading and viewing, Life urged its readers to recognize themselves as optimally belonging to a nuclear family, the representational ideal of American culture.

This interplay between the magazine text and its readers has significance for a postwar Canadian society that was more heterogeneous than is typically conveyed by prevailing stereotypes. For example, one measure of diversity is ethnicity and race (Table 2.4). In 1951, in a total population of just over 14 million,\textsuperscript{17} less than half (6,709,685) were of British origin, slightly more (6,872,889) hailed from European


\textsuperscript{16} Kozol, p. 94.

\textsuperscript{17} Canada’s population (in thousands) in 1941 was 11,507, in 1951 was 14,009, and in 1961 was 18,238. F. H. Leacy, ed. \textit{Historical Statistics of Canada, Second Edition}, (Statistics Canada, 1983), Series A1: Estimated population of Canada, 1867 to 1977.
Table 2.4: Origins of the Population, Canada, 1941-1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>British</th>
<th>European</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>5,715,904</td>
<td>5,526,964</td>
<td>74,064</td>
<td>189,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>6,709,685</td>
<td>6,872,889</td>
<td>72,827</td>
<td>354,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>7,996,669</td>
<td>9,657,195</td>
<td>121,753</td>
<td>462,630</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

roots, 72,827 were labeled Asiatic, and 354,028 were “other,” (this category was composed of Metis, Native Indians, Inuit, and “Negro”). Further, in 1951 (Table 2.5) just over 8 1/4 million (8,280,809) Canadians identified English as their mother tongue, slightly over 4 million French (4,068,850), and the rest of the population, 1,659,770, listed another language, with the largest categories Ukrainian (352,323) and German (329,302). By 1961 Canada was more, not less, diversified. Many in this heterogeneous society may have felt insecure about their place in the middle-class dream. Magazine articles worked to convince their readers that they too shared in this vision of affluence so long as they subscribed to and celebrated the ideals of upward mobility and consumerism enshrined in North American bourgeois family values.

---

19 Leacy, Series A185-237: Mother tongues of the population, census years, 1931-1976.
20 However, in her analysis of the complicated nexus of gender, class, and ethnicity in the context of the welfare state, specifically the relations between post-war immigrant women in Toronto and the attempt by social service workers to integrate these women into “Canadian” (white, middle class, gendered) society, Franca Iacovetta argues that immigrant women responded in pragmatic ways to the services offered them, taking advantage of these services to meet their own needs as they defined them. Social service workers met with relatively little success in their efforts to re-shape their clients’ lives. Franca Iacovetta, Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrant in Postwar Toronto (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992).
Table 2.5: Mother Tongues of the Population, Canada, 1941-1961

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>6,448,190</td>
<td>3,354,753</td>
<td>1,703,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>8,280,809</td>
<td>4,068,850</td>
<td>1,659,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>10,660,534</td>
<td>5,123,151</td>
<td>2,454,562</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many groups are for all intents and purposes absent from the pages of the magazines. First Nations, African Canadians, Indo-Canadians, Chinese Canadians, homosexuals, bisexuals, the aged, and the poor, provide examples of marginalized groups that are, tellingly, not included. Most suppressed groups were not simply pushed to the periphery, they were invisible. Postwar persecution of homosexuality and the homophobic seams in anti-Communist rhetoric are well-documented, but when analysing the magazines it is the denial of sexual diversity rather than its condemnation which is most striking. Similar to the homogeneous treatment of race and class, a heterosexual imperative permeates the magazines. Heterosexual relations are taken for granted. Postwar Canada assumed a particular model of marriage and the family premised on gendered assumptions about women’s and men’s roles. Certain obligations were placed on each member of the relationship. Within this gendered framework, male violence was understood, almost condoned, as a manifestation of true masculinity. Both male and female homosexuality was

---

viewed as a threat in that homosexuals were unable to perform the gendered roles necessary to maintain the virtue and strength of the family and Canadian nation.

While it is clear that the publications are limited in their perspectives, their extensive circulation ensured that broad segments of the population were exposed to these ideas. They helped shape popular opinion in Canada between 1945 to 1960 but they were also a reflection of society. The demand for sales necessitated a presentation of images and opinions recognizable to the Canadian public. In this way, it may be argued that the major impact of the magazines was not so much in altering, but in reinforcing, consolidating and fortifying values and attitudes, as well as deflecting challenges to the social consensus.

On one level, the magazine articles can be read for the window they provide into the postwar era. Divorce and alcoholism appear of evident concern in this era. However, a much more complex reading is also possible. As discursive constructions of the postwar world, the articles not only reproduce social values, but privilege some values at the expense of others. Moreover, some of the issues that emerge from the magazines are metaphors of a perceived insecure and uncertain world.\(^{22}\) What I want to point to and remind readers about is the language and discursive strategies used to construct such moral concerns as divorce as a national problem. We need to ask, for instance, whose concerns are these? By presenting divorce and not, for example, family violence, as a significant public issue requiring

\(^{22}\) For an analysis of how the perceived corruptibility of youth was the impetus behind broad ranging initiatives of youth and moral regulation during this same time period, see Mary Louise Adams, "Youth, Corruptibility, and English-Canadian Postwar Campaigns Against Indecency, 1948-1955," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6, 1 (1995), pp. 89-117.
the attention of Canada, who is rendered invisible? Clearly, for the most part, women and children. Thus, it is productive to consider the articles as problematic sites open to complex and even contradictory readings.

Chatelaine magazine is today the most heavily studied Canadian women's magazine. In the 1960s, with the emergence of feminist scholarship, women's magazines began receiving attention as a legitimate area of investigation. Prior to the 1960s neglect occurred despite the fact that women's magazines always cornered a substantial piece of the magazine market. This lack of scholarly attention reflects the historical association of women with the private and domestic. While newsmagazines covering war, political events, and economic analyses are public texts, allied to the masculine world, and are therefore seen to be worthy of scholarly scrutiny, women's magazines, with their concern of private, feminine issues such as sewing, recipes and childraising, were readily dismissed. As the English language Canadian women's magazine, an analysis of Chatelaine helps reveal a neglected world. The publication itself advertised: "By 1959 one of every three English

---

23 See Sylvia Fraser, ed. Chatelaine: A Woman's Place: Seventy Years in the Lives of Canadian Women (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1997) and Valerie J. Korinek, Roughing it in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties. University of Toronto Press, 2000. While Fraser's book is of a "coffee table" style, with little analysis and many excerpts from the magazine, Korinek's is a scholarly study. Although Korinek labours to prove that Chatelaine could be and was read by Canadian women who inferred multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings (in the editorials and articles, fiction, cover art and advertisements), and that the audience was much less homogenous than commonly assumed, she struggles to prove this point. One is left with a rather different portrait: a white, Anglo, middle-class woman's world, one in which older women, ethnic women, lesbians, single women, "barren" women, rural women or women in poverty did not belong.

24 Other Canadian women's magazines were in circulation during this time period. Canadian Home Journal (1905-1959) is close to Chatelaine in terms of target audience (all Canadian women instead of a cordoned off segment) and format (recipes, dress patterns, behavioural advice, and short stories), yet its circulation statistics came second to Chatelaine. Canadian Homes and Gardens (1924-1962) continued...
speaking women in Canada, or 1,650,000 women, read each issue of Chatelaine magazine."²⁵ Although its evaluation exceeded the reality (see Table Three) the magazine’s influence is nonetheless undeniable.

Feminist investigations of women’s magazines have largely concentrated on content analysis. In a well conceptualized and thorough study of adolescent magazines and their readers, sociologist Dawn Currie contextualizes her research within the theoretical framework underpinning the approach of content analyses.²⁶ While this approach is one that is currently the subject of "acrimonious debate among feminists,"²⁷ she identifies three persistent and repetitive themes that dominate the literature: the domestication of women, the perpetuation of oppressive beauty standards, and the absence of visible minority women. That these themes have been historically persistent is undeniable; just how one positions the reader in her relationship to these themes is the crux of the debate. In the 1970s feminist analyses of women’s magazines were critical of their prescriptive and limiting female identities, whereas in the 1990s some feminists began to criticize and critically reconsider magazine images of women and to see them as fantastical. In this way, the content of images are distinguished from their form. Currie states: "...we need to separate pleasure from commitment to the text, because we can enjoy

²⁵ Canadian Advertising: Canadian Media Authority, January-February 1959, p. 118, as cited in Korinek, p. 70.
²⁶ Dawn H. Currie, Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers (University of Toronto Press, 1999), see Chapter One especially.
²⁷ Currie, p. 22.
browsing without necessarily buying everything on offer." Thus, to acknowledge reading pleasure and self-indulgence in these magazines is not necessarily to cede power to the dominant male order. Readers remain in control of textual meanings. Currie maintains that regardless of where one positions oneself in this debate, the distinction between texts as "fantasy" – as bringing women reading pleasure – and texts as "reality" – being harmful to women's identities – is key. Her study moves from a content analysis of teen magazines to an ethnographic study of adolescent girls and the ways they make sense of the magazines. She concludes that, however pleasurable, the cultural consumption of magazines must be held accountable in the ongoing subordination of women through the construction of gendered subjectivities.

My analysis, although similar to Currie's in conclusions, is quite different in methodology. The readers of both the academic and popular magazines make but fleeting appearances. This study does not engage in a systematic analysis of advertisements, editorials, letters to the editor, or cover art, as do textual and cultural theorists, although these occasionally come under scrutiny. My examination of a single subject – domestic violence – necessitated a critical reading of the magazines for discussions and images of violence. This study is solely an analysis of selected articles.

I came to recognize that discussions about family violence were never direct, but could be glimpsed within the shell of family breakdown. Embraced within

---
28 Currie, p. 29.
magazine narratives of family instability are six issues that often overlap: alcoholism, psychological analysis, professionalism, divorce, gender roles and sexual deviation. The first of these, alcoholism, is presented as a disease, not a moral failing. Psychology, the second issue, is a category within which a host of social behaviours from male/female communication to heterosexual conduct are pathologized. Thirdly, the magazines highlight professionalism, as experts are sought to analyse and interpret the family's difficulties. The fourth issue is the dyad of marriage and divorce; as an expression of concern over the growing divorce rate the merits of education for marriage are explored. There is much discussion about the fifth issue, that of gender roles, the specific identities women and men should hold in relation to each other and, together, in relation to the modern world. The final issue is sexual deviation, wherein the problem is discussed in terms of how Canadian families can protect themselves from these "strangers."

All six of these related issues are contained within the following organizational framework. I begin by addressing one theme, that of veteran adjustment to postwar civilian life. The immediate postwar period was viewed as a time of transition and familial re-adjustment wherein marital difficulties, including male violence in the home, would simply need to be "weathered" by women. I then move to two issues, alcoholism and divorce. In magazine articles on alcoholism we witness abuse against women by their drunken violent husbands. Narratives of abuse are also glimpsed throughout the presentations of divorce. Magazine presentations of postwar family re-adjustment, alcoholism and divorce hold women responsible for family harmony and blame them if the family structure collapses. In
this way an analysis of the magazine literature serves two purposes: to ferret out
evidence legitimizing violence against women and to identify women's prescriptive
roles, identities which do not allow for the admission of family violence.

During World War Two, much concern was expressed over male veterans' re-
adjustment to civilian life. To this end a number of practical steps were taken by the
government, enshrined in what became known as the "Veterans' Charter." These
included such basic entitlements as a discharge bonus, clothes, and free
transportation home, and also newly developed perquisites such as loans for
education, benefits for the wounded, and provisions for low-cost mortgages.29

Nervousness also existed over the mental state of the returning soldier. Certainly
the degree to which this issue was recognized sets the Second World War apart from
previous conflicts and reflects the rise of the discipline of psychiatry in the interwar
period.30 For the first time psychological issues such as "battle exhaustion" were
recognized as warranting medical treatment. Substantial concern was also
expressed regarding the average soldier's psychological transition from the military
and war to home and civilian life. In 1945 and 1946 popular magazines were laced
with articles on how to handle the returning men.

29 The Veteran's charter and the return of servicemen and women to civil society is covered in Walter
Woods, Rehabilitation (A Combined Operation) (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1954); Barry Broadfoots' collec-
tion of edited veterans' memories, The Veteran's Years (Vancouver: Douglas & MacIntyre, 1985); and, Desmond

30 For a detailed analysis of the substantial influence of psychology and psychiatry in shaping
women's roles in this time period see Chapter Three, this thesis.
For example, in a Maclean's article published in May 1945 entitled "Home Won't Be Heaven Soldier," the title suggests the intended audience is the veterans themselves. Author J. D. Ketchum is actually advising the veterans' wives. He cautions the women to expect "minor" problems, such as a man preferring the company of "crude" discharged buddies to family and pre-war friends, and not to "make a life-and-death matter out of these conflicts." They should be sympathetic and understanding of their husband's difficulties. The article contains excerpts from letters written to the author from wives articulating their concerns. One woman expresses her dismay regarding her husband's preference for wartime drinking buddies over her friends:

"... I can't get Tim to take any interest in the friends I've made here, he disappears if anyone comes to the house, and he actually walked out on a little party I'd arranged for him, saying he wasn't wasting an evening on a lot of 'flannelmouths.' .... I had to pretend he's been called away on business. He was really over in Centreville with a couple of chaps he knows there, discharged men, too, and pretty crude specimens in my opinion. He had them in the house once, but I told him flat I wasn't entertaining that type of fellow. So now he spends half his time in Centreville, comes home half-tight at night and won't"

---

31 J. D. Ketchum, "Home Won't Be Heaven Soldier," Maclean's Magazine, Vol. 58, No. 9 (May 1, 1945), pp. 5-6, 30, 32. For a more balanced and realistic analysis of the difficulties the returning soldier may face when once again on Canadian soil, see: Samuel Roddan (a socially progressive Vancouver minister), "Preparing the Fighter for Civvy Street," Canadian Forum, Vol. XXIV, No. 290 (March 1945), pp. 279-280, and his "Nothing Was Too Good for the Soldier," Canadian Forum Vol. XXV, No. 300 (January 1946), pp. 242-243. Further, two Canadian Welfare articles provide basic information on the services available to veterans, and the shortcomings of these services: Supervisors in the Social Assistance Branch, Department of the Provincial Secretary, British Columbia, "Public Welfare in British Columbia," Canadian Welfare Vol. XXII, No. 2 (June 1, 1946), pp. 2-6 and Superintendent of Publicity of DVA, "DVA Social Service Division," Canadian Welfare Col. XXII, No. 4 (September 1, 1946), pp. 25-26.
have anything to do with decent people who could help him along.\textsuperscript{32} 

The author’s response? This wife is “asking for trouble.” She should understand and appreciate the strength of her husband’s bonds with his wartime comrades, and have patience. If their backgrounds and interests are entirely different, as time goes on he’ll see less of them. The subject of the serviceman’s consumption of alcohol is ignored.\textsuperscript{33} Ketchum’s response suggests that, for the moment, military service-based ties override class boundaries and that alcohol consumption by servicemen, imbibed in close companionship with other military personnel, is not perceived as problematic in the short term.

The same article contains an excerpt from a letter written by a woman in which she puzzles over the malaise that has befallen her husband: “… At the moment he doesn’t seem to want to do anything or see anyone, just sits around the house, smoking and listening to the radio, or lies on his bed reading magazines. He

\textsuperscript{32} Ketchum, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{33} By and large the articles present alcoholism as a middle class problem, although there exists acknowledgment that the ramifications of having a drunkard as husband and father often plunge the family into poverty. For example, in an article for the Star Weekly, Dennis Braithwaite attempts to disabuse the public about the social class dimensions of alcoholism. Drunks are not “bums,” Braithwaite maintains; in fact, he argues that many well known and respected professionals are alcoholics. The one exception to this middle class portrayal is found in an article on Charlie, a “baysie” drinker (that is, he drinks after-shave lotion or hair tonic) who lives in various rooming houses and shelters in downtown Toronto. The author attempts to make the point that alcoholics will drink anything, the only distinction between baysie drinkers and scotch drinkers is social class. In providing Charlie’s life story, the author puzzles over Charlie’s single marital status, stating that Charlie’s wife left him “for no reason at all.” Alcoholism appears not to be a valid reason. See, Robert Thomas Allen, “They’ll Drink Anything,” Maclean’s Vol. 60, No. 18 (October 1, 1947), pp. 12, 62, 64. There is a parallel assumption that alcoholism is an urban problem. One sole article details the problem of rural alcoholism. The author, a rural resident, claims that alcohol consumption has reached “alarming” levels in the rural communities and is responsible for an increase in harmful behaviour such as child neglect and violence. See, Anonymous, “Alcoholics Country Style,” Chatelaine Vol. 22, No. 11 (November 1949), pp. 26-27, 43-44.
doesn't talk either.... I wish I knew what was the matter with him, but if you ask him he flares up like anything.” Ketchum belittles the woman's concerns by stating: “Serious? Not a bit of it. ... He'll snap out of it soon, particularly when he's got something definite to do, and in the meantime, patience, affection and understanding are all that's needed.” Ketchum makes no comment regarding the husband’s “flare ups”, nor how the woman is to display affection in the face of hostility and volatility.

Conflicting advice is also presented. In Ketchum’s discussion of the “bugbear of responsibility” he cautions wives against assuming their husbands are ready to take on the “burden” of decision making. He suggests that “a wise wife” will “go on settling as much as she can herself and just let the rest slide. It won’t be fatal.” In the next paragraph, however, he advises that some men may have difficulty in accepting that “the wife has become pretty competent at looking after everything,” and may feel hurt pride in the face of their dispensability. The author urges women to be tactful and understanding. Despite recognition of the verifiable emotional and psychological difficulties experienced by many families at war’s end, the author diminishes and demeans these “little problems,” positioning the intimate community surrounding the veteran, especially the wives, as bearing the responsibility for a successful postwar adjustment. In short, Ketchum provides trite

---

34 Ketchum, p. 6.
35 Ketchum, p. 6.
36 Ketchum, p. 30.
37 Ketchum, p. 30.
38 Ketchum, p. 32.
advice, acknowledging problems particular to this period, but not their complexities, and certainly not gendered power relations.

In a 1945 article in Canadian Welfare, Dora Wilensky, Executive Director, Jewish Family and Child Service, Toronto, takes a different position from Ketchum, placing families in the centre of her analysis of the war’s impact on family life. She chastises social workers who, during the Depression years, explained family friction and the breakdown of family life as a result of men’s personality defects, only to be cured upon attaining a steady job with a decent income. She nevertheless offers a similarly facile analysis of postwar family breakdown blaming the housing shortage and poverty.

Family living requires a home, a place where people can have privacy and peace, and where they can rest or play. In Canadian cities, towns and rural communities there are all too many families who have no homes; instead they exist in dilapidated, makeshift dwellings, hopeless as far as healthful living, is concerned. Accordingly we find children living their lives on the street, families separating, life sometimes becoming so harsh and cruel that escape is sought in quarreling, drinking and gambling.  

Although certainly environmental conditions such as the housing shortage exacerbated family difficulties and are frequently cited as a cause of family instability, these crises are not held fully accountable for creating family problems.

---


40 Several articles present the housing crisis as the cause of myriad social problems: “Social workers will tell you of the pregnant children, the divorces, the neurotic behavior and warped personalities directly traceable to housing conditions ....” In, Editorial, “No Subsidies,” Canadian Forum Vol. XXVII, No. 323 (December 1947), pp. 195-196.
The quote also targets parental poverty. If parents cannot provide a “home”, then family difficulties and marital breakdown are to be expected. As Wilensky fails to examine the systemic reasons why some families are forced to live in “dilapidated” dwellings, we are left with the likelihood of parents being individually reproached. To her credit, Wilensky concedes that the war has brought “deep-seated marital conflicts” to the surface and has led to the break-up of those homes with a weak foundation. She also discusses the specific effects of the war upon women, mothers in particular. Strong women, she argues, while experiencing dismal loneliness during their husbands’ absence overseas, as well as emotional and physical exhaustion, took up the challenges, which “unleashed unsuspected capacities and which led to the development of greater initiative and self-reliance.”\(^{41}\) This maturity sometimes appears as a threat to the husband in his return to his role as the head of the family. The challenge for women is to relinquish their responsibility sufficiently and to make a place in the family for the husbands. On the other hand, dependent and weak women, according to Wilensky, are often filled with resentment at coping alone with the family situation. Due to the “considerable relaxation of standards in sexual behaviour” brought on by the war, she argues, weak women sometimes formed relationships with other men in the hope of some emotional support.\(^{42}\) Illegitimate children occasionally further complicated these extra-marital entanglements. Although Wilensky offers a more sophisticated analysis of the

\(^{41}\) Wilensky, p. 13.

\(^{42}\) Wilensky, p. 13.
impact of the war on marital life, specifically what expectations men and women might have in re-adjusting to family life, almost all adaptation, as with Ketchum’s analysis, still centres on women. As their treatment of veterans and their families in the immediate post-WWII years indicates, the message of the professional journal (Canadian Welfare) and the popular magazine (Maclean’s) are essentially the same, even if the form and level of sophistication of the presentations differ.

Just as women were obliged to ease men’s re-adjustment to civilian life, even if this meant tolerating an emotionally distant, ill-tempered or cruel husband, wives were also held accountable for marital breakdown. Magazine articles on alcoholism and divorce present portraits of unhappy families. In some of these families we glimpse wife abuse. Right from the start of the period under investigation, 1945, articles surface on family breakdown in which alcoholism is a factor.

To date, despite signs of interest in the United States and Great Britain, Canadian historians have had precious little interest in alcoholism, save when linked to the prohibition era of the 1920s. An exception to this is Robert Campbell’s

---

43 For recent works, see Michelle McClennan, “Taking Alcoholism Out of the Gutter, Attic, or Closet: Marty Mann and the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism,” paper presented at “Gender, Science and Health in Post-War North America, Comparative Canadian-American Perspectives, 1940-1980” York University, March 5-6 1999, and Kenneth D. Rose, American Women and the Repeal of Prohibition (New York: University Press, 1996). On the high correlation between drunkenness and wide abuse, see Del Mar, pp. 124-126. Del Mar argues, as does Linda Gordon, that drunken people use their inebriation to selectively overstep boundaries. In this way, the decision to drink is a decision to participate in behavior that is ostensibly but not truly unacceptable.

Demon Rum or Easy Money: Government Control of Liquor in British Columbia From Prohibition to Privatization (1991). While not a social history of alcohol, Campbell’s analysis of government control of alcohol portrays the post-W.W. II era as a time when British Columbians wanted easier access, increased private sales, and fewer moral constraints on drinking. In the postwar period “casual” consumption of alcohol was viewed as a middle-class emblem of modernity. The consumption of alcohol was promoted and accepted as a legitimate, even glamorous, social activity, regardless of the acknowledgment that some people suffered from alcoholism. Insobriety was perceived as an individual rather than societal problem and was not subject to moral censure or stigma. Certainly the “scientific” belief that alcoholism should be regarded as a disease rather than a badge of immoral behavior is a consistent focus in the magazine articles. This stands in marked contrast to the


interwar temperance campaigns when advocates blamed liquor for destroying men and causing hardship for their wives, children, and mothers. This earlier analysis was almost always confined to intimate relations among the poor and minority groups. According to temperance advocates, alcohol was evil, regardless of where it was imbibed or by whom. What is fascinating is the way in which the shifting perspective on alcoholism from a personal moral failing to a disease positions women. Temperance supporters placed wives, children, and mothers at the centre of their campaign, arguing that they were the true, defenceless victims of insobriety.⁴⁷ It was in the context of the nineteenth century temperance movement that domestic violence was publicly discussed for the first time.⁴⁸ Arguing that women and children must be protected and men punished, the temperance movement put domestic violence on the map. Conversely, when alcoholism was described and understood as an illness, it became the duty and obligation of wives and mothers to support their inebriate men through to wellness. In the alcoholism-as-disease paradigm, there was little sympathy for wives of alcoholics. Just the opposite. As the magazine articles show, women were urged to stand by their men and to engage in psychological self-examination as to why they might be pushing their husbands into alcoholism. With rare exceptions alcoholism was regarded as a male, middle-class and urban phenomenon.

⁴⁸ Gordon, pp. 142 -146. For a Canadian (Ontario) portrait, see Sharon Anne Cook, "Through Sunshine and Shadow": The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evangelicalism, and Reform in Ontario, 1874-1930 (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), pp. 76-86.
An article in the *Star Weekly* (1948) connects violence and intemperance, focusing specifically on the impact of drunkenness on the wives of alcoholics. Physical violence is presented as part and parcel of wives’ experiences: “Many times [Mrs. Y] ran out of the house, her small daughter with her, to avoid being slapped around.”

According to the author, Alcoholics Anonymous advises that through cooperation with her husband and taking a personal moral inventory, a wife will learn how to help her husband with his illness. A similar connection is made between alcohol and violence in which a criminologist asserts that alcohol is a catalyst setting off violence, cruelty, and death. “[Results of excessive consumption of alcohol] appear in crimes of violence, murder, robbery and rape, ....”

---


surprisingly, given the presentation of women as, first and foremost, their spouses’ help-mates, career women are portrayed as selfish; their commitment to working outside of the home threatens their husbands’ self-esteem.

A further point demanding attention is the gendering of alcoholism. Men regularly appear as alcoholics, women rarely do. Only five magazine articles on insobriety, a mere fraction of the total, approximately ten percent, depict the culprit as female. Where women alcoholics are highlighted, they are seen as unusual. In contrast to the incessant admonitions to women to support their inebriate husbands, men are expected to display little loyalty: “If she’s married, her husband has generally left or divorced her, for a man rarely puts up with an alcoholic wife.” In the 1950s alcoholism amongst women was thought to be on the increase, although it was recognized that women’s alcoholism was a “hidden” problem. One magazine article analyses loneliness as a causative factor in women’s alcoholism: “... [women] have no constructive outlet for their abilities ... these women are bored by the endless round of housekeeping.”


53 Burke, p. 2.

54 Warsh shows that alcohol consumption and alcoholism increased for females between 1921 and 1949. The woman drinker represented the growth market for alcohol consumption after the defeat of prohibition. Female consumption occurred in the home as the majority of drinking women did not imbibe in public. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, “Smoke and Mirrors: Gender Representation in North American Tobacco and Alcohol Advertisements Before 1950,” Histoire sociale/Social History XXXI, 62 (Novembre - November 1998), pp. 183-222.

55 Burke, p. 2.
it was argued that estimates of one in five may be low. Concern was expressed not only for the woman, but also for her children, "... the seeds for the illness [of alcoholism] can be planted in the over-protected child as well as the rejected child." In this way, the female alcoholic may endanger herself and be unable to fulfill her role as a good mother, unconsciously spreading the disease to her children.

Women's roles in perpetuating their husbands' immoderation, indeed at times even consciously sponsoring it, are taken up in a 1959 article by Sidney Katz, a well-known journalist and frequent contributor to Maclean's. Purportedly about the struggles and shame faced by wives of alcoholics, it details the beatings and abuse of wives and children, but women are ultimately blamed. Katz identifies questions "social scientists" were asking in their study of alcoholism: "To what

---

56 Nielson, p. 12.
57 Burke, p. 2.
58 Between 1947 and 1959 Katz contributed thirteen articles on family life to Maclean's; in 1958 he wrote an article for Canadian Welfare. He is far and away the most prolific contributor to the magazines on the theme of domestic violence. Authors who penned articles more than twice on this theme are: Marjorie Earl, who contributed six articles to the Star Weekly between 1947 and 1949; Dorothea Sangster, who wrote three pieces for Chatelaine and one for Maclean's between 1953 and 1960; Violet Munns, who produced a series for Chatelaine in 1958 and then two more articles for the same magazine in 1959 and 1960; and, Dr. Blatz, who composed a series for Chatelaine in 1955, ten years after writing a piece for Maclean's. Given that the number of articles on domestic violence in the magazines and periodicals is about two hundred, what stands out is the number of single authors, that is, writers who were published but once or twice on this topic. This suggests that most of the authors were not "experts" on domestic violence; indeed there were no real experts on this subject, as domestic violence was peripheral issue, contained within other themes such as family breakdown. Certainly all of these writers published other articles on other subjects for these same magazines.
59 Only one article, presented in a testimonial format, challenges the blame cast upon women for their husband's insobriety. "Janet", the author, argues the alcoholic is babied as "a sensitive, noble soul, who can't stand the sorrows and sufferings of mortal life, and must have liquor to cast a rosy glow over it, or to numb him into not feeling anything." Conversely, the alcoholic's wife is portrayed as "an impatient, self-righteous clod, lacking in understanding, thinking about such mundane subjects as how to pay the rent or what to feed the children .... (p. 8)) Janet, "I'm An Alcoholic's Wife," Maclean's Vol. 59, No. 24 (December 15, 1946), pp. 8, 58, 61.
extent is marriage responsible for [men's] drinking? Does a certain type of woman deliberately marry an alcoholic because of a deeply ingrained 'need to suffer'? Does this need eventually lead her to sabotage her husband's efforts to stop drinking?"60

Wives are analysed as psychologically disturbed, "... [they] gain satisfaction from their plight."61 This attitude reflects the authority enjoyed by psychology in the postwar years. "The wife," states one social worker, "is not an innocent bystander in the sordid sequence of marital misery. She's an active participant and creator of problems which ensue."62 Women marry alcoholics because of their own needs, perhaps a desire for martyrdom, possibly a need to control and dominate, or maybe even misplaced aggression. Katz credits Alcoholics Anonymous with encouraging women to understand themselves, so that they can become fulfilled wives and mothers. He provides several examples of self-realization. "One woman discovered that she was a lazy and slovenly housekeeper."63 Another admitted her bossiness, a third confessed she had denied her husband her bed, and a fourth woman "suddenly" realized that not a day had gone by that she hadn't criticized her husband about something. Katz warns that sometimes self-recognition comes at a cost: if the wife has a deeply felt need to dominate and control, she'll feel threatened in several ways by a sober husband. One woman, whose alcoholic and unemployed husband "would severely beat her, smash the furniture and incur debts," was able

---

61 Katz, p. 92.
62 Katz, p. 92.
63 Katz, p. 95.
to run a smooth and efficient household, be a good mother, and keep a job besides. When her husband reformed, "the woman became apathetic and listless." ¹⁶⁴ She also embarked on a campaign to sabotage her husband’s sobriety by daring him to resume drinking. In providing a lengthy description of the last case Katz suggests that wives of alcoholics have psychological needs for intoxicated husbands.

The belief that women impel their husbands' into alcoholism was regularly echoed elsewhere. A 1947 Chatelaine article on the role of wives contains the following confession: "I nagged my husband into alcoholism." ¹⁶⁵ Similarly, in a later example in the Star Weekly (1960) a wife of an alcoholic offers advice on how to understand a drunk’s alcoholic rages: "Barbara stuck with her second husband even when he blacked her eye and pawned her jewels. He isn’t vicious or cruel by nature, she says, ... he is just an alcoholic and I can live with that, knowing it’s not his fault." ¹⁶⁶ An article in a professional journal oriented towards social workers particularly mentions the wife of the alcoholic, her needs, and fears, concluding that her own emotional weaknesses often "encouraged his drinking." ¹⁶⁷ In these popular and professional narratives of alcohol abuse women are guilty. Alcoholism is primarily a male manifestation, but a female problem.

Embedded in these tales of alcohol and abuse are two contradictory themes: men’s aggression is almost always in the context of drunkenness and women

¹⁶⁴ Katz, p. 95.
¹⁶⁵ Hanes, p. 15.
¹⁶⁶ MacKay, p. 11.
accomplices often provoke, sometimes bask in, their husband’s insobriety due to their own psychological insecurities and needs. The contradiction is readily apparent: if alcoholism is a disease, then no one is liable; if it is due to women’s behaviour and deep psychological flaws, then it is not a disease. Whichever way the linkage between alcoholism and domestic violence is construed, men are not accountable.

Similar conclusions regarding women’s responsibility for family harmony (and men’s repudiation or retreat from this obligation) appear in the magazine literature on issues of divorce and marriage mending. Prior to the Divorce Act of 1968, jurisdiction over marriage and divorce in Canada was shared between the federal and the provincial legislatures. Under section 91 (26) of the British North America Act, the federal Parliament has exclusive jurisdiction over “Marriage and Divorce” and, under section 92 (12), the provincial legislatures have jurisdiction over “the solemnization of Marriage in the Province.” Although federal authority to deal with divorce was not questioned, there was no Canadian Divorce Act until 1968. The federal position (sanctioned by the majority of Canadians) was essentially one of inertia. To fill this vacuum, prior to 1968 provinces had different divorce laws, although Quebec and Newfoundland (after 1949) had none at all. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and British Columbia maintained their own divorce laws. The prairie provinces inherited the laws of England, including those on divorce, as they stood on July 15, 1870. Ontario implemented judicial divorce in 1930. Where divorce was permissible, details differed, but the basic conceptions were the same: the only ground for divorce until the liberalization of the laws in
1968 was adultery. Thus, the legal process transformed complex financial, emotional and physical relations into a single sexual and moral issue. Divorce petitions in Quebec and Newfoundland were subjected to a three-step process, one that involved the federal state. First, evidence was heard by the Senate Divorce Committee, then the Senate as a whole, and finally the House of Commons, where they were typically passed in batches during the time allocated to private members' bills. This process was cumbersome, relatively expensive, and frequently unsuccessful. The result was a high postwar rate of male desertion in these two provinces in particular. As a whole, Canadian divorce laws were based exclusively on the doctrine of matrimonial offense. Only the innocent party could be granted relief. On the one hand, stood the guilty perpetrator and, on the other, the innocent victim.

The outstanding publication on the legal and extra-legal dissolution of marriages is James G. Snell's *In The Shadow of the Law: Divorce in Canada, 1900-1939*. Snell attempts to explain why Canada "consciously" maintained a prohibitive divorce regime and how Canadians behaved within that environment. He argues that most Canadians broadly accepted a confined divorce milieu because it was believed to sustain family values and gender-based attitudes. Snell maintains that to treat divorce as a possible response to an unsuccessful marriage threatened the very

---

68 Except in Nova Scotia, where cruelty remained a grounds.
69 Although the costs of the entire process of parliamentary divorce could vary considerably, Snell estimates that in the early twentieth century it ranged from $800 to $1,500, thus rendering this form of divorce out of reach for many Canadians. James G. Snell, *In the Shadow of the Law: Divorce in Canada, 1900-1939* (University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 51.
core of the Canadian family and, by extension, the Canadian nation, because it "... not only undermined the foundation of the family structure but challenged the validity of the idealized notion of the family." The ideal of the conjugal family defined the roles of all members of society. Divorce jeopardized this ideal. As Snell convincingly argues, "... the ideal of the family shaped debate, filtered reform proposals, and constructed behaviour." In this same way, the basic conjugal family model did not allow for an admission of family violence in the post-World War Two period. In her analysis of family violence in the United States, Elizabeth Pleck argues that this dominant ideal of the family is "the single most consistent barrier to reform." Whitaker and Marcuse further support this claim:

For the first postwar decade ... the 'official' image of women was that of stay-at-home wives and mothers. Men, as businessmen, administrators, workers, or soldiers, were responsible for looking after the dangerously insecure world beyond the home, while women tended the home fires. These were deeply conservative images that reinforced conservative trends elsewhere in Canadian society.

Indeed, articles in the Canadian periodicals suggest that subscription to this ideal prohibited any significant acknowledgment of family violence.

Snell identifies two conflicting responses to the increase in divorces from 1900 to the eve of World War Two. One, divorce is wrong in principle and the state must use its power to curb divorce and do nothing to facilitate it. The second position

\footnotesize

Snell, p. 33.
Snell, p. 32.
Pleck, p. 7.
Whitaker and Marcuse, p. 15.
agrees that divorce is evil, but argues that refusing divorce pushed individuals into behaviour even more deviant, immoral and illicit. Snell elaborates on this argument:

Rather than drive such people into illegal divorces, bigamous or common law marriages, or adultery, rather than promote circumstances in which illegitimate children might be brought into the world and raised in immoral environments, surely it is better to accept legally the reality of the broken marriage and allow the succeeding relationship to be brought within a regulated environment – that is, within the law and within a socially acceptable family – through the state’s reasonable provision for divorce.  

Advocates for divorce reform were not necessarily speaking in the best interests of fatherless Canadian youngsters or deserted women, those whose claims middle-class reformers most frequently invoked. The idea was to have the state sanction an already occurring phenomenon – what Snell refers to as informal divorce. He points out that those marriages dissolved through the formal or legal process represented only a fraction of the marriages that actually ended with both partners still living.

Divorce rates in Canada (Table 2.6) were relatively low prior to 1945. With war’s end they climbed sharply, setting off a host of responses, ranging from calls to liberalize the divorce legislation, to calls to curtail the escalating rate, mainly through marriage education. The debate regarding divorce continued in the Cold War era.

---

74 Snell, p. 73.
75 See also Chapter Three for a full analysis of the different means by which attempts were made to staunch the rising divorce rate. Statistical information from Leacy, Series B75-81: Number of marriages and rate, average age at marriage for brides and bridegrooms, number of divorces and rate, net family formation, Canada, 1921 to 1974.
76 In all the magazines only one article questions Canadians’ concern over divorce. This is, Mary Jukes, “Canadians and the Divorce Bogey,” Chatelaine vol. 23, No. 2 (February 1950), pp. 6-7, 61.

continued…
Table 2.6: Divorce Rate, Canada, 1931-1961
(Rate per thousand population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beginning in 1945, articles on divorce occur in the popular magazines. Calls to reform the divorce laws then crop up regularly. In her 1945 Chatelaine piece entitled “Divorce in Canada,” Adele Saunders explains that, as adultery is the only legal ground for divorce, many couples (she cites “well over fifty percent”) “arrange” to be caught in an adulterous act so as to procure a divorce. She beseeches Canadians to consider legislative reform to include “incurable insanity, desertion, and cruelty as additional grounds.” She concludes with an oft-repeated rationale explaining the high level of broken wartime marital unions: hasty marriages, “shotgun” weddings, the new-found financial independence of women,

---

Jukes argues that contrary to popular opinion, divorce is not a problem of great magnitude in Canada because, although divorce rates are on the increase, they are still relatively low.

77 Leacy, Series B75-81: Number of marriages and rate, average age at marriage for brides and bridegrooms, number of divorces and rate, net family formation, Canada, 1921 to 1974.  

78 There are several articles on divorce in 1945: Adele Saunders, “Divorce in Canada,” Chatelaine Vol. 18, No. 4 (April 1945), pp. 10-11; Anonymous, “My Marriage is a War Casualty,” Chatelaine Vol. 18, No. 12 (December 1945), p. 60, 95; and, Reverend W. R. Inge, “Divorce: What Should be the Law for Those Who Are Christians?” Saturday Night Vol. 60, No. 8 (January 6, 1945), p. 16. All three articles call for divorce reform; this includes the article by Reverend Inge in which he states that although marriage is not, nor should be, a revocable contract, the Church ought to distinguish between the guilty and innocent parties: “To condemn a cruelly wronged husband or wife to perpetual celibacy is not reasonable.” (p. 16)

and the devastating upheaval to family life. The implication here is that the war caused the normal order to become unbalanced, temporarily endorsing unnatural behaviour, such as women’s public employment. The result was an increased demand for marriage termination. This article is striking in its explication of both sides of the debate. On the one hand, the expansion of the allowable grounds for divorce is necessary so that those people who legitimately need to have their marriage vows rendered null and void may do so. On the other hand, the unnatural experience of war encouraged (and was continuing to encourage) people to make ill-considered choices, the results of which were sending shock waves through the population in the postwar period. For authors such as Saunders, liberalization of the divorce laws is an unfortunate but necessary fact; this does not preclude these same authors adamantly pledging their support to the protection of the “intact” home.

The magazine literature in support of divorce reform contains two subthemes which refer indirectly to the incidence of domestic violence: the fraudulent means by which evidence for divorce is attained and the high level of male desertion of

---

80 Other articles on the necessity for divorce reform include, W. K. Power, “Canada’s Divorce Laws Need Modernization,” *Saturday Night* Vol. 62, No. 43, (June 28, 1947), p. 19; Michael Barkway, “This Curious Divorce Business,” *Saturday Night* Vol. 66, No. 37 (June 19, 1951), pp. 9, 44; and, Blair Fraser, “Ottawa’s Creaky Divorce Machine,” *Maclean’s* Vol. 68, No. 22 (October 29, 1955), pp. 9-11, 61-62, 64-65. The articles by Barkway and Fraser detail the strategy of certain MPs, mainly CCFers, in stalling the passage of divorce bills as a means to put pressure on the federal government to reform the divorce laws. Attention is paid to the fact that the petitioner is almost always male, usually rich, and the respondent is most often female and poor. Snell’s research, although on an earlier period, indicates a different trend. He argues that by 1920 middle class divorce behaviour dictated that most petitioners were female. Among the working class, female petitioners led the way for the first two decades of the twentieth century, then men’s participation climbed to a comparable level. Snell, pp. 220-221.
their families. Three authors detail their own spurious divorce evidence, two of whom, not surprisingly given the illegality of their evidence, write anonymously.\textsuperscript{81} One article, written in 1948 for Maclean's, is framed within a testimonial format. The author discloses that he convinced a friend to perjure himself so that he could dissolve his marriage. “Our release could only be gained if one of us were to commit either the crime of adultery or the crime of perjury. I chose perjury. I broke the law by conspiring with my friend to have him lie under oath. In the eyes of my family, my business associates and my friends I became an adulterer.”\textsuperscript{82} In the course of confessing the details of his miserable marriage, the author describes frequent and fierce fights: “Our quarrels became so violent the police were called by an indignant landlady to break up one of them.”\textsuperscript{83} The pain of losing custody of his son was mitigated only by the recognition that the child would be spared the bewilderment and fright caused by his parent’s rows. Thus, in the context of an essay on the unfortunate necessity of feigning adultery to be granted a divorce, we glimpse violence, although just whose responsibility it is remains unspecified.

Beginning in 1951 articles appear on the perceived growing trend of husbands who desert their wives.\textsuperscript{84} Such desertion reflected the high incidence of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Anonymous, “How We Faked Our Divorce,” p. 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{83} Anonymous, p. 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{84} In her study of the Ontario Mothers' Allowance Margaret Little observes that by the end of the 1940s many believed desertion had reached crisis proportions, although there was no strong evidence to prove this. She observes that the perception of increasing desertion rates was actually due to the increase in reportage as well as heightened public awareness of the issue. Little, pp. 130-131.
\end{itemize}
marriage breakdown and the difficulties in procuring a legal divorce. Desertion, a category apart from separation, implies that the spouse not only leaves the family, but has little, if any, ongoing contact with his wife or children, and makes no financial provisions such as alimony or child support payments. Similar to other male transgressions, like alcoholism, abandonment is often blamed on the wife. For example, after detailing the increase in desertions, estimated to be two thousand a year in Canada for 1950, a 1951 Chatelaine article reproaches women for their role in propelling their husbands from the family home: “Nagging or alcoholic wives, inefficient housekeeping, or careless handling of the family income are frequent causes which drive husbands to desertion.” In a like manner, a 1957 article in the Star Weekly wholly castigates women for male desertion. “The basic reason men leave home is that they lose interest in their wives - and the wives bring this on themselves by becoming too absorbed in their home and children.” The solution? Women need to pay more attention to their physical appearance and they must stop nagging their husbands. “A wife should use her superior tact and understanding to smooth over the rough spots in marriage before they drive her mate to desert her.” The image of wives pushing their husbands out of the family home is frequently conveyed. Again, this indicates women's failure to fulfill designated roles adequately. “Wife’s refusal to tolerate disloyalty of husband” tops the list of factors

87 Browning, p. 13
leading to male desertion in a 1951 *Saturday Night* article. Men’s infidelity is not blamed for marital breakup, but women’s inability to accept this “fact.”

In a rare piece on marriage in an academic periodical, historian A. R. M. Lower cites family breakdown as a factor motivating men to welcome war. He beseeches men and women to acknowledge that although people decry the horrors of war and extol peace, a more honest self-assessment would show that only a fraction of people actually dislike war. War is fought for both psychological and practical reasons, and enlistment can be a pragmatic response to family dislocation. Lower cites “husbands whose marriages have worn out and who hope that going away into the anonymity of army life will give them peace and increase their sense of freedom.” War is one escape from women and marriages that turn sour. What is exceptional is the rare juxtaposition between the public face of violence – war – and private family disputes. What does not differ is women’s accountability for family harmony.

Runaway husbands are effectively absolved from responsibility when difficulty in obtaining a divorce is often cited as their motivation to flee. Desertion is frequently called “the poor man’s divorce.” Tellingly, in the French Catholic province of Quebec where divorces were not countenanced and only obtainable through the expensive and time-consuming parliamentary process, the defection

---


90 See, for example, Bodsworth, p. 12.
rate was the highest.\textsuperscript{91} Estimates of absconded husbands in Quebec were set at
15,000 to 20,000 in 1950.\textsuperscript{92} Desertions were also on the increase throughout Canada.
Sidney Katz estimates that in Canada as a whole in 1951 there were five thousand
convictions for non-support of families, double the figure from 1941.\textsuperscript{93} Statistics on
desertion are imprecise at best because government agencies were only brought into
the picture when the wife and families requested aid. In many cases, the wife or
other family members assumed responsibility for the children and never appealed to
the authorities. Unless children were neglected, most desertions were never referred
to a social service agency at all.

Male desertion was a problem in another sense: lone mothers were not
thought appropriate role models. Of particular concern was the linkage between
domineering mothers and sexual perversions (including homosexuality). Authors
expose homosexuality as an entirely male phenomenon, created by overattentive
mothers. Male desertion left in its wake a ripe breeding ground for male
homosexuality. A 1948 \textit{Maclean's} article by psychologist J. D. Ketchum introduces a
deserted family in which the mother “turns” her son to “homosexuality and other
perversions.”\textsuperscript{94} “The mother, separated from her husband, devoted herself to her
only son, letting nothing interfere with their constant, intimate companionship. The

\textsuperscript{91} Not surprisingly, given the heavy hand of the Catholic church in the province, Quebeckers affirmed
a lessening of the facilities for divorce rather than a broadening of them.
\textsuperscript{92} Ness, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{94} J. D. Ketchum, “The Prude is Father to the Pervert,” \textit{Maclean’s} Vol. 61, No. 2 (January 15, 1948), p. 43.
boy did not mix well with other boys, but instead developed crushes on some of them, worshipping them from afar.⁹⁵ Only by “good insight” and pulling himself away from his mother’s control was this young man, at age 20, able to adjust “normally” and marry happily. Another article in which a psychologist propounds the damaging effect of fatherless families on boys, creating delinquency, homosexuality, and mental distress, labels mothers who develop close relationships with their sons as “selfish.”⁹⁶ One more writer appeals to mothers of boys to “cut the apron strings.”⁹⁷ In a 1955 Chatelaine article author June Callwood argues that sexual deviance is “created” by parents. “Almost all sex offenders have suffered neglect or brutality in their childhood’s or had parents [mothers] who were overindulgent, creating an insecure child as surely as rejection.”⁹⁸ The point is that by linking desertion, domineering mothers, and sexual perversions, the family headed by a lone mother was seen to threaten the safety of the country and its citizens.⁹⁹ The message to mothers is clear: neglecting the dominant wifely and

⁹⁵ Ketchum, p. 43.
maternal roles thereby creating the conditions in which a husband might want to leave – being intolerant of his alcoholism or abuse, for example – leaves one’s children susceptible to dangerous influences.

Besides creating sexual perversities, mothers were blamed for the increase in juvenile delinquency in the postwar period. A Star Weekly article argues that most of the country’s juvenile delinquents come from “fair to poor” homes which, due to death, desertion or divorce, are headed by women. Working women, so-called “career women,” are singled out: “[Neglectful parents] are the mothers who got jobs so they could buy a fur coat and think they are good parents because they


101 James Y. Nicol, “Are Parents the Real Delinquents?” Star Weekly Magazine Section, No. 2 (June 9, 1956), p. 2. Several articles detail the rising incidence of child neglect. Despite women being blamed for a multitude of social problems at this time, child neglect and abuse were framed in a way that acknowledged its existence, but offered little analysis. Of all the following articles only one (Armstrong) refers to the specifics of the abuse (an alcoholic mother). What is the more likely presentation, is exemplified in Stewart (below). Stewart, a family and juvenile court judge, argues that although attempts to keep the family together at all costs are commendable, there are times when wardship action and the removal of children from their natural parents is necessary. He also asks child welfare workers to consider that natural parental affection for the child does not necessarily translate into a good home: “there are frequently very real family ties in homes where there is serious neglect.” (p. 62) Articles on child neglect and abuse include: Marjorie Earl, “Studied Neglect,” Star Weekly Magazine Section, No. 1 (September 13, 1947), p. 15; Violet Anderson, “Turning New Leaves,” Canadian Forum Vol. XXVIII, No. 331 (August 1948), p. 117; Sidney Katz, “Are We Growing Cruel to Our Children,” Maclean’s Vol. 61, No. 14 (July 15, 1948), pp. 10, 42-44; Eileen Younghusband, “Is All Well With the Child?” Canadian Welfare Vol. XXVII, No. 5 (November 1, 1951), pp. 3-14; Jean Armstrong, “It’s Not So Bad Being An Orphan,” Chatelaine Vol. 25, No. 10 (October 1952), pp. 7, 67-68, 70-73; and, V. Lorne Stewart, “Family Breakdown,” Canadian Welfare Vol. XXXIII, No. 1 (May 1, 1957), pp. 59-64.
got Sonny a bicycle and dress Judy well." Not all the focus is on boys.
Overcontrolling mothers are blamed for girls running away from home, and even forcing their daughters into prostitution.103

Besides holding them accountable for juvenile delinquency and sexual perversities, another psychologist concludes that mothers are largely responsible for war. Arguing that individual character defects contribute to world war, Dr. Brock Chisholm identifies women’s responsibility in raising children: “Women carry the major responsibility for the development of the character of children, therefore we cannot avoid the conclusion that women are at least as, and probably more, responsible for wars than men.” Magazines repeatedly view child raising as vitally important to the family, community and nation, asserting that mothers toe a very fine line between being over-protective (especially of sons) and being self-absorbed and neglectful towards their children.

Neither popular nor academic periodicals show much recognition that women also forsake their families. From 1945 to 1960 only a single article in the popular journals addresses this phenomenon, and that example is reluctant to treat female desertion as seriously as male: women do not have to pay support, they cannot be subjected to a charge of neglect, and there is no social support for men comparable to the Mother’s Allowance. With a cry of “Chivalry has gone far

103 Gwényth Barrington, “This is a Prostitute,” Maclean’s Vol. 61, No. 19 (October 1, 1948), pp. 13, 50, 52-54.
104 Dr. Brock Chisholm, “Do Women Make War?” Chatelaine Vol. 21, No. 7 (July 1948), pp. 6-7, 36-37.
enough." novelist Hugh Garner argues that runaway wives are on the increase and they are allowed to get away with it. Garner claims that a woman leaves her husband for the following reasons: promiscuity, a lack of desire for children, or, that "her mentality makes her incapable of feeling the natural urge of a mother to protect and cherish her children." Only passing acknowledgment is paid to the fact that women are often forced to flee their husbands. Garner also recognizes that the disappearing mother may be acting on the only option left to her: "Many of the women who desert their families do so because it is the only alternative to a life of misery for their children as well as themselves.... These women have a terrific love for their children, and when they leave they do so reluctantly, and as a last resort." Domestic violence is implied in this scenario, but never actually stated, and mothers in flight from abusive husbands are certainly not presented as typical.

Divorce reform and its advocates' corresponding acknowledgment of marital collapse are one side of the debate regarding the increase in the divorce rate after World War Two. Articles on fraudulent divorce and male desertion point to the need for divorce reform. Sceptics of divorce reform cautioned against the institution of any policies which would make it easier to receive a divorce, and instead rallied

---

106 Garner, p. 31.
107 Garner, p. 31.
108 One article speaks directly and personally to the importance of divorce. In a woman's testimonial about how she found happiness after a divorce and re-marriage, she refers to the terror of her first marriage, her husband's alcoholism, and his "perverted" tendencies. A Divorcee's Story, "I Found Happiness In ... My Second Marriage." Chatelaine Vol. 27, No. 4 (April 1954), pp. 24-25, 52-53.
to make marriages better. The magazines are brimming with articles on how to ensure a happy marriage: "Marriages Mended," "How to Stay Married," "How to Quarrel Successfully," "First-Aid For the Family," and "Talk It Out." As well, there were two series of articles on marriage. The first, "Marriage in Canada Today," ran from October 1955 to September 1957 in Chatelaine, and comprised a total of eight articles. This series was written by Dr. William E. Blatz, a well-known psychiatrist at the Toronto Family Court. Most articles discuss the value of an open and honest relationship, and each features a case study based on Blatz's experience at the Family Court. The second series, written by Violet Munns, Director of Case Work, Neighbourhood Workers' Association, Toronto, also appeared in Chatelaine, from March to November 1958. Each of the later articles highlights a typical marital problem, with each featuring women as the cause of marital strain. Like Blatz, Munns also uses examples from her professional work to accentuate her points.

The Blatz and Munns articles signify the premium placed on happy homes and the gendering of the private sphere: it was the wife's duty to ensure the comfort and sanguinity of her mate and children. For these authors, divorce was not an option. Most articles on marriage "saving" are found in Chatelaine, a reflection of the magazine's female audience. Several reiterate wives' responsibility for male infidelity. In a 1952 article journalist Dorothea Goetz warns women: "And if you are a wife who doesn't give her husband encouragement in his job or neglects his need for affection, another woman is likely to find him the easiest of targets."

---

109 Dorothea Goetz, "How To Fight the Other Woman," Chatelaine Vol. 25, No. 5 (May 1952), p. 75.
Another *Chatelaine* piece by “Anonymous” presents Celia who, despite coping with constant infidelities and emotional abuse, humbles herself by accepting entire responsibility for her husband’s ill conduct. She is praised for successfully saving her marriage. Social worker Violet Munns counsels a “sexually frigid” woman whose husband sought companionship with another woman. Munns advises her to tolerate her husband’s unfaithfulness, and attempt to be more sexually responsive.

Other articles simply bid women to take responsibility for unhappy marriages and endeavour to mend them.

In much the same vein, several articles build on the theme of “hot tempered” husbands, and suggest strategies for managing their anger. The close correlation between anger and violence is often made explicit. Violet Munns presents the “terrible tempered husband.” “Karl would lose his temper, strike Sally, then be overcome with remorse .... Karl’s faults were obvious - but Sally was to discover some of the blame was hers, too.” How could Sally help Karl? Munns recommends Sally quit her job, stay at home, and compliment Karl on his successes.

Munns’ additional examples replicate this script. Women are beaten to the extent

---

14 Munns, p. 42.
that their bones break and they are "whacked to the floor." Still, the onus is on women to rein in men's terrible temper.\textsuperscript{115} This advice closely coincides with advice to women regarding men's alcoholism.

An early 1946 article in \textit{Maclean's} "How to Keep Your Mate" by Clifford R. Adams, a marriage counsellor at Penn State College, links marriage and violence in a dyad that typifies the treatment of marital violence. The piece seeks to establish a light, even humorous tone through the caricature-like, almost cartoonish illustrations and the pop-quiz "Are You a Good Wife – or Husband?" Nonetheless, the content is of a serious nature. The author dispenses what he calls "down-to-earth" advice on how to keep a marriage intact. A short introduction links broken homes and adult and juvenile delinquency: "Statistics show that divorced people (and their children) commit more crimes, have shorter lives, become more mentally disturbed, and have many more unpleasant things happen to them than people living in secure, happy homes."\textsuperscript{116} The article next introduces four themes: 'Don't Hoard', 'Common Interests Needed', 'Should Have Babies' and 'Wife Sacrifices More.' Although token attention is paid to the possible male readers, the intended audience is clearly women. For instance, Adams admonishes those couples stingy with praise and rewards, explaining that the best way for women to have requests granted is to serve up a really good meal first: "Many a wife has had her request granted by waiting to make it until her husband has enjoyed a good dinner. To ask


\textsuperscript{116} Clifford R. Adams, "How to Keep Your Mate," \textit{Maclean's} Vol. 59, No. 3, February 1, 1946, p. 20.
a favor of him when he is tired and hungry is to court refusal." Although this may be reasonable, even sensible, advice, Adams positions the woman not only as petitioner for economic support but also as responsible for her husband's good behaviour. If he refuses the favour, she misjudged the timing of the request. Adams further explains the principle of praise and rewards: "This principle is so powerful that a wife may continue to love a mate who beats her when he is drunk, providing he pleases and rewards her in other ways to a greater degree than he distresses her." He elaborates with this dictum: "Reward the behavior that you like, ignore that which displeases you." Of interest here is the connection between wife-beating and insobriety; the subtext is a drunk absolved of responsibility. Since alcoholism was understood in this era as a disease no different from, say, tuberculosis, he is not to be blamed.

An additional message is that as long as a husband acts well in some ways, then misbehaviour short of murder, is acceptable. Later in the article, Adams discusses the importance of compromise in marital relations. The wife must sacrifice more in the relationship. Adams depicts an actual case in which a couple quarreled violently over money. The husband criticized his wife for extravagance; the wife retorted that he was miserly. She was advised to recognize that he wasn't unduly parsimonious, simply thrifty, and allow him to control the purse. The

---

117 Adams, p. 30.
118 Adams, p. 30. Italics in original.
119 Adams, p. 30.
120 The comparison of alcoholism to tuberculosis, or measles, is made in, Janet, "I'm An Alcoholic's Wife," Maclean's Vol. 59, No. 24 (December 15, 1946), p. 8.
violent arguments were due to the woman’s initial inability to compromise. The
details of his brutality are not probed, but the fact that there is even mention of
domestic violence is significant in an era seemingly devoid of violence in the private
sphere.

Many articles on “recipes” for a happy marriage emphasize communication –
“talking” – between couples. In a 1959 Maclean’s article entitled “How to Talk to
Your Spouse - and When Not To,” author Janice Tyrwhitt explains that voice and
expression are just as important as the content of conversations. To back up her
point, she relays an example from a social worker: “While I could see that [the
deserted woman’s] complaints were justified, I couldn’t stop thinking how
maddening it must have been for the poor man to have to listen to that whining
voice every night.”\(^\text{121}\) In this case the woman comes under fire, the implication being
that the quality of her voice was surely at least partly responsible for driving her
husband to desert. In another lesson on communication Tyrwhitt explores the
difficulties surrounding discussions on financial matters. The case study she
chooses describes male violence. She explains that a couple went to Family Court
after a “vigorous” battle: “he’d hit her because he’d suddenly been showered with
bills for things she had secretly bought.”\(^\text{122}\) Although Tyrwhitt details the solution –
a personal allowance for private expenses – in no way does she acknowledge the
violence in the couple’s arguments. The violence is an acceptable, perhaps

\(^{121}\) Janice Tyrwhitt, “How to Talk to Your Spouse - and When Not To,” Maclean’s Vol. 72, No. 2
(January 17, 1959), p. 33.
\(^{122}\) Tyrwhitt, p. 27.
legitimate, response to the woman's overspending and the couple's lack of effective communication over family finances.

In a like manner, a 1958 Star Weekly article considers the importance of talking through annoyances. The author presents a case study of a couple whose marriage was "on the rocks." The wife is described with untidy hair, an ill-fitting dress, her face carelessly made up. The husband no longer felt charmed, no longer could he "take pride in the attractive woman he had won - this heightened his resentment." Their marriage was "saved" when he was able to talk to her about his dismay over the lack of attention she paid to her appearance. The "talk", then, is focused on the husband's ability to confront his wife with his justified annoyance regarding her behaviour.

Further confirming the fact that criticism regarding family breakdown was leveled at women is an earlier 1947 piece in Maclean's in which the author states: "[M]ost experts would agree that the war between the sexes is really the fault of the woman." A barrage of advice is offered women on avoiding or dealing with quarrels. A profile on Quebec's Ecoles Menageres (Schools for Home Management) shows that besides learning the standard tasks of cooking, housekeeping, and dressmaking, female students also learn "male psychology."

---

“When domestic storms threaten, she learns to hold her tongue.” A placard in the main hall of the Joliette school proclaims: “God has no more perfect gift than a silent woman.” Similarly, another article cautions women to “let yourself lose an argument once in a while. This will help keep your husband’s ego high.” Violet Munns underlines this point in a case study presented on the necessity of women adjusting to their husband’s personalities. She argues that if a wife wants to preserve her marriage and her husband will not change then, yes, she must do all the adjusting. The wife of a mentally ill and emotionally abusive husband is advised to be satisfied with small signs of progress, as when he remembers her birthday. Finally, in another Chatelaine article by Dr. Marion Hilliard entitled, suggestively, “Do You Love Him Enough?” Hilliard maintains that whatever a husband’s failings – alcoholism, infidelity – a wife can secure a happy marriage if she loves him enough. What precisely “loving him enough” means is unclear. However, Hilliard strongly makes the point that it is the obligation of wives to contend with their husband’s weaknesses and shore up their marriages. Thus, although some of the articles indicate the importance of “talking things over” and others advise female silence and manipulation of males, all converge in addressing the issue of

---


marriage breakdown as a woman’s problem in which she must actively orchestrate spousal harmony.

Solidifying the anti-divorce campaign are several articles, written by divorcees, in which the option to terminate a marriage is openly attacked. Nina Wilcox Putnam, a twice divorced, thrice married woman, wrote “I Tried Divorce - It’s a Fraud” for Maclean’s in 1948. In her bid to convince readers that divorce is not the solution to marital discord, Putnam exhorts an extraordinary plea. “Infidelity ... murder, madness or dishonesty cannot be regarded as inevitable causes for separation.” Reiterating the same theme is an article in Chatelaine (1959) in which author Diana Baldwin pens a cautionary tale about her “intolerable” marriage to an unfaithful husband. Filled with remorse and desperately lonely, she regrets the divorce. The message is clear: no matter the extent of a husband’s bad behaviour, despite how unbearable the marriage seems, it must be borne. The consequence – social isolation – is even more dire.

That women found their only happiness and, by extension, society its stability, through fulfillment of women’s moral and familial responsibilities in the home was certainly a deeply entrenched belief. This conviction was encouraged, fortified, and naturalized in the magazine articles, academic/professional and popular, although appeared more consistently in the popular magazines, given over as they were to private, family issues. As a woman’s magazine Chatelaine did not

---

130 Nina Wilcox Putnam, “I Tried Divorce - It’s a Fraud,” Maclean’s Vol. 61, No. 13 (July 1, 1948), p. 49.
131 Diana Baldwin, “I Got A Divorce ... And I’m Sorry,” Chatelaine Vol. 31, No. 8 (August 1959), pp. 23, 106.
differ markedly from other popular magazines except in the category of marriage advice, and here the difference was quantitative, not qualitative. In terms of coverage of specific issues, concern over transitional postwar adjustment of male veterans to family life flooded the publications between 1945 and 1947 and then disappeared. Articles on desertion became prominent in 1951. All other themes – alcoholism, the influence of psychology, gender roles, professionalism, divorce, marriage-saving, and sexual deviation – remained relatively constant throughout the sixteen year period.

Presentations of domestic violence exist in the shadows of the magazine literature. Through an analysis of selected magazines and journals this chapter shows that although not recognized as a problem worthy of acknowledgment and analysis, domestic abuse was a reality. The framing of the problem, however, mainly through issues related to veteran postwar adjustment, alcoholism and divorce, indicate women’s culpability and men’s victimization. Thus interpretations of the family and family crises were manipulated, with attention and blame often being shifted to women.
CHAPTER THREE:
"YOU HAVE TO HAVE AN INSTINCT FOR IT":
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SOCIAL WORK AND ATTITUDES
TOWARDS FAMILY VIOLENCE IN VANCOUVER, 1945 TO 1960

Dissertation literature has routinely been neglected by scholars as a fruitful historical source. This likely has much to do with the difficulty of identifying and obtaining theses, the often unwieldy organizational and writing style popular in thesis writing, and the common belief that “good” theses are published anyway (in a condensed and more readable form). Yet, scholars’ dismissal of dissertations is lamentable.¹ Dissertation literature, while admittedly clumsy, non-indexed, lengthy, troublesome to find and even physically awkward, is also a bounteuous source, revealing layers of texts ripe for investigation. This chapter examines social workers’ attitudes towards intrafamilial violence, specifically husband’s violence against their wives and the blaming of women for “provoking” men to spousal violence, as unveiled in the dissertation literature emanating from the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) Master of Social Work (MSW) degree program between 1945 and 1960. To be better understood the theses are placed in context. To this end, an analysis of the development of the field of social work in Canada, and UBC in particular, is offered, with specific attention focused on the entwined concerns of professionalization and the predominance of women social workers. The related disciplines of sociology, psychology and psychiatry—and the larger scientific ethos

¹ A notable exception to this “dismissal” is Neil Sutherland’s recent monograph in which he makes fairly extensive use of UBC Masters of Social Work theses from the 1950s and 1960s. See his Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television (University of Toronto Press, 1997).
which shaped these and other fields – are discussed in terms of their influence on the theory and practice of social work. The dissertations themselves are assessed in light of this academic context. This chapter investigates the ways in which academe – specifically the discipline of social work – positioned spousal violence in Cold War British Columbia.

Most writing on the development and evolution of welfare in Canada flows from the desks of sociologists and political scientists. The historical analysis of welfare has received far less attention. What has been produced in both the social sciences and the humanities is also heavily weighted in favour of the nation as a whole, and Ontario specifically. Little substantial work has been written on British Columbia, although certainly there are numerous articles on various components of B.C.’s welfare system. The literature as a whole cleanly falls into distinct theoretical

---


camps, the approach with which I identify most closely is feminist/gender. The most salient and distinctive feature of this theoretical stance is the placement of women at the centre of analysis; women's predominance in shaping welfare policies as clients, reformers, and employees. Rather than reinforcing the "top-down" biases of records and sources created by those in overt positions of power, which often perceive welfare recipients as victims of circumstance or social injustice, feminist analyses of welfare tend to situate women as actors, actively resisting their victimization. At the same time, many feminist analyses acknowledge the complex of women's multiple and layered identities, such as gender, race, class, and ability.

How does this approach fit with my study? While not directly tackling the experiences of women, a basic premise of this chapter is that women were understood by welfare regimes during the Cold War era in certain and specific ways and within set relations of power, and that if women manipulated the system to

---

4 James Struthers, *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920-1970* (Ontario Historical Studies Series: University of Toronto Press, 1994). Struthers identifies six theoretical camps: functionalist, cultural theorist, the social democratic model, Marxist, state-centered theorist, and gender (feminist). (pp. 5-17) I agree with Struthers in his claim that all the explanatory models shed light on interpreting the complex events and issues surrounding the response to poverty and need. "Although some interpretive perspectives are more useful than others, none is without its limitations in understanding how social policy gets made, nor will any theory suffice for unraveling the complexity of what has become known as the modern welfare state." (pp. 16-17)

5 For another recent Canadian reflection on the theme of welfare history, see the review essay by Cynthia Commachio, "Another Brick in the Wall: Toward a History of the Welfare State in Canada," *left history* 1, 1 (Spring 1993), pp. 103-108.

6 Positioning welfare clients in the analytical centre is not exclusive to gender theorists. For example, some Marxist analyses present the poor as historical actors in their own right, episodically resisting the dominion of the state. The best example of this are Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward's influential books on American social welfare, especially their *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York, 1971) and *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York, 1979). See also various works by Michael Katz, for example his *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York, 1986).
make it work for them they did so within the boundaries of this constructed framework. Through an analysis of select university dissertations on family violence, this chapter sets out the discursive framework, the historical "texts" of public welfare, to which women were bound in their efforts to seek support and assistance for their violence-afflicted lives. In other words, this chapter assesses the ideas propelling the practice of social workers, not the practice per se, except in as much as it is visible in the dissertations. The ways in which women were actively able to use the system to their own advantage remains to be studied.

Graduate programs in social work first developed in Canadian universities, specifically at Toronto and McGill, during and after World War One. Social work was part of a triad of professional programs, in which females vastly outnumbered males, instituted in universities by the 1920s. The other two were home economics and library science. In 1914 the University of Toronto instituted the initial

---

Franca Iacovetta takes this approach in her work on immigrant women to postwar Toronto, and their maneuverings of the welfare system. Iacovetta, Such Hardworking People.

Professionalization of social workers occurred slightly earlier in the United States. The National Association of Social Work was established in 1917, and by 1921 it had 4,000 professional members. For a full discussion of the professionalization of social work in the United States, see Gordon, Heroes of Their Own Lives, pp. 61-69. The later trend toward urbanization and the fact that welfare fell under provincial, not federal, jurisdiction, are two reasons often cited for the later start to the professionalization of social work in this country.

department of social service in Canada.\textsuperscript{10} Toronto's social work program was an instant success, admitting fully two hundred students from all over Canada in its first year of operation.\textsuperscript{11} McGill University began offering courses in the social services in the 1918-1919 school year.\textsuperscript{12} By 1945 there were seven Canadian social work schools, five of which offered two year diploma courses for university graduates: Toronto, McGill, the University of Montreal School of Social Science (1938), the Maritime School of Social Work, located in Halifax (1941) and Laval University (1943). Two more universities offered a one year diploma course: School of Social Work, University of British Columbia (1931), and School of Social Work, University of Manitoba (1943).\textsuperscript{13}

An investigation of dissertations from English Canadian universities prior to 1945 reveals that the scholarly community did not investigate violence in the private sphere until after the Second World War. Framing of the term "violence" was narrow, existing almost exclusively in the public sphere, and closely tied to wars

\textsuperscript{10} Prior to the First World War private individuals organized a handful of lectures on social services at the University of Manitoba. This lecture series constitutes the only expression of interest in social work in an academic setting in Canada prior to 1914.


\textsuperscript{12} In 1919 the Department of Social Work at McGill was opened. During the Depression years the school ceased affiliation with McGill, but continued privately until it again became part of McGill in the later 1930s. See, Henry, Howie and Rutter, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{13} Paralleling the increase in the number of schools of social work was a growth in the number of students. In 1939, with three training programs, there was a total of 100 full-time students. By 1945-46 there were seven schools with a total enrolment 279 full-time students. In 1946-47 the total enrolment increased to 401 students (the increase largely fuelled by a federal grant initiative – the Department of Health and Welfare offered, in this year, $100,000.00 to cover students scholarships and bursaries; the monies were reduced by half in the next and then subsequent year, and then the initiative was disbanded). By 1949-50 the total enrolment reached its peak in the period under investigation, with 543 full-time students. Enrolment began to decline after this. See Henry, Howie and Rutter, pp. 10-13.
and battles. Canadian academics in the humanities and social sciences appear to have supported the peaceable kingdom myth. This represented the notion that Canada had enjoyed a relatively peaceful evolution from colony to responsible government to independence. The few violent episodes in Canada's past, such as the War of 1812 or the Rebellions of 1837-1838, were understood as an aberration from the Canadian norm.

There are a few notable exceptions. I have identified fifteen theses that deal with private, or family-based violence beginning in 1928 and ending in 1945. All are Master of Arts dissertations situated in the fields of sociology and psychiatry, and the university most frequently identified (seven theses) is the University of Toronto. Fully nine of the fifteen theses study juvenile delinquency, three focus on family breakdown, two examine the discipline of children, and one assesses sterilization. These theses examine family life with a focus on the prevention of perceived public problems. An example of this is juvenile delinquency. Of the nine Canadian theses which examine juvenile delinquency, with the "problem" children typically male,

---


15 For example, see: B.S. Leslie, "A social analysis of juvenile delinquents," M.A., University of Toronto, 1929; Herman Lewis King, "A study of 400 juvenile delinquent recidivists convicted in the province of Alberta during the years, 1920-1930," M.A., University of Alberta, 1932; E. M. McCollum, "Male juvenile delinquents in the city of Toronto," M.A., University of Toronto, 1932; Mary E. Wright, "The psychological aspects of the causes of juvenile delinquency," M.A., University of Western Ontario, 1933; and, Kenneth William Thomas Wright, "A survey of male juvenile delinquency in British Columbia from 1920 to 1941," M.A., University of British Columbia, 1941. Males tended to be studied more than females as male delinquency was a more public manifestation than female delinquency, whereas female delinquency was conflated with sexual deviancy, and the continued...
the focus is on the necessity for psychological testing so as to predict delinquent behaviour and prevent recidivism, reflecting a preoccupation with the public dimensions of delinquency. These theses also embody the scientific knowledge of this time, the belief that when the “facts” causing juvenile delinquency were studied, prevention was possible. In the postwar period scholars’ investigation of the family retained this focus on empiricism.

The following table (Table 3.1) identifies theses on violence from English Canadian universities between 1945 and 1960. Thirty-one in total, these theses in some way describe family violence. All relevant theses originated from four universities: the University of Toronto, McGill University, UBC, and the University of Western Ontario. At UBC, all these dissertations issued from the social work programs. However, at the other universities a small number of theses were written under the auspices of graduate programs in the arts, typically sociology or psychology. These two disciplines in particular were closely linked to the profession of social work in the post-W.W.II time period. Three main themes embodying family violence are child neglect, juvenile delinquency, and marital instability. The subject matter of the theses underwent modest changes from 1945 to 1960.

The changes can best be understood as a shift in balance, not focus. Child neglect and juvenile delinquency are the two largest topical categories of the theses and remain consistent throughout the period in all universities. However, beginning in 1952 we see the gradual introduction of theses concerned with marital
girls or young women, sometimes the victim of rape or other sexual mistreatment, would be placed in industrial schools.
Table 3.1: 
Select Theses on Violence From English Canadian Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TORONTO</th>
<th></th>
<th>McGill</th>
<th></th>
<th>UBC</th>
<th></th>
<th>WESTERN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| (instability, especially in terms of alcoholism. The uncovering of alcoholism as a source of marital difficulties is chiefly although not exclusively associated with MSW's from the University of Toronto. For example, the subject matter of three of four 1959 University of Toronto MSW theses is alcoholism and marital conflict. Rather than supplanting theses on child neglect and delinquency, dissertations dealing with marital difficulties co-exist in all universities alongside this dominant category.)
Theses receiving the most attention in this chapter originate from the University of British Columbia. The justification is threefold. First, in an attempt to narrow the focus of this dissertation from English Canada to the Pacific province, the UBC theses deserve attention as they are essentially a British Columbia portrait and more specifically they represent Vancouver. Second, considering the thesis component of the post-graduate program in social work at UBC began in 1946, this program most fully reflects the dominant attitudes of the 1945 to 1960 era as articulated by Leonard Marsh, a leading Canadian authority on social welfare who directed the program from 1948 to 1960. And third, a survey of theses from all Canadian social work programs between 1945 and 1960 shows that the majority of dissertations on violence emanated from the UBC Master of Social Work program (see Table One). A partial explanation for this high output is that the UBC program competed with the University of Toronto in having the highest number of fulltime equivalency students enrolled in social work programs. For example, in the 1950-51 school year, UBC had 143 students, the University of Toronto enrolled 139, followed by McGill University with 70, and the rest hovered between 48 and 20. These

---

16 As well, by 1951 UBC's School of Social Work was described as "ranking with the Toronto School as the largest in Canada, and among the 15 largest schools on the North American continent." Henry, Howie and Rutter, p. 18.

17 Many of these theses are not included in this study as they do not involve violence. For a complete listing to 1956 see, Leonard C. Marsh, ed. Social Work Research at the University of British Columbia, 1947-1956 (UBC, School of Social Work, 1957).

18 For a full bibliography of English Canadian theses on violence from 1928 to 1995, see Diane Barbara Purvey, Not So Peaceable a Kingdom: A Preliminary Guide to Selected English-Canadian Theses on Violence (Feminist Research, Education, Development and Action, Simon Fraser University, Harbour Centre, 1995).

19 Henry, Howie, and Rutter, p. 25.
numbers are typical of enrolment between 1945 and 1960 and perhaps UBC's relatively high numbers suggest Leonard Marsh's appeal in drawing students to the UBC program. This high enrolment, however, does not necessarily explain why the UBC MSW program produced more theses on violence than any other MSW program in an English Canadian university during this time period. A specific analysis of the UBC program sheds light here. In particular, the influence of Leonard Marsh shifted the focus of the dissertations to an empirical analysis of family breakdown, thus exposing family violence more readily.

The Department of Social Work at UBC was formed in 1931, and transformed into the School of Social Work in 1946, which offered both a Bachelor of Social Work and a post-graduate program. Research was an integral part of the curriculum for the Master of Social Work degree. This left a fertile legacy of dissertations, mostly based on casework in Vancouver and the surrounding area. These theses may be read in at least two ways: one, for the incidence of violence contained within the dissertations (a particular focus is the social services agencies working with violent families during the postwar era), and two, for illuminating the construction or understanding of violence in Canada's recent past. Thus, a dissertation might reveal the relationship, in practical terms, between Vancouver's Family Welfare Bureau and mothers separated from violent spouses and the role of social workers in administering welfare to such women and their families. The same thesis might also tell us much about the advice women were given regarding their relationship with an abusive husband, specifically in this instance that reconciliation was preferable to separation and support through public assistance, and that the burden of adjustment
rested fully on the women. In this way, through a close and careful reading of the theses we witness both the practice and theory of the response of academe to family violence.

Appendix One lists the fifteen theses on violence from UBC's Masters of Social Work program from 1945 to 1960. Not all are equally pertinent to this study. Five assess child welfare services (Singleton, 1950; Johnson, 1952; Dorosh, 1954; Smyser, 1954; Tuckey, 1958), three analyse the increase in juvenile delinquency (Woodward, 1949; Mozzanini, 1950; M. Wright, 1957), and two study child neglect (Campbell, 1951; Matison, 1955). Although the patterns and changes in the UBC social work dissertation topics will be addressed in terms of social work's general approach to violence in these years, six dissertations will be analysed in considerable depth.

Leonard Marsh directed the UBC School of Social Work from 1948 to 1960. His Report on Social Security for Canada, a pivotal document in the development of war and post-war social security programs, sets forth the inadequate response of Canada’s welfare systems to the social conditions of the 1930s. Still in his thirties when he was commissioned to write that document, Marsh (1906-1982) received his

---

20 Franca Iacovetta, “Family Court Intrusions into Working-Class Life,” in Franca Iacovetta and Wendy Mitchinson, eds. On the Case: Explorations in Social History (University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 312-337. Iacovetta analyses the oppressive penalties and repressive remedies taken by family court against misbehaving teenage girls in post-WWII Toronto, arguing that the extent of the legal and non-legal response to the transgressors' behaviours is an indication of the degree to which delinquency threatened the state and society. See also, Mary Louise Adams, The Trouble With Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality (University of Toronto Press, 1997).

21 Reflecting the influence of psychiatry, child neglect cases were increasingly seen as products not of poverty, as they were perceived in the Depression era, but of neurotic negligence or rejection. Neglect in this period was gendered; only mothers could be capable of it. See Gordon, pp. 116 to 167.
early education in economics at the University of London and a Ph.D. in Economics from McGill in 1940. In 1931 he was appointed Director of Social Research at McGill University, where he guided "a pioneering program of co-ordinated social science research on employment and related topics, financed by grants from the Rockefeller Foundation." After his wartime service in Ottawa where he was research advisor for the federal government's Advisory Committee on Post-War Reconstruction (which resulted in the report that bears his name), Marsh worked as a welfare advisor and senior information officer for the first United Nations agency, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Then, from 1948 to 1960, he co-ordinated over a hundred Master of Social Work dissertations as director of research at the School of Social Work of UBC. In 1965 he became Professor of Educational Sociology in the Faculty of Education at UBC, and in 1973 was Professor Emeritus of Education. As well as his teaching career, and along with other first generation Canadian social workers and researchers such as Harry Cassidy and Charlotte Whitton, Leonard Marsh dedicated himself to developing the specialized understanding of Canadian society and its problems that was essential to the development of modern social welfare legislation. To this end, he taught a host of extension courses and gave a wide variety of auxiliary lectures, was a frequent contributor to CBC radio forums, and published regularly in magazines such as *Canadian Forum*. He also became a member of the League for Social

---

Reconstruction. As a “Canadian Fabian”, rivaling Harry Cassidy as the country’s leading authority on social welfare, his influence on the newly developed graduate program in the School of Social Work at UBC was great. Marsh was also solidly connected to other influential professionals in his field and in government circles. As a survey of the UBC social work theses indicates, his strong pragmatic bent towards factual inquiry shaped the direction of the program. Empiricism influenced social welfare principles and practices in the early decades of the twentieth century.

In her study of the development of the discipline of sociology during the interwar years at McGill University in Montreal, Marlene Shore characterizes the 1920s as a watershed in intellectual thought. It was in this decade when the reform impulses of the late nineteenth century, namely the social gospel and social reform

---

23 The League for Social Reconstruction came into existence in 1932, and is generally acknowledged to be modelled after the English Fabian Society, the predominant beliefs of which are the concern with poverty, the inevitable but gradual development from capitalism to socialism, and the development of an efficient bureaucracy of experts who would be in a position to direct the state to bring about social betterment – “the greatest happiness for the greatest number.” Research and education was key to this – a type of “empirical democracy.” For an excellent analysis of the influence of Fabian philosophy on both Harry Cassidy and Leonard Marsh, see Allan Irving, “Canadian Fabians: The Work and Thought of Harry Cassidy and Leonard Marsh, 1930-1945,” in Raymond B. Blake and Jeff Keshen, eds. Social Welfare Policy in Canada: Historical Readings (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1995), pp. 201-220.

24 An example of this was the publication, under his direction but authored by a UBC Assistant Professor of Social Work, of a “text” composed of Canadian social work records to be used for teaching purposes: Arthur C. Abrahamsen, Social Work Practice in Canada: Case Records and Examples for Study and Teaching (Vancouver: School of Social Work, U. B. C., 1955). The text is large – almost 250 pages single spaced – yet contains no analysis, simply case histories.

25 John R. Graham’s Ph. D. dissertation on the history of the School of Social Work at the University of Toronto indicates that the University of Toronto’s social work program also embraced scientific inquiry and social policy analysis during this period, thus paralleling the UBC program. Graham argues that this was largely due to the influence of Harry Cassidy, Marsh’s contemporary. See “A History of the University of Toronto School of Social Work,” Ph. D., Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, 1996.
movements, were channeled into institutional and scientific pursuits. This shift reflects both the disillusionment with humanistic reform, partially caused by the horrific experiences of the First World War, and the immense authority of science, a marker of intellectual thought from the 1920s through to the late 1950s.

This ... tremendous faith in science ... constituted part of a more general emphasis on economic productivity; a widespread conviction that such productivity would ensure national and international stability contributed to the belief that industrial efficiency would solve all social ills, and that notion, combined with fears of unrest stemming from the post-war economic depression, changed the shape of university education.

At war’s end, certain professionals influential in the field of social work pledged themselves to the belief that the great slaughter would not be in vain, but rather would mark the birth of a new, non-violent society. This society was to have scientific foundations. The pure sciences would be harnessed to ensure Canada’s industrial progress, while the study and application of the laws of the social sciences would enable an improved and stable social environment. In this way, the scientific study of the troubled family – the “facts” leading to insobriety, for example – would

---

26 Previous to the professionalization of social work – in Canada this ultimately meant a university degree or diploma, a requirement social workers had still not achieved in the 1945 to 1960 period – charity was largely dispensed by married middle- to upper-class women volunteers working in the nation’s private charities and welfare institutions. That being said, Charlotte Whitton, in many ways the most critical social worker in the first half of the twentieth century, was not trained as a social worker although she was university educated. Although insistent on professional standards, Whitton deplored the replacement of volunteerism with the “expert complex.” Whitton viewed volunteers as the “leaven” that humanized public welfare agencies. In her view, a perspective shared by many other social workers, professional or not, both volunteers and experts were essential to public welfare. See P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton A Feminist on the Right (UBC Press: 1987), p. 102.

27 Shore, p. xii.
reveal the necessary remedies. The methodology of casework was embraced by those disbursing welfare earlier in the twentieth century. The motivation behind casework was to create a file on individuals or entire families, so that long-term trends or patterns could be observed, with the aim of sustained independence, not merely immediate relief.

Casework enhanced the status of social workers by providing a supposedly scientific foundation for their work. The genesis and fulfillment of the vision of empiricism was located in the universities. In this context schools and departments of social work were established. Leonard Marsh, at this time director of McGill University’s social research program (1931 to 1941), conducted thirty-two social surveys on various aspects of employment and unemployment, which were carried out by the university’s departments of social science. He asserted that methods that had been tremendously successful in the natural sciences could be employed in the amelioration of adverse social conditions. “The task of social engineering demands the same scientific attitude and the same systematic appeal to facts.”

---

28 The case history also has significance in the psychiatric realm, for in the early decades of the twentieth century psychiatrists devoted much energy to creating case files on their patients, as a means to bolster the modern, scientific status of the emerging profession of psychiatry. See, Steven Maynard, “On the Case of the Case: The Emergence of the Homosexual as a Case History in Early Twentieth Century Ontario,” Franca Iacovetta and Wendy Mitchinson, eds. On the Case: Explorations in Social History (University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 65-87.

29 See Lynne Marks’ Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth Century Small-Town Ontario (University of Toronto Press, 1996) for an examination of the concept of “deserving” and “non-deserving” poor in relation to the disbursement of relief through church parishes and town councils in turn-of-the-century, small-town Ontario (chapter two in particular). Believing charity should be empirically based, charity workers looked for patterns in an individual’s case that might lead to long-term dependence on charity and perpetual pauperism – the non-deserving poor.

believed the scientific approach to social problems provided “the best foundation for
the construction ... [and] the advocacy of improvements and reforms.” This
process of gathering facts and then applying the empirical data to specific reforms
was still in evidence in his own written work while at UBC and in his students’
theses. For example, in 1957 Marsh states:

> The welfare problems on which social work can be
> brought to bear, the services which can be rendered, the
> causes which are at the root of both sound diagnosis and
> successful treatment – cannot be determined analytically
> until they have been described descriptively. Social work
> becomes scientifically defined through a series of
detailed, critical descriptions in specific situations.

In Marsh’s very language exists evidence of his commitment to rational, objective
research. However, as Shore details, the experience of the economic depression of
the 1930s, followed by yet another World War, caused some questioning of the
assumption that progress was inherent in the social structure if only the processes
could be observed, investigated and corrected. Similarly, the loss of faith in “facts” –
what constituted facts and the assumed simplicity in ascertaining them – “… led in
the late 1950s and 1960s to attacks on the myths of objectivity and value-free
analysis.” This was to come later; during the immediate postwar period facts and
objectivity reigned supreme.

---


32 Other works by Marsh during this period reflect this pragmatism. These include: Canadians In
and Out of Work: A Survey of Economic Classes and their Relation to the Labour Market (Oxford
University Press, 1940) and Rebuilding a Neighbourhood: Report on a Demonstration Slum-
Clearance and Urban Rehabilitation Project in a Key Central Area in Vancouver (UBC, Vancouver,
1950).


34 Shore, p. 271.
The 1940s and 1950s provided social workers with a serendipitous opportunity to engage in the task of moral regulation. The postwar era marked a dramatic expansion in the welfare state and social workers were keen to prove their legitimacy. Gone from the welfare caseloads were those (mainly men) who simply lacked work; unemployed male clients were largely supplanted by women (and their dependents) who were either deserted, sick, or unmarried mothers. In his study of the development of social welfare in twentieth century Ontario, James Struthers points out that eight out of ten clients on general assistance in Canada’s most populous province throughout this period were women and children, while the remainder of the caseload were sick or elderly men or women.35 “The resort to welfare,” Struthers maintains, “was the result of physical, family, or personal breakdown, rather than the generalized economic collapse of the 1930s when Ontario’s public welfare system began to take shape.”36 Apart from establishing their eligibility for assistance, social workers were principally involved with the moral regulation of these families and individuals. To cite Struthers once more: “The task demanded not enforcement of the work ethic, as in the 1930s, but rather the regulation of family life.”37 And, given that women constituted the largest category of public welfare recipients, it was women’s lives that were morally


36 Struthers, The Limits of Affluence, p. 149.

scrutinized. In her comprehensive analysis of Ontario Mothers' Allowances (OMA) and the moral regulation of single mothers in Ontario from 1920 to 1997 Margaret Little argues that as the OMA policy became more generous and inclusive in the postwar years, the everyday administration of the policy became more inquisitional, with social workers distinguishing between various types of applicants. In this 'hierarchy of deservedness', widows were considered the most worthy and received the most favourable treatment "... deserted, unwed, and ethnic-minority applicants ... often experienced considerable difficulties from OMA administration and society generally."38 Thus, although the composition of casework clientele had changed, value-laden assumptions about the degree of worthiness and merit of the mainly female welfare candidates remained consistent with the inadequate and demeaning rationale and structure of the welfare system during the Depression. Despite assertions of objectivity and scientific rationale, the 1940s and 1950s witnessed the inquisition of female faults and failures, the stigmatization of many women as morally deficient, and the entrapment of women and their children by intrusive state agencies that upheld and reinforced women's dependence on abusive or deserting males.

Complicating public acceptance and the hope of creating a positive profile of social work in the postwar period was the fact that the profession itself was in crisis. Only a minority of caseworkers were trained professional social workers.39 There

38 Little, ""No Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit"", p. 126.
39 A substantial Department of National Health and Welfare survey of four thousand social welfare positions, conducted between 1948 and 1953, confirmed the lack of benchmark standards in the training of social workers, and the gendered positions within the field. Fifty two percent of all those continued...
were several reasons for this. Although enrolment in Canadian social work programs sharply increased between 1946 and 1949, this temporary bulge is attributable to veteran students who took advantage of the educational opportunities afforded them at war's end. After this peak and through the 1950s there were declining enrolments in all Canada's social work programs which meant that the output of graduates was relatively small, although demand remained high. And those who did graduate were scooped up by child welfare and private social agencies which offered higher wages and lower caseloads than government welfare departments. Constant high turnover and poorly trained staff, many of whom were culled from the ranks of teachers and nurses, meant that morale was low, reinforcing the problematic image of the profession.40

A further complication was social work's status as a female career ghetto. Certain circumstances encouraged women's progression into the profession of social work. For example, due to the death of so many men in the battlefields of World War One, numerous women's hopes for family life were thwarted. Some single or unwed women turned to a career – one that did not threaten their femininity, but affirmed their status as nurturers.41 For all its increased educational and job

---

40 Struthers, The Limits of Affluence, p. 151.
41 In the Boston context, Gordon argues that at the turn-of-the-century female caseworkers were initially close to their predominantly female clients, and engaged in caring, personalized acts of kindness. Increased professionalism militated against this and, as professional distinctions grew, the sense of a woman's community in child-saving work diminished after the 1920s. Gordon also continued...
opportunities for Canadian women, the interwar era witnessed a reaffirmation of
the female traits of domesticity, femininity and dependence, both within and outside
of the educational and professional settings. Social work remained a profession
dominated by women in the post-WWII period.

Female social workers were encouraged to leave their profession with
marriage and unquestionably with motherhood.\(^4\) This had several ramifications.
Despite the fact that women constituted the majority of social workers, they were
overwhelmingly relegated to junior positions. As marriage and motherhood
necessitated an end to their paid careers this meant that there was a shortage of
experienced women to move into executive positions. And unmarried women who
had achieved senior positions such as Charlotte Whitton, the pioneering child
welfare advocate, were seen as unqualified by the very professionals they helped to
create. As P. T. Rooke and R. L. Schnell observe: “Increasing numbers of ambitious
technocratic men with advanced university qualifications in such areas as labour
and economic planning entered the profession, undermining the power of the
established nucleus of female social workers who remained in family and child

makes the point that social workers with feminist sensibilities were drawn to settlement and other
more militant social welfare campaigns, and not casework. (Gordon, pp. 67-68).

\(^4\) This attitude is confirmed in a 1952 MSW thesis on UBC School of Social Work graduates: “A
woman student, following graduation, may marry and leave the profession for which she was
trained, or she may continue in employment until it is necessary for her to devote her time to her
children.” Henry, Howie and Rutter, p. 81. In this sense, a woman’s employment after marriage is a
possibility, but retirement upon motherhood is a “necessity.” This same thesis laments the
discrimination against married female social workers “by some agencies” stating “... it is anticipated
that such discrimination will pass with the growth of knowledge and understanding on the part of
the general public of what the trained social worker is able to contribute. The married social worker
has equally as much to offer in the understanding of child care, marital relations and other problems
as the married teacher to the teaching of children.” (p. 93) Appealing to women’s natural inclination
towards caring for children reflects a maternal feminist stance.
welfare areas.” As well, some social workers wanted men in the profession as a strategy to upgrade their status. By doing so, these social workers were caught in a conundrum, one of their own making. Much of the impetus behind the professionalization of social work emerged out of an assertion that women’s special capacity for nurturing within the family had a larger role to play within society itself. And, as women were often perceived to be “overly sentimental”, making them untrustworthy administrators, men were increasingly needed to fill the administrative dimension of the field as it enlarged in the postwar years. Men, too, were sex-typed. Their role in the field was as efficient administrators who could be trusted to handle the large sums of monies granted to private charities and government agencies. As a consequence, the sexual division of labour within the ranks of social work simply mirrored the appropriate male and female spheres in the larger society. As Struthers succinctly states: “Women remained wedded to a social work vision of women’s role in society which made their own eclipse by men within the social service sector difficult to challenge.” Thus, women’s roles within social work were constrained by their views of women and men outside of it. For the most part, social workers – career women – did not challenge sex-role stereotypes, they fueled them. This has relevance to the attitudes and gender-roles

---

43 Rooke and Schnell, No Bleeding Heart, p. 100.

44 Struthers, “‘Lord Give Us Men’,” pp. 130-134. Besides this, if a woman did secure an administrative position, the sex-wage differentiation meant that women received a lower salary than their male counterparts. Henry, Howie, and Rutter found that the median salary for men in administrative positions was approximately $25.00 a month higher than the median salary for women in the same position. (p. 80, 105)

45 Struthers, “‘Lord Give Us Men’,” p. 140.
social workers subscribed to and determined their stance toward women living with violent men. As will be seen in select social work dissertations, women in abusive relationships were often denigrated by female and male social workers as caring little for their families, as causing their own predicament, and even as deserving of punishment.

More successfully than social workers in the postwar period, psychologists solidified a niche for themselves as professionals and experts on the "normal" middle class Canadian family. This focus on normalcy is significant. In an important study on psychology and the construction of the "normal" family in postwar Canada, Mona Gleason argues that the normalizing power of psychological discourse was used to shape notions of postwar family life in the Canadian context. Similar to sociological discourse at the time, psychologists invoked "truths," "facts," and "objectivity" to lend an ethos of science to their field. These truths were little different from subjective, conventional moralizing. As Gleason notes:

"[Psychologists'] discussions of normal families and normal family members were shaped not by objective, unchanging scientific 'truths,' but by the hegemonic values and priorities of the middle class in postwar Canada."  

In the Cold War context, certain civic qualities deemed necessary to maintain the social order in a changing

---

and uncertain world, such as the work ethic and obedience and contentment, were praised and normalized. The normal family of social discourse served to level important differences in between and within families. Gleason argues: “The normal child, teenager, and family was equated with the idealized, and more acceptable, Anglo-Saxon, middle class child, teenager, and family.”47 The conflating of normal and ideal is telling. By linking the construction of normal with the perception of the ideal, psychologists not only made professional expectations unrealistic and unattainable, they also pathologized deviance from the ideal. What is of significance to this study is that psychological analysis served to define both normal and deviant human relations. The social work dissertations thus focus on the binary opposition to normal: abnormal. Women’s self-serving behaviour, sometimes leading directly to marriage breakdown, escaping from a violent husband for example, is analysed as “abnormal” in as much as the battered wife is understood as causing the violence. To complete the circle, in perceiving what is considered abnormal, the reader of the theses glimpses normalcy: which meant, in the case of women in particular, the mother willingly and selflessly sacrificing her own desires to those of her family.

The related discipline of psychiatry examines the abnormal.48 Whereas the expertise of psychologists was in normal human adjustment and interaction, the

47 Gleason, p. 444.

48 Since the early 1980s Canadian historians have advanced a social history of madness and psychiatric institutionalization, but very little research has been done on the perspectives of the patients themselves. This point, as well as a brief review of the literature on psychiatric history, is well made in, Lykke de la Cour and Geoffrey Reaume, “Patient Perspectives in Psychiatric Case Files,” Franca Iacovetta and Wendy Mitchinson, eds. On the Case: Explorations in Social History (University of Toronto Press, 1998), see footnotes 2-4 especially. They might also have added that Canadian historians have not applied themselves to the study of how psychiatric discourse framed and influenced “commonsense” notions of mental illness and wellness. For example, when and why continued...
domain of psychiatrists was pathological human adjustment and interaction. Just what constitutes "normal" and "pathological" is a matter of interpretation. Still, there was considerable leakage from psychiatric understandings into the technologies of popular psychology and the discipline of social work. Psychiatric jargon and concepts became widespread in the postwar world. To mention psychiatry in this period is to talk about Freud. In the 1950s neo-Freudian ideas entered popular language and understandings. In his broad-ranging study of the history of psychiatry, historian Edward Shorter argues against the oft-held notion that psychoanalysis marks the end point of the history of psychiatry, although he does offer Freud a short-lived but prime position of influence in North America.

was male violence against women first identified as a psychological problem in and of itself, and not something that women "deserved" due to their own psychological needs and weaknesses. Criminologists Robert Menzies and Dorothy E. Chunn's work on the gendered discourses of crime and madness is an important work in this direction. See their "The Gender Politics of Criminal Insanity: "Order-in-Council" Women in British Columbia, 1888-1950," Histoire sociale / Social History XXXI, 62 (Novembre-November 1998), pp. 241-279.

49 The first psychiatric clinic was opened in Toronto in the 1920s by Clarence Meredith Hincks and C. K. Clarke, superintendent of Toronto General Hospital. Hincks was a pioneer in the field of mental hygiene, whose predominant research interests were in mental defectives and the care and training of the "feeble-minded" and "backward" in the public schools. To this end, Hincks introduced intelligence testing in Ontario schools. He was also a player in the British Columbian Putman-Weir Commission of 1924-5, recommending intelligence testing in British Columbia schools. Hincks was interested in all the social sciences, believing they were integral to social improvement. He proposed that with the community as their laboratory Canadian social scientists were in a prime position to influence social welfare and the general well-being of modern society. In his presidential address to the Second Canadian conference on Social Work in 1930, he "spoke of the discontent that existed among social workers, particularly of the feeling that they were attacking social problems with ineffective weapons, patching up rather than offering constructive social effort." (Shore, p. 201) Hincks strove to make social workers understand that research was the only way forward and to put social workers in a position of developing social policy, not solely implementing (often ill-conceived) policies. This suggests the perceived power of social workers in articulating just what were and what were not social problems – for example, marriage breakdown was a social problem whereas spousal violence was not – and in identifying the causes and suggesting solutions to these problems.

50 Kinsman, p. 116. Pleck analyses the massive impact of Freudian analyses to the profession and practice of social work in the 1950s in the United States in her Domestic Tyranny, pp. 162-166.

51 Sigmund Freud first published his influential Studies on Hysteria, co-authored with fellow Viennese, family physician Josef Breuer, in 1895.
"For a brief period at mid-twentieth century, middle-class society became enraptured of the notion that psychological problems arose as a result of unconscious conflicts over long-past events, especially those of a sexual nature.\textsuperscript{52}

The goal of Freudian-based psychiatric therapy was individual maturity, and this was often measured by the woman's ability to adapt to nuclear family life. Almost all interpersonal conflict – spousal alcoholism, sexual impotence, deviant children, homosexual sons – was analysed in terms of the woman's complex mental ailments: failure to accept her feminine self, a need to control resulting from her own sexual repression, female frigidity as a denial of her womanhood, and masochism. These psychiatric categories defined family conflicts. Further, woman's neuroses required diagnosis and treatment by professionals – not friends, not family, not church leaders. The most egregious example of the influence of psychiatry on social work was in the blaming of wives for abuse by their husbands. Marital violence became an indicator of wifely dysfunction. A battered woman who sought assistance from social workers would be invited to reflect on her own behaviours and needs, to question how and why she provoked her husband, and to consider ways in which she might change so as to build her husband's sense of esteem. Women's "self-sacrifice" and "renunciation" were key words in the day-to-day language of social workers.

\textsuperscript{52} Edward Shorter, \textit{A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac} (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1997), p. 145. Shorter does concede that the influence of psychoanalysis was greatest in the United States, triumphing from the late 1940s to the late 1960s (p. 160, 170). For his regrettable short analysis of the influence of psychotherapy on the discipline of social work, see pp. 293-297.
Science, sociology, psychology, and psychiatry were persistent and important influences on the theoretical debates and practices within the social work profession. These influences are evident in the UBC MSW dissertations. The dissertations are examined in three ways: in their entirety, as a group of fifteen relating to violence and, finally, six dissertations depicting men's violence against their wives are examined in detail (Table 3.2). The practice of social workers is highlighted, and the academic understandings of violence against women are analysed. A woman-blaming response to wife beating was pervasive in the Cold War era. The increase in family breakdown and the concern over this increase meant that social workers were confronted with wife abuse. Caseworkers, particularly those of a more therapeutic orientation, began to define abuse as a problem for women to work on within the parameters of an intact family.

Examined as a whole, the fifteen UBC School of Social Work dissertations in the 1945 to 1960 era (Appendix One) present a puzzle. This is the period when the terminology associated with studies of family violence emerges: battering, abuse, neglect, cruelty, brutality. However, acknowledgment of the existence of domestic violence was framed within psychiatric categories. In the language of psychiatry, women's behaviour was increasingly viewed as pathological, the result of unconscious psychological conflicts implanted in infancy and early childhood. "Very few, if any cases, have no health or social problems," social workers reported, the roots of which were often "obscure and elusive ... frequently having origin in the
Calnan, Wilfred Michael.
The effectiveness of family casework; an evaluation of the case work
treatment of family relationships by the Family Welfare Bureau of
Greater Vancouver, 1948.

Gerrie, Catherine Lorraine
Welfare aspects of desertion; a casework evaluation of the effects of
desertion on family life, based on a sample group of cases from public
and private agencies, 1954.

Wright, Gordon Richard
Casework with the wives of alcoholics; a study of 18 cases drawn from
the files of a family agency, 1954.

Marcuse, Berthold
Long-term dependency and maladjustment cases in a family service
agency, 1956.

Morton, Betty M.
The psychodynamics and treatment of the male partner in marital
conflict cases, 1957.

Wharf, Brian
The social casework approach to marital counselling: the exploratory
analysis of some characteristic family service agency cases, Vancouver,
1957.

individual's own personality and being displayed in this behaviour." The complex
mental ailments a woman might suffer from include: failure to accept her own
femininity and attempting to compete with her husband; frustration as a result of
her own frigidity; a need to control resulting from her own sexual repression; a
desire to be punished due to past sins; and, masochism. Previous interpretations of

53 Struthers, The Limits of Affluence, p. 149. Note the social worker's use of the personal pronoun
"he" even though the bulk of their casework was with women.
women's "immoral" actions as caused by environmental factors, in which family violence was seen as an epiphenomenon of extrafamilial events, had vanished.

Ironically, although we are introduced to the terms we today use to signify marital violence, a close examination of the theses in this period reveals that it is most often the child who is battered and neglected, and the mother who is at fault. 54 When men abuse their children, the blame is still cast on mothers. According to these social work theses a major factor responsible for male violence is men's perception of powerlessness vis-à-vis their wives. Wives emasculate their husbands. Women have a need to control resulting from their own sexual repression. In an attempt to re-assert control, men initiate violence. Yet there is no attribution of male responsibility. Social workers perceived male violence as being "provoked", and the wives as the provocateurs.

Appendix Two identifies and categorizes by subject area 189 UBC Master of Social Work theses written between 1947 and 1956. The categories were selected by Leonard Marsh and thus provide insight into the classifications he deemed significant. 55 Marsh's Social Work Research at the University of British Columbia, 1947-1956 is a "consolidated list and analytical classification of Master of Social

54 See, for example, Doreen Evelyn Campbell, "Decisions of removal or retention in child neglect cases," M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1951; Sonja Constance Matison, "Child neglect situations: A comparative case analysis of two neglect cases, from Vancouver agencies, 1955," M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1955 and Elizabeth Ursula Townsend Tuckey, "Family influence on child protection cases at the point of apprehension and in later foster care," M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1958.

55 Marsh, Social Work Research, 1957. He also categorizes the theses according to methodology (historical, descriptive surveys, analytical and quantitative surveys, descriptive casework, and social work methods analysis) – the bulk of which are descriptive surveys. Marsh includes a listing of sources or agencies on which the dissertations were based.
Work theses completed at UBC, 1947-1956” and stands as an indication of his long-standing and on-going commitment to empiricism. He articulates this in the guide’s introduction. His stated rationale for the guide is “to shed light on the nature and dimensions of welfare research,” and to serve as a reference for current and future students so as to “strengthen the process of building research on what has gone before.”  Marsh hoped that his bibliography would contribute to national and international compilations.

In Marsh’s bibliography there are fully twenty subject area categories, most of which are further divided into sub-categories. The bulk of theses (31) are grouped under “Child Welfare.” This reflects UBC’s heavy reliance on the Children’s Aid Society as a site for MSW research. More significantly, it also points to social workers’ continuing interest in child neglect. However, child neglect in this period was seen as a product not so much of poverty but of neurotic rejection or negligence. Child neglect was gendered insofar as mothers, not fathers, could be guilty of neglect. Marsh’s influence on this analysis is difficult to discern. He supervised theses in which women were blamed not only for marital breakdown but also for a host of male ills, from alcoholism to violence against women. However, Marsh’s own writings are largely silent on the subject of women. This apparent contradiction may be interpreted in several ways. Perhaps the defend-the-conventional-family attitudes in social work were so pervasive that Marsh did not feel the need to add his voice to condemn those who fell outside of acceptable

---

female boundaries, nor to praise those who upheld “pro-family” values. Perhaps
the study of women and the family was not his academic domain, and Marsh felt
uneasy commenting on a subject outside his area of expertise. As well, perhaps he
supervised the theses because he was head of the program, or because he was
interested in the theses’ chosen methodology, not necessarily by reason of his
interest in or familiarity with the subject matter.

To turn to the categories contained in Marsh’s bibliography, the classification
of “Physical Illness, Handicaps” (22) – in which there is a sub-category of children
(7) – generated substantial research. So too did “Mental Illness” (18) (again, children
is a sub-category (2)) and “Social Work (Method) Analysis” (18) of which the
majority (12) focus on families. Four of the theses that receive in-depth treatment in
this chapter are identified in Marsh’s survey (two theses –Wharf and Morton – were
written in 1957, outside of the scope of the survey). Two fall under the “Family
Welfare” category: Wright’s thesis is placed in the sub-heading “Family Service
Agencies” while Gerrie’s is situated under the sub-heading of “Desertion,
Unmarried Mothers.” Both Calnan and Marcuse are found under “Social Work
(Method) Analysis,” sub-category “Family, Generic Settings.”n57 There is no heavy
concentration on a certain subject in any given year. This suggests fairly consistent
research foci. The one subject that crops up in the research in the 1947-50 period and

n57 Of interest here is that all six theses, save one (Morton), intensively analyse the methodology of
casework, yet only two are included in this category. This suggests, perhaps, the pervasiveness of a
methodological analysis in many of the dissertations researched and written during Marsh’s tenure at
UBC.
rarely beyond is veterans. This focus is, of course, due to immediate postwar concerns of veterans' postwar readjustment, one that faded after 1950.

What is interesting is the lack of a category for violence, indeed there is no category for family troubles, marriage breakdown, or divorce. Marital difficulties could have been indicated in a number of ways, but these categories do not exist. Also of interest is the lack of attention to women as a category. This suggests, I believe, that the influence of Marsh was mainly in method – scientific inquiry. An analysis of the six pertinent UBC MSW theses will demonstrate this.

UBC dissertations that at first might not seem relevant to family violence do in fact examine violence. Discussion is frequently masked by other terms of reference, most notably alcoholism. Again, the mother is credited with complex mental ailments that prevent her from performing effectively as a mother and as a wife. She is personally responsible for the breakdown of the family; cultural or structural arrangements, such as poverty or poor mental hygiene, are not the culprits. Family stability is contingent on the wife/mother's desire to seek diagnosis and treatment from a professional. For example, in a study of marital conflict, we see the "normally passive husband's outburst of hostile aggression, suicidal threats, and impotency" assessed as due to an "aggressive and controlling wife." In

---

58 For example, see Florence V. Clayden, "The Social Service Division of the Department of Veterans' Affairs: its origin, setting and functions," M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1950 and Bruce M. McKenzie, "The Care of an Aged and Disabled Group in a Veterans' Hospital," M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1950.

59 The linkage between alcoholism and violence is fully discussed in "Safeguarding the Family," Chapter Two, this thesis.

another case, a husband’s alcoholism which causes him to “occasionally beat his wife and force sexual relations upon her” is explained as his “means of free expression of strong aggressive and sexual drives towards [his wife,] indicat[ing] a degree of depreciation of her husband as a worthwhile man and also inhibitory feelings on her part with regard to sexual relations.” Thus, male brutality is almost always in response to women’s actions. Ultimate blame and subsequent treatment resides with the woman. Social workers would attempt to convince women that their marriage was more important than the woman’s own personal happiness or that happiness came with submission.

To be sure, social workers, particularly the frontline workers, had to balance theoretical beliefs regarding their practice with a recognition of the real intra- and extra-marital pressures facing women during this time. Social workers’ concerns about maladjusted women were also an interpretation of the stresses of social and economic change, and the conflicts and contradictions women felt and experienced as they were counseled to perform in often contradictory ways: to be subordinate but independent, to raise their aspirations but to experience constricted opportunity. At times, these stresses are acknowledged by the social workers and/or the MSW students in the dissertations.

Of the six theses, four were written by men. This ratio, three-to-one, is consistent with the totality of UBC MSW theses written during this period. For

---

61 Gordon Richard Wright, “Casework with the wives of alcoholics,” M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1954, p. 66.
62 Wright, p. 68.
example, between 1947 and 1956 of 196 authors of theses, 108 were produced by men, 88 by women. Although only a small sample of these are examined in detail, there appears to be no difference in perspective between the male and female authors. All blame women. Moreover, the social workers who are examined in the dissertations, almost exclusively female, also condemn women for the violence against them. This assessment is endorsed by the student authors. Certainly more research needs to be done to ascertain if male and female MSW students differed in their regard of the female clients they were studying.

All six theses centre their analysis on the case records of Vancouver’s Family Welfare Bureau. This institution, later known as the Family Service Agency, was created in 1928 to meet family needs as defined in the British Columbia Child Welfare Survey of 1927, headed by well known welfare advocate and then Secretary of the Canadian Welfare Council, Charlotte Whitton. Miss Mary McPhedren, a trained social worker from Toronto, secured the position of director (one which she held until the mid-1950s). Students from UBC’s School of Social Work received their field training at either the Family Welfare Bureau or the newly revamped Children’s Aid Society (both organizations shared the same building although their offices, staffs, budgets and records were separate). In the postwar era the Family Welfare Bureau administered four main programs: marital counseling, parent-child relationships, individual problems of adjustment, and income management. It worked closely with other public and private social service agencies in the city, such as the Children’s Aid Society, Catholic Children’s Aid Society, City Social Service Department, provincial and municipal social welfare departments, social service
departments of the city hospitals, provincial mental hospitals, and neighbourhood houses. Students' exclusive focus on these two institutions provides a key to why the UBC program, relative to other English Canadian universities with MSW programs, produced so many theses on violence.

Struther’s suggestion that the profession was seriously threatened by overwhelming workloads in the postwar period was not the case for the Family Welfare Bureau. In fact, even faced with new postwar problems social workers experienced a reduction in caseloads steadily declining from an average active cases per worker of 43.4 in 1945 to 23.7 in 1952. Put another way, the total number of families receiving assistance from the Family Welfare Bureau peaked in 1946 at 4475, after which it fell to a low of 1404 in 1952. In his MSW dissertation Mitchell attributes this reduction to the Family Welfare Bureau’s enforced selectivity in determining cases – necessitated by a drop in funding from the Community Chest (for which it was almost entirely dependent for its financing), and also to a steadying of the average number of social workers employed full-time by the Bureau to approximately sixteen. He suggests that this number compares favourably with the caseloads of comparable family agencies. Mitchell also makes clear that the client profile underwent drastic changes. Problems brought on by environmental factors – unemployment due to the Depression – were replaced in the

---


64 Mitchell, pp. 54-56.

65 Mitchell, p. 57.
The postwar period with "psychological problems – those of personal and family adjustment." This meant that the balance between office visits and home visits shifted so that the former, office visits, formed the bulk of the social worker's workload in the postwar period. As well, by war’s end the nature of the profession of social work had changed so that women became the main and often the sole family contact for social workers, thereby necessitating a focus on wives and mothers.

Changes in social work procedures, most notably the casework approach, created structural reasons for mapping family problems onto women. Professionalized casework concentrated on office visits, and the client who was most often present and thought to be most easily influenced was the woman. In earlier pre-professional years, social workers attempted to reform men: they threatened, cajoled, hectored, made surprise visits to the home or worksite, interviewed friends, family, neighbours, and employers, and were often able to bring the police on-side to enforce short jail terms. However, in the new professional paradigm of the practice, social workers rarely saw husbands and fathers. Wives and mothers typically first made contact with social workers, they went to the interview, and they received assistance. Social workers still visited the homes of many of their female clients and, as Little tells us, social workers applied coercive measures to reunite

---

66 Mitchell, pp. 57-58.
67 Gordon, p. 281. Margaret Little corroborates these findings. In her analysis of investigators for the Ontario Mothers’ Allowance in the twenties and thirties, she portrays the investigators as intrusive and morally judgmental, despite claims of scientific objectivity. Little, pp. 42-44.
families or at least capture the deserted husband. But social workers communicated with the women. Abandoned women were counseled to think of why they were deserted and what they could do, if opportunity arose, to ensure their spouse's commitment to the home. In this way, caseworkers focused their attention on those they could reach and influence – women.

In the 1945 to 1960 period, many public welfare agencies were still largely dealing with meeting the material needs of those in difficulty. The Family Welfare Bureau, by contrast, worked principally in the realm of interpersonal relationships. Throughout the period of study it was one of the few agencies in Vancouver dealing with marriage counseling per se. In 1957 the only other agency available was the Vancouver branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association, which employed a psychologist to offer services to those in marital conflict. By 1957 the Family Welfare Bureau employed eighteen social workers, all of whom worked in marriage counselling.

Social workers were desperate to prove their legitimacy in a changing society, one in which they believed the citizenry needed their skills to successfully adapt to new challenges. Although the Cold War and external political tensions are not articulated as concerns, the political context infuses the perceptions of social workers. Is not a repeated desire to be seen as professionals also a belief that traditional structures were crumbling and a new way forward, spearheaded by

---

68 Little, p. 134.
69 Brian Worth Heseltine Wharf, "The social casework approach to marital counselling: the exploratory analysis of some characteristic family service agency cases, Vancouver, 1957," M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1957, p. 3.
experts, had to be found? Is not the belief in science, as seen through methodological research and education, an attempt to triumph in a vastly competitive world? The Cold War offered no second chance. While battles would be fought with military expertise and new technologies, the foundation of the nation had to be solid and strong. This was the family. Research and fact-finding, social workers believed, had to be employed to negotiate progress in the modern world, to make absolutely certain that the country was impervious to any sort of attack, either within or without. Although social workers had long desired to heighten their status, during the 1945 to 1960 period there was a singular urgency to this quest. This message suffuses the dissertation literature.

The first UBC Master of Social Work thesis to articulate spousal violence is Wilfred Calnan's 1948 evaluation of the casework approach to family relationship problems. In fact, Calnan's study is also the first of all theses written in English Canadian universities to depict wife beating. His study is based on fifty-eight cases from the Family Welfare Bureau. Not surprisingly, veterans' adjustment to civilian life figures largely into the family histories. Male absence from the family, income re-adjustment, transiency, pregnancy, English war brides, housing shortages – all are examples of the specific postwar challenges experienced by some of these families. However, Calnan is careful to point out that, while these factors perhaps exacerbated problems, they were not the cause. For example, in citing one couple's poor living arrangements Calnan states: "... housing conditions seemed to be the
end-result of the conflict rather than a contributing cause."\(^7^0\) Difficulties associated with transition from war were seen as environmental, not causative. The situation of Mr. and Mrs. U, a couple from a group of thirteen families analysed as exhibiting advanced marital conflict, will serve to illuminate the recurring depiction of violence and the perceived causes of spousal abuse in the Calnan thesis.\(^7^1\)

The relationship of the U’s is described as “physically violent” and marked by “wife-beating.”\(^7^2\) Mr. U, an admitted “philanderer”, who nevertheless accused his wife of marital infidelity while he was serving overseas during the war, “ruled his home with a napoleonic tyranny.”\(^7^3\) His strict authoritarianism is analysed as being due to his “domineering mother.”\(^7^4\) Thus, Mr. U is absolved of his violent behavior. Mrs. U, a mother of five children and pregnant with their sixth, “succumbed to [Mr. U’s] dominance.”\(^7^5\) Despite Mrs. U’s demanding family responsibilities, Mr. U complained about his wife’s untidiness and poor housekeeping. When Mr. U contacted the Family Welfare Bureau requesting homemaker service to clean up “their dirty and disorganized home,” the caseworker challenged Mrs. U to “prove her capacity for homemaking.”\(^7^6\) Acceptance of her wifely and motherly duties was

\(^7^0\) Wilfred Michael Calnan, “The effectiveness of family casework; an evaluation of the case work treatment of family relationships problems by the Family Welfare Bureau of Greater Vancouver,” M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1948.

\(^7^1\) As it is unclear if the authors of the dissertations use pseudonyms when referring to the clients of the social work agencies, I have changed the clients' names to a single letter.

\(^7^2\) Calnan, p. 96.

\(^7^3\) Calnan, p. 100.

\(^7^4\) Calnan, p. 104.

\(^7^5\) Calnan, p. 101.

\(^7^6\) Calnan, p. 106.
viewed as part of Mrs. U’s treatment. Calnan argues: “This was a real ‘homemaking’ service with the homemaker being carefully tutored in the active part she was to play in the social treatment.” Considerable attention is focused on Mrs. U. Her lack of self esteem leading to submission to Mr. U’s rule is problematized. Yet, there is no mention of helping Mr. U come to terms with his abusive behavior. The caseworker’s approach to male brutality is: a) to blame abuse on his mother’s domination and, b) to encourage the abused woman to better fulfill her female roles.

This treatment is consistent throughout the entire thesis. Male violence is mentioned as a manifestation of a problem marriage, yet it is never specifically addressed as a problem in and of itself, except inasmuch as the wife, the casualty of her husband’s brutality, needs to change her behavior. So, for example, Calnan presents the situation of Mrs. F, an English war bride, whose husband not only “violently rejected her” when she arrived in Vancouver on the train, but “also assaulted her.” The caseworker provides financial assistance to Mrs. F, but makes no effort even to contact Mrs. F’s deserted husband, whether it be for financial support, for reconciliation, or even to assist Mrs. F in pressing assault charges. Similarly, Mrs. R first arrived at the Family Welfare Bureau in a state of fear, afraid to return home due to “an aroused husband who had been violently angry with her at the beginning of the day.” She was further “conflicted” by concern for her two preschool aged girls whom she had left with Mr. R. The caseworker’s approach is to

\[77\] Calnan, p. 106.
\[78\] Calnan, p. 110.
\[79\] Calnan, p. 129.
support Mrs. R. in realizing her responsibility for her children and the need to save her marriage. To do this she “must assert herself to her husband.”\textsuperscript{80} Just what is meant by “assertion” is not spelled out by the caseworker or Calnan, however it likely meant accepting her femininity and her attendant roles and obligations. Although this interaction may be read as the social worker supporting Mrs. R and condemning the husband, Mrs. R was nevertheless counseled to return to her abusive husband.

The second UBC MSW thesis to be examined in detail focuses on the wives of alcoholics. Defending his decision to study the wives of alcoholics (rather than the male alcoholics themselves), Gordon Wright asserts that “[t]he wife of the alcoholic is the focus of this study because . . . success or failure in regard to the total family problem is frequently dependent upon the nature and effectiveness of work with her.”\textsuperscript{81} In his 1954 Master of Social Work thesis Wright studied eighteen wives of alcoholics, all referred to the Family Welfare Bureau. He categorized women into personality types – the basis of which appears to be the degree to which women accept their “feminine core.” Wives of a more feminine orientation showed less emotional disturbance and hence were not as likely to “drive” their husbands into alcoholism. However, even wives who were “essentially feminine” proved problematic. For example, in analysing Mrs. G’s endurance of drunken beatings the author asserts:

\textsuperscript{80} Calnan, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{81} Wright, p. iii.
This submission to the burdens of constant [financial] insecurity and frequent beatings would seem to indicate a very real need for punishment on the part of Mrs. G. It might be wondered how much a part of her behaviour might have played in precipitating the desired punishment.\textsuperscript{83}

Thus, it is the wife's desire to be punished that leads the alcoholic husband to beat her. The author wonders "what the crime was for which [Mrs. G] so guiltily sought punishment."\textsuperscript{83} Here we see the influence of Freud; the notion that one would unconsciously seek punishment, likely due to unresolved childhood trauma. Mrs. G's "missionary zeal" in attempting to save Mr. G is also problematized. The author believes the "moral element" in her personality to be strong. This is expressed in both her evangelical desire to protect Mr. G and her submission to brutality.

Wright links female financial insecurity to tolerance of (or, as illustrated above, desire for) male violence. Women had few resources other than their husband in the task of supporting children. They felt entitled to financial support and sometimes interpreted their husband's financial failings as willful (rather than, as Wright argues, being due to the vagaries of an industrial capitalist economy).\textsuperscript{84} Unemployment created anger and depression in men. Women both resented their dependency on males and the failure of husbands to support them. Even if the male was employed, a woman might be vexed at her husband's "waste" of money on alcohol – which in this era was usually consumed in taverns, a public, male space outside of the reach of remonstrance, where the camaraderie, some scholars have

\textsuperscript{82} Wright, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{83} Wright, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{84} Wright, p. 69.
suggested, consolidated, encouraged, and perhaps even escalated men’s violence against women.\textsuperscript{85} Thus, alcohol consumption was part of a dance that often had as much to do with power relations between husbands and wives as a loss of control leading to violence on the part of husbands. Although the Wright thesis is permeated with psychological interpretations, his acknowledgment of women’s financial dependence on men as a reason to tolerate abusive husbands is unique in the theses.

Wright mentions, almost as an aside, that in eleven of the cases the women chronically endure their husband’s aggressive acts; in three of these cases the seriousness of the brutality brought police action. In a particularly troublesome case, wherein Mrs. A discloses to the caseworker not only her husband’s frequent beating of her when he is in a drunken state\textsuperscript{86}, but also his “sexual attack” on their 15 year old daughter and her knowledge of his “sex play” with neighbourhood children,\textsuperscript{87} the case worker supports Mrs. A’s decision to leave her husband. However, Wright is critical of the counselor’s endorsement of family disunity, suggesting that if Mrs. A. had been provided with appropriate psychological counseling then she “might have been able to find the security in her own emotional life that would have enabled her to reunite with her husband and to give him the

\textsuperscript{85} For example, see Robert Campbell’s \textit{Demon Rum or Easy Money}, pp. 55-58.

\textsuperscript{86} Some of these beatings were so severe she was knocked unconscious. After a particularly severe beating culminating in her being left unconscious in the street she laid a charge against him, but withdrew it at her husband’s request. Wright, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{87} Wright, pp. 29-36.
support without which he seems to have been unable to work.” Another case highlights Mrs. R, whose husband “works spasmodically, drinks heavily and of late years has frequently beaten [his wife].” According to Wright, Mrs. R’s inability to accept her femininity leads to Mr. R’s abusive behavior. Mrs. R is analysed as “lack[ing] capacity for the wifely and maternal aspects of the feminine role.” Rather, she is “masculinized” – “exhibiting a real desire to take over many of the responsibilities which her husband feels are part of the masculine role.” “Guilt” – it is not stated why she felt guilty – and her need for punishment made her return repeatedly to her husband after savage attacks. The case worker felt that in “relating her husband’s brutality Mrs. R got considerable satisfaction out of telling about it and probably very much desired the initial punishment.” This case further illustrates the belief held by social workers at this time that the behavior of married women in abusive relationships encouraged their husbands to beat them and that female guilt found expression in their desire to be punished.

An example of the growing penchant for psychological and psychiatric approaches to marital breakdown and family violence is exemplified in the third

---

88 Wright, p. 35.
89 Wright, p. 68.
90 Wright, p. 63.
91 Wright, p. 69.
92 Wright, p. 70.
UBC Master of Social Work thesis to be examined in this chapter. Betty Morton begins her 1957 study of the male partner in fifteen marital conflict cases (culled from the files of the Family Welfare Bureau) with a presentation of the normal, healthy marriage, this reflecting Marsh's influence in identifying the ideal.  

A mature marriage adjustment requires that [the husband] must have freed himself of strong childish parental attachments, that his specific sexual drives be directed toward the opposite sex, and that he be able truly to perceive and care about the feelings and needs of his partner.  

Morton concedes that "many people who marry do not meet these requirements, and their marriage cannot be said to be 'mature.'" She provides a telling portrait of a marital conflict case.

The family disequalibrium may be, apparently, due to the disturbed or delinquent behaviour of one of the children, which is the result of the mother's rejection of him. Further exploration may show that the mother's rejection of the child stems from her rejection of her husband, the child's father.  

The causative factor in family distress is the mother. Thus, even in a thesis on marital conflict cases in which the focus is on the male partner, the woman is denounced. The mother poisons all familial relationships.

---

93 Betty Marie Morton, "The psychodynamics and treatment of the male partner in marital conflict cases: an exploratory study based on Family Service Agency Files, Vancouver, 1957," M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1957. The term "mature" is also used to describe normal. The terms "immature," "neurotic," and "disturbed" are used interchangeably with "abnormal."

94 Florence Hollis, Women in Marital Conflict Cases (Family Services Association of America, New York, 1949), as cited in Morton, p. 50.

95 Morton, p. 51.

96 Morton, p. 2.
The case of the C family further substantiates wives' responsibility for reducing marital conflict. Both Mr. and Mrs. C approached the Family Welfare Bureau seeking help for marital problems which they believed were producing the disturbed behaviour of one of their sons. However, the caseworkers accepted that Mr. C was unable to recognize the fact that there was emotional conflict between himself and his wife. Thus, after only three sessions with Mr. C, they turned their gaze on Mrs. C. This approach is seconded by Morton. With the assistance of the caseworker, Mrs. C began to see her own contribution to the conflict situation at home.

Gradually [Mrs. C] was able to speak of her strong feelings of guilt about the marriage, and to relate this to her feeling of anxiety and tenseness which dictated her behaviour at home. She was able to see that her behaviour was such that she often provoked her husband's hostility. She verbalized her wish to be punished.

Again, a husband’s hostility towards his wife is analysed as being due to the woman’s behaviour and also her unconscious wish to be punished based on a past “sin”. In order to stop her husband’s physical acts of aggression, the wife needs first to become aware of her desires and then change her behaviour.

Another case cited by Morton is laden with psychological analysis. Morton believes most immature marriages stem from unmet childhood needs: “All too often, people seek to collect old debts from the marriage partner by seeking to

---

gratify residual childhood needs unmet by the parents." As proof of this claim, Morton presents Mr. and Mrs. N, a married couple exhibiting "poor ego strength." Morton suggests that this insufficiency disabled them in effectively handling their internal emotional stress. They then projected this conflict onto each other.

Mr. N needed a frigid rejecting wife to protect him from his castration anxieties which stemmed from his unresolved fear about his father, and Mrs. N needed an unsuccessful male on whom he could vent the rage she truly felt for her own father.

Mr. N "felt insecure and hostile with everyone" and Mrs. N "saw herself as being at the mercy of a brutal husband." Of interest is the course of action taken by the caseworker: Mr. N was referred to a Vocational Counsellor "for a realistic assessment of his abilities in the area of employment" (his scores were "very high"); Mrs. N was referred to a psychologist and was diagnosed as a possible schizophrenic. Thus although social workers believed the N's marital conflict was, for both spouses, rooted in unmet psychological needs stemming from childhood, only Mrs. N is meant to uncover and deal with these needs with the assistance of a psychologist. The solution for Mr. N was entirely environmental: gainful employment. Psychological analyses as witnessed in the UBC MSW theses provides the male with an excuse for violent acts, and the female with a motive for desiring brutality.

---

98 Morton, p. 51.
99 Morton, p. 86.
100 Morton, p. 86.
101 Morton, p. 86.
102 Morton, p. 86.
The citations in Morton’s thesis further display psychiatric influences. The bibliography contains forty-two references, almost all of which are journal articles. *Journal of Social Casework, Social Casework* and *Marriage and Family Living* compose the majority of the references, with many of the article titles suggesting a psychiatric bent: “Some Specific Techniques of Psychosocial Diagnosis and Treatment in Family Casework”; “Psychiatric Principles in Casework”; “The Psychological Role of the Father in the Family”; “Psychoanalytic Contributions to Casework Treatment of Marital Problems”; “The Family as a Psychological Unit”; and “Application of Psychoanalytic Concepts to Casework Treatment to Marital Problems,” to provide a sample. As well, Morton prefaces her thesis with a five page presentation of Freudian analysis. Such psychiatric understandings undergird the study of social work in this era.

The influence of psychiatry is also reflected in the language in all six relevant theses. Constant references to the “ego” and “id,” and the “oedipal conflict,” recur without explanation as to what is meant by these terms. This omission suggests that the authors believed there was no need to offer an explanation due to the ubiquity of the psychiatric terms. Moreover, in several theses much of the

---

103 Morton, pp. 134-137.
104 Morton, p. 7-11.
105 As a pattern, all of the theses have brief bibliographies. Besides Morton, the most extensive bibliographies are those in the Wharf, Gerrie, and Wright theses, and, like Morton, in all of these the majority of the references are to psychological journals and monographs.
106 For example, in her discussion of the “Treatability and Treatment Methods Used” in marital conflict cases Morton assesses the “ego strength” of each partner in the fifteen cases she analyses. She even provides a chart in which the ego strength is measured (the choice being: poor, limited, or good). See chapter 3, pp. 68-91.
understanding of spouses' inability to form a healthy marriage is often analysed in Freudian language. For example, in another 1957 thesis on the efficacy of the casework approach to marital counselling (the fourth to be examined in detail in this chapter), Brian Wharf highlights six couples who sought assistance for their failing marriage from the Family Welfare Bureau. In analysing a wife's role in the breakdown of her marriage, a caseworker argues:

Mrs. B is a rigid, withholding person with a strong drive toward perfectionism. She has difficulty in expressing her hostility, and has much hostility toward men. She is able to channel her energies fairly constructively into her housework, and seems to care for the children. She provokes her husband into hurting her and then assumes a hurt, martyrish attitude.\(^{107}\)

The caseworker suggests Mrs. B "has strong oedipal conflicts" and she finds significant Mrs. B's comment that "[Mrs. B] liked Mr. B during their courtship because 'he did not touch me'."\(^{108}\) The social worker analyses Mrs. B's sexual frigidity as the root of her personal problems, difficulties she transfers to her husband and family responsibilities. In this thesis the husband who "hurts" her is neither studied through this same psychological lens, nor is he answerable for his violence.

Another example in the Wharf thesis asserts that "clarification of near conscious feelings and motivating attitudes was attempted and proved to be of help to the client."\(^{109}\) The case of Mr. and Mrs. F is illustrative of this. The case was

\(^{107}\) Wharf, p. 24.

\(^{108}\) Wharf, p. 24.

\(^{109}\) Wharf, p. 107.
referred to the Family Welfare Bureau by a clergyman who stated that "there was a twisted emotional situation in the family."\textsuperscript{110} The caseworker also refers to Mr. F's hostility towards his wife, although the nature of the aggression is not plumbed. The F's had four children of their own, and Mrs. F had an "illegitimate" daughter by a previous relationship. Mr. F claimed to be in love with his step-daughter who, although married and pregnant, was living with the family. The caseworker felt that Mr. F had "unconsciously attributed to [his step daughter] all the qualities he felt a good mother should have ... Mr. F was also attracted by [his step daughter's] physical appearance, and he acknowledged this quite openly."\textsuperscript{111} Although the caseworker recorded that "there are some notably sick things beneath the surface of his personality" she uses this as a reason NOT to involve Mr. F too deeply in treatment.\textsuperscript{112} In fact, Mr. F's attraction to his step daughter is completely side-stepped with scant focus on Mr. F at all. Another file is opened on the step daughter, but this has to do with the step daughter's own particular situation and marital difficulties, not her relationship with her step-father. Mr. F is analysed by the caseworker solely in terms of his initial attraction to his wife.

Mr. F was assisted to realize that the resentment caused by his mother's compulsive and masculine behaviour was creating friction between him and his wife, to whom he had been attracted because of his unfulfilled need for motherly affection.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{110} Wharf, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{111} Wharf, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{112} Wharf, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{113} Wharf, p. 24.
According to the caseworker, Mr. F's need for motherly love, denied him in his childhood, was what unconsciously attracted him to his wife-to-be. After marriage, Mrs. F's housekeeping habits ("obsession with cleanliness") closely paralleled his mother's behaviour, thus alienating him from his wife. He then transferred his affections to his step-daughter.

The principal focus in this case is on Mrs. F. "It seemed at first, because of Mr. F's excessive interest in his step-daughter, that he was more in need of treatment than his wife. The opposite proved to be true ...." Mrs. F is urged to recognize the primacy of her husband's needs:

Mrs. F was helped by the caseworker to understand her husband's need for a feminine wife, and she was able to gradually achieve more femininity in her husband's eyes. She bought a new red party dress when her husband announced they would celebrate a wedding anniversary by going out, and was amply rewarded by the praise her husband gave her.

The language of Freud, particularly the linkage of unconscious desires stemming from childhood with sexuality, lays responsibility at women's door.

In a related example of how psychiatry came to dominate family violence work in this era, the author of a 1954 UBC Master of Social Work dissertation on desertion maintains that "personality factors lie at the root of most marriage conflicts." In the fifth thesis examined in detail the author, Catherine Gerrie,

---

114 Wharf, p. 49.
115 Wharf, p. 50.
analysed thirty records of deserted families from Vancouver's Family Welfare Bureau. Her assessment of "neurotic" marriages follows:

Some neurotic marriages were held together by the need for punishment and the desire to punish. The alcoholic marriages closely resembled this pattern and to some extent they are the so-called masochistic-sadistic unions, in which the one partner seems to be seeking punishment and the other one desiring to render it.\textsuperscript{117}

In this case the symbiosis of marital discord is presented – with both the wife and the husband unconsciously seeking a role in the destructive relationship.

To provide an example of this sort of relationship Gerrie highlights the situation of Mr. and Mrs. O. The wife, Mrs. O, first made contact with the Family Welfare Bureau after suffering a beating at the hands of her husband. "Reports indicated that her husband was always drunk, and that on the last occasion, he had beaten her unmercifully and she had left him a week ago."\textsuperscript{118} Yet this is a cautionary tale. Gerrie notes that the wife was "attractive", "well dressed", "sparked as she talked", and was going to "show him."\textsuperscript{119} The caseworker, alert to the need to be aware of the "total situation", interviewed the husband, whose story was rather different.

The husband was contacted with little difficulty, and although at first hostile, he soon relaxed; and when he realized he could tell his side of the story, he seemed to become quite a different person. This was the fourth time his wife had gone off in a tantrum when she could not get her own way. He said that he did drink with the

\textsuperscript{117} Gerrie, p. 61.
\textsuperscript{118} Gerrie, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{119} Gerrie, p. 26.
boys, and at times his wife had carried on in such a way that he had lost his temper and struck her. Subsequent facts revealed that this man was not only a very adequate supporter, but he was very fond of his wife.\textsuperscript{120}

What was, according to Mrs. O, drunken wife abuse, became, according to Mr. O, a legitimate response to female petulance. In the space of one sentence, a man who loses his temper and strikes his wife is transformed into someone who is very fond of his spouse. In this case, obvious and admitted male spousal violence is metamorphosed into a justifiable reply to female incitement. It is the woman who is placed under a moral microscope. Mrs. O is condemned for her good looks and deportment, for "enjoying" (perhaps a little too much) the opportunity to talk of her husband's abusive behaviour. Gerrie reveals that the wife in fact was not in "urgent" need of financial support from the Family Welfare Bureau and that she "was living with friends who were persuading her to go to a lawyer to get financial settlement."\textsuperscript{121} Although Gerrie does not draw attention to considerations of social class, the social worker's description of Mrs. O's clothes, attitudes, and financial situation (her ability to afford a lawyer) suggests that Mrs. O was not seen as "deserving" of financial relief or empathy. In this case, we see that by interpreting all actions of their clients as essentially ethical, social workers were in the business of moral regulation.

In language much the same as that used by Gerrie, a pronounced sadistic-masochistic element is also evident in seven "long-term maladjusted family

\textsuperscript{120} Gerrie, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{121} Gerrie, p. 26.
constellations” assessed in Berthold Marcuse’s 1956 thesis on long-term dependency and maladjustment cases dealt with by the Family Welfare Bureau. This approach is atypical of the UBC MSW theses analysed in this study. The psychiatric analysis in four of the five previous dissertations is solely evident in analyses of the female. Gerrie examines men and women, although the balance is certainly weighted toward women. As the two theses examining unhealthy relationships in terms of both wives and husbands occur later in the period (Gerrie, 1954 and Marcuse, 1956), this may suggest a shift in focus in the dissertation literature, but further research is necessary. Marcuse, author of the sixth and final thesis to receive detailed analysis in this chapter, places husbands and wives together under the microscope. Their relationship is the focus and is treated as a separate entity from the individual wife and husband. The wife’s masochism is fed by the husband’s sadism. The direction of the violence here is meaningful. Males behave in sadistic ways so as to fulfill their wife’s masochistic needs; women do not behave masochistically so as to fulfill their husband’s sadistic tendencies. In this way, the focus and blame is still on women. Marcuse readily admits that information on the wife is far more complete than for the husbands. The reason for this, he believes, is “since in most cases it is the wife who seeks help, casework and other services are directed towards her.” Structural reasons explain the

---

122 Berthold Marcuse, “Long-term dependency and maladjustment cases in a family service agency,” M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1956.
123 Marcuse, p. 99.
unrestrained psychological labeling of the wife and indeed social workers' focus on women.

Marcuse's justification for analysing the entire family unit is because some families as a whole become and remain chronically dependent upon the social welfare offices of a community, draining time, money, and resources from the agencies available to them. Of pertinence to Marcuse's study is that all seven of the males are described as exhibiting sadistic behaviour: "All the men, with the possible exception of Mr. C, beat their wives harshly and frequently." Marcuse's dissertation makes repeated references to male violence against their wives: "Early in this year Mr. A gives his wife a severe beating. This is a frequent occurrence throughout the period;" "Mr. B beats his wife;" "[Mrs. D] complains of her unhappiness in Canada, of their heavy debts and of her husband's abuse of her;" "Mr. E beats his wife frequently - a common pattern being to spank her until she is black and blue. Then Mr. E cries for awhile and the relationship is improved;" "Mrs. F describes a relationship with her husband characterized by frequent quarreling and brutality interspersed with periods when her husband expresses contrition and relations are improved for a while. She is very ambivalent about her feelings towards her husband and despite severe beatings which required police

\[124\] Marcuse, p. 82.  
\[125\] Marcuse, p. 59.  
\[126\] Marcuse, p. 64.  
\[127\] Marcuse, p. 69.  
\[128\] Marcuse, p. 71.
intervention refused to press charges;"[129] and, "[Mrs. G] also complained about her husband beating her up and being punitive towards the children."[130] Thus, abuse occurs and is recognized by observers. However, men’s violence towards their wives is mentioned as part of a larger pattern of husband-wife behaviour – similar to other marital difficulties, such as gynecological problems (often a euphemism for female low sex drive or lack of interest in sex with her husband), or spousal quarrels over financial matters. Domestic violence is not perceived as an issue of independent importance, nor is it viewed as a male problem, but rather a behaviour largely provoked by women. Not only is violence a reaction, it is part of an “aggregate” of problems. Marcuse believes that this composite must be studied as to its causes, both environmental and psychological, so that treatment and ultimately prevention can occur.

Analyses of habitual cases, such as Marcuse’s, fit well with Leonard Marsh’s ambition to research and educate. As Marcuse himself wrote: “Both personality defects (behaviour) and psychosocial factors can be identified and scheduled.”[131] The author’s hope is that once the etiology of maladjustment and dependence is identified, the condition may be “cured.” He makes a direct comparison to medical science.

... medical research has found treatment techniques to prevent chronicity in most diseases which a generation ago or less, usually became chronic, (e.g. tuberculosis,

---

[130] Marcuse, p. 79.
[131] Marcuse, p. 84.
syphilis). In the same way social research may find the techniques whereby maladjustment and dependency may be “cured” in the acute stage – or more hopefully, as in the case of many once common diseases, prevented from ever developing.\textsuperscript{132}

The above passage harkens back to the comparison of social sciences with the pure sciences, and the belief that an uncovering of the facts will lead to the remedy. In this specific case, systematic diagnosis of similarities in the patterns of disturbed emotional and social behaviour exhibited by these longterm multiproblem families, followed by appropriate treatment, will, if identified early, prevent chronicity: “...the importance of accurate, complete and scientifically oriented recording procedures cannot be over-stressed if meaningful research into problems such as that of long-term maladjustment and dependency is to be made possible.”\textsuperscript{133} Similar trust in empirical research is evident in the other theses. For example, in the conclusion to her study of the male partner in marital conflict cases, Morton explains that her study indicates some of the factors which may act as deterrents to the successful casework involvement of the male partner. And then she identifies the stages of effective research: “... there are two stages demanding the accumulation of research material; (a) the measurement of the situation; (b) intensive analysis to explore the causes of improvement or failure.”\textsuperscript{134} Again, we see the “empirical research leads to effective solutions” conviction. Similarly, in lamenting the lack of

\textsuperscript{132} Marcuse, p. 99
\textsuperscript{133} Marcuse, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{134} Morton, p. 133.
evaluation methods suitable for his study on the effectiveness of family casework.

Calnan states:

The need for a yardstick with which to measure the effectiveness of family casework is abundantly clear. The factors of public support for family agencies, of professional devotion and the scientific character of family casework all demand that the process be tested so that it can be practiced with utmost efficiency.  

Research and testing, in short, leads to effective practice. Since the six theses divulge evidence of wife-abuse, then empirical research into social workers' approach to troubled families and the subsequent application of the findings to professional practice, will serve to cure family violence.

A detailed investigation of six select theses shows the profound effects of empiricism and education, psychology and psychiatry on the discipline. That violence was inflicted on women by their spouses is readily acknowledged. However, women were held responsible for this abuse for two reasons: one, failure to accept their feminine selves; and two, women's masochistic desire for punishment. The solutions offered women were grounded in this analysis: embrace their femininity and submit to counselling so as to uncover their unconscious desire for abuse. Significantly, these solutions point to a consensus in attitudes toward the family. In the postwar period family stability was the overarching goal, women's individual happiness was reduced to the question of family survival.

---

139 Calnan, p. 43.
Brief mention has been made of social workers' perception of members of the extended family. Outside interference by members of the extended family was held to exacerbate neurotic marriages; step-mothers were particularly culpable. Mothers-in-law also come under fire.\footnote{Gerrie, pp. 61-62.} For example, in an analysis of a purportedly “disturbed” man, one who was diagnosed as manic-depressive, homosexual, and a depressive, the step-mother receives the blame.

Mr. E was assisted to understand how his hatred of his step-mother and guilt feelings in regard to his mother [who committed suicide after expressing physical anger toward her son, Mr. E] had led to hostile feelings toward women in general, and his wife in particular.\footnote{Gerrie, pp. 61-62.}

Such analysis endorsed the separation of the nuclear family from other kin and looked suspiciously at active extended family networks as “interference.” This attitude reflects a class bias, as most social workers were located in the urban, educated level of the social strata and were accustomed to a loss of kinship ties.\footnote{Gordon, pp. 280-285.}

The comment also indicates a professional bias, as social workers were hostile to any sort of extra-familial (beyond the nuclear unit) hampering with their clients. If families were to be saved by external influences, professionals would do the job. This increasing reliance on professionals fits well with Del Mar’s contention that as notions of individual freedom and privacy became more entrenched in the postwar
period abused women shifted away from their previous reliance on family members and friends.139

This negative attitude towards non-nuclear family member’s involvement in familial disputes is revealed in the Wright dissertation on wives of alcoholics. Mothers-in-law are frequently blamed for their hampering.140 In one detailed case, Mr. B is described by the caseworker as a heavy drinker, leading to the corollary problems of underemployment, incontinence, and verbal and physical abuse against Mrs. B, with an assault charge being laid against him on at least one occasion. Although Mr. B is analysed as a weak and dependent man, both Mrs. B and Mr. B’s mother are held responsible. Mrs. B “totally lacks understanding of her husband and his difficulties,”141 and constantly criticizes and depreciates him. Mrs. B’s father was an alcoholic and Wright argues that she must come to terms with her feelings regarding her father’s alcoholism before she can see her husband as “a real person.”142 For her part, Mr. B’s mother is seen as dominating and interfering, thus causing her son’s dependency. Wright believes the mother resents her son’s movement into an adult sexual relationship and is thus vituperous in her assault on her daughter-in-law. During a family “inquisition” of Mr. and Mrs. B in the kitchen of the mother’s home, the mother called Mrs. B a “chippie” “and stated it was [the daughter-in-law’s] keeping Mr. B at home for reasons of sexual pleasure that made it

139 Del Mar, p. 161.
140 A mother-in-law refers to the wife’s mother-in-law, by definition the husband’s mother.
141 Wright, p. 45.
142 Wright, p. 46.
impossible for him to find and keep work."\textsuperscript{140} Wright suggests Mr. B was "tied to his mother's apron strings."\textsuperscript{144} In this way, both Mr. B's mother and his wife are blamed for Mr. B's dependency, and also indirectly for his violence and abuse. What is fascinating here is that similar to female social workers blaming female victims of violence, female family members (by marriage, not blood) also blame other women. Firmly established in the structure of society, misogyny was the prerogative of both men and women.

This chapter shows that social workers, both in their academic perceptions and in their practice, shifted attention and blame for male violence against their spouses to women. Initially, social workers believed that the fragility of the family was a hangover from the stresses of the war. Yet as problems persisted, even deepened (for example, the divorce rate climbed into the late 1940s), and the Cold War quickly filled the void of World War Two, Canadian social workers realized their role was not simply to provide stop-gap measures of adjustment so as to ensure a return to peacetime lifestyles after wartime disruptions of family life, but rather that family dislocation was a perennial theme of modern postwar family life and that they, as experts, were well positioned to rectify and reinforce the sanctity of the family. Influenced by psychiatric and psychological analysis, and believing that remedies would quickly be brought to light as soon as empirical, objective research was undertaken, Master of Social Work students and the practicing social workers

\textsuperscript{140} Wright, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{144} Wright, p. 40.
they studied earnestly sought to examine and treat maladjusted families, as much to raise their own status as experts, as to improve family life and national security. In their exploration of areas they thought important in causing psychological problems they believed led to marital discord, social workers chose to ignore or minimize the seriousness of wife abuse.
CHAPTER FOUR:
"WOOLRIDGE DRIVEN TO KILL WIFE":
PRESS REPORTS AND DEPICTIONS OF VIOLENCE
IN POSTWAR VANCOUVER TO 1960

On the afternoon of Saturday March 1, 1947, Malcolm Woolridge, a twenty
year old ex-Navy veteran, husband and father, shot to death his wife of three years,
Viola Woolridge, age 22, in a downtown Vancouver boarding house. His guilt was
never disputed. After firing three shots into her body at close range he walked into
the room of a fellow boarder and friend and attempted to call the police. Almost
four months later, on June 28, 1947, Malcolm Woolridge, although found guilty of
manslaughter by a twelve man jury, walked away from court a free man. The sole
condition placed upon his release was a seven year probation.

The case of Malcolm Woolridge was played out in at least two arenas. In the
formal context of the courtroom, a cast of judge, attorneys, and jury determined the
man’s guilt and his fate. Within the boundaries of the judicial system Woolridge
was plainly guilty of murdering his spouse. However, faced with this most extreme
form of violence – murder – these legal players had the responsibility of deciding, on
behalf of the community, how far legitimate force could be extended and still remain
within the parameters of acceptability. In the Woolridge trial, due to the particulars
of the case which were influenced by dominant societal expectations, the charge
against Woolridge was reduced from murder to manslaughter (a homicide
committed “in the heat of passion caused by sudden provocation”).¹ Although he

¹ This definition of manslaughter is from Neil Boyd, The Last Dance: Murder in Canada
was found guilty, his jury of peers "recommended and pleaded" for and received the utmost clemency for the man who murdered his wife.

The second arena in which the case was debated was the court of public opinion. In that theatre, meanings and assumptions regarding Woolridge’s guilt or innocence which went well beyond the legal case itself were explored. The Woolridge case shows that the determination of victim and villain is a complex process in both the legal and public theatres. Social assumptions and values help to determine the ascription of guilt and blame. The eventual reversal in this case of the roles of perpetrator and victim show the extent to which notions of guilt and innocence are socially and historically constructed. This is revealed in the very language and discursive strategies chosen to argue and convey guilt and innocence. The social meanings attached to the Woolridges’ lives were profoundly shaped by prevailing notions of marriage and parenthood in the context of heterosexual, white, middle-class Vancouver. As will be seen, Viola violated the conventional roles of wife and mother, indeed, of womanhood.

The Woolridge case is one of many instances of violence that occurred between 1945 and 1960 in Vancouver. We will never know for certain what prompted Malcolm Woolridge to kill his wife on March 1, 1947, nor are we able to reconstruct the months and years of the Woolridges’ relationship that led to that fateful day. In fact, this is not my intention. Rather, I argue that the texts emanating from the Woolridge murder trial can be read for their revelation of the dominant

narratives in relation to the family in 1947. These narratives served not only to reproduce and regulate social values, but to privilege some values to the exclusion of others. The scripts of the popular media—in this case the newspapers—provide insight into the definition of male and female gender roles, normative (hetero)sexuality, parenthood, and the meaning and shape of propriety and convention. This chapter’s central argument is that “dominant” forms of femininity were constituted out of a set of “negative” forms, ones that appeared in everyday communications—in this case, the newspapers. Echoing Angus McLaren’s study of court and press records to ascertain appropriate male sexual behaviour at the turn-of-the-century, I also argue “that in a certain sense it was easier for society to note the bad examples rather than the exemplars of the [womanly] ideal.” In the press reports Viola Woolridge was publicly presented as a “bad” example of womanhood.

Since the media scripts of the trial reflect certain prescribed social values of the day, it is necessary to contextualize Vancouver and British Columbia in the postwar era. Particular attention will be paid to the growth of the city, a perceived “crime wave,” and the civic government’s attempt to control crime and assuage the citizens’ fears regarding this development. A year of the Vancouver News-Herald is examined as a public text. I study the newspaper’s presentation of violence

---

3 By “scripts” I mean the rhetoric of what was articulated in the newspapers of women’s place in society; this was often at odds with what women were actually doing and saying.


5 By “public text” I am signifying that the newspapers may be read in at least two ways: one), as the public voice of the dominant in the province, in which the newspapers were a vehicle to promote and inculcate desired social norms, and two), as an opportunity to catch momentary glimpses of the continued...
through 1947, as well as the violent acts themselves. I chose 1947 for two reasons: in the postwar growth in actual homicides, 1947 was just prior to this increase reaching a zenith, and simply because an examination of the civic newspapers over the sixteen year period from 1945 to 1960 revealed the Woolridge murder as one of the rather more publicized domestic homicides in which masculine and feminine codes of acceptability are identified. I then wanted to contextualize the Woolridge murder in terms of the climate of violence generally, and violence against women specifically. The ubiquity of violence is demonstrated in the newspapers, as are the circumstances under which violence was judged as morally and/or criminally acceptable. Nineteen forty-seven is significant in that it not only marks the Woolridge murder and trial but also a “shake-up” in the Vancouver Police Department, when new people were catapulted to top levels to “clean-up” corruption in the force. The resulting investigation and assessment of the city’s police force offers insight into just what the problems facing the police department and, by extension, the city’s populace were seen to be. I also explore Canada’s laws regarding homicide between 1945 and 1960, and how debates concerning the reform and application of these laws were played out on the local and provincial level. To conclude, I return to analysing violence against women by way of the Woolridge murder and trial.

Like other urban centres in Canada, Vancouver experienced substantial and consistent population growth in the postwar era. At this time it vied with Winnipeg everyday lives of women, in which family strife, violence, and marital breakdown are revealed as the contours of some women’s lives.
for recognition as Canada’s third largest city, after Montreal and Toronto. In the 1941 census, the population of B. C. ‘s most populous city was 275 thousand, increasing substantially to 345 thousand in 1951 and reaching 385 thousand in 1961.⁶ A large proportion of this population growth consisted of migrants from elsewhere in Canada, predominantly the Prairies: in 1951 32% of British Columbians were born in other Canadian provinces or territories, by 1961 the percentage remained high at 28%.⁷ This consistent westward flow may be attributed to a heavy inward movement of workers and their families attracted by the expansion of wartime shipbuilding and aircraft industries, to an influx of armed forces dependents, to an uninterrupted migration from the prairie provinces, and to postwar demobilization (including British war brides).⁸ Not surprisingly, the population of the entire province also surged: ranked sixth nationally until 1931 when it grew to fifth largest, the province’s population stood in fourth place on the eve of the Second World War, and by war’s end, when the provincial population surpassed one million, British Columbia trailed only Ontario and Quebec.⁹ Provincial sex ratios which, earlier in the century, were heavily weighted towards men, moved steadily

---

⁷ Barman, p. 365.
towards parity in the postwar years so that in 1951 the population stood at 51.4% males and 48.6% females and by 1961 was at 50.7% males and 49.3% females.\textsuperscript{10} These statistics show that in both real and proportional terms there were more women in British Columbia. Clearly, as the numbers of women increased, as marriage rates increased\textsuperscript{11}, so too the likelihood of violence against women in the domestic sphere also increased.

Concomitant with this rapid population growth was an economic boom, shared with the rest of the postwar western world. Sparked by demand for the province’s natural resources during the Second World War, B. C.’s economy rapidly recovered from the economic crisis of the 1930s and experienced expansion and diversification into the 1940s through the 1960s. Demand for the province’s resources, rising foreign investment, the decision of unions to cease to contest unfair labour practices in exchange for steadily rising wages, consumer confidence, and government spending meant anticipation and often realization of “the good life” for many British Columbians, especially Vancouverites. With unprecedented levels of disposable income and widespread suburbanization requiring the purchase of automobiles and allowing for mass consumption, the Vancouver version of the “American Dream” seemed within grasp.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Barman, p. 369.

\textsuperscript{11} See introduction, this thesis.

Paralleling the city’s population and economic surge was a heightened concern over crime in the city. This was partly due, I believe, to the high level of crime reportage in the city’s newspapers. Whether newspapers mirrored or created a perception of increased crime is difficult to determine. Nevertheless, while the newspapers are full of anxiety over increased crime rates, statistics on reported crime suggest otherwise. For example, available figures on assault charges indicate a decline in crime rates as a percentage of the population. Importantly, criminal behavior was seen to threaten the perceived stability of the family, and by extension, the nation. What is of significance is not crime statistics per se, but expressed

---

13 Certainly the police griped about the press’s adverse criticism of them. For example, in 1948 police chief Mulligan complained about what he felt was unfair coverage in the media and the overplaying of minor crime: “... when criticism takes the form of unnecessary prominence given to crime reports in the press, particularly when written up with the obvious intention of discrediting the police administration, it has a far reaching damaging affect on the reputation of the city as a whole.” As quoted in Ian Macdonald and Betty O’Keefe, The Mulligan Affair: Top Cop on the Take (Surrey, B.C.: Heritage House, 1997), p. 34.

14 Statistics on crime in Vancouver are difficult to pinpoint. For example, in the Vancouver City Police Department’s Annual Reports the category of “assault” does not appear until 1956 (assault is broken down to: indecent assault, aggravated assault and assault of police officers). Throughout the six year period, 1955-1960, despite a surge in the city’s population, assault figures remain fairly constant, except for a tremendous increase in aggravated assault in 1957. This means that, relative to the population, assault rates actually decreased overall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>indecent</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggravated</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of police</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 An excellent example of crime commentary is the analysis by the then head of the FBI in the U.S. on the rising problem of juvenile delinquency in the United States. Although the context is American, of significance is its Canadian publication and distribution. The author believes that juvenile crime is a threat to the American nation. The act of printing the article in a Canadian publication implies that Canadians should also be concerned about increasing acts of crime amongst their youth. It also speaks to the importation an American “panic.” J. Edgar Hoover, “Post-War Crime Wave,” Star Weekly, Magazine Section, No. 2 (June 9, 1945), pp. 11-12.
concern and fear over the perception of an increase in criminal acts. The following comment by Chief Constable Mulligan exemplifies this anxiety:

It will be noted from the crime statistics that seven murders were recorded in the city during the year, a total which has only been equated once in the past 10 years. In the absence of a "degree" classification for murder, I should explain that of the seven crimes listed under this heading, one related to a death following an abortion; two were instances where death followed brawls; three were cases involving mothers and children...; and the seventh case was that of a Chinese who murdered his wife and then committed suicide.

The point being made by Mulligan is that these murders were specific and contained within the (immoral) family unit (abortion, infanticide, spousal murder), involved a certain set of people, as in those who engage in brawling (the term "brawl" suggests males and working-class), or were committed by non-whites (Chinese). He assures

---

16 In an article published in 1986, James P. Huzel regrets the lack of historical consideration of crime in Canada. Unfortunately, this still well characterizes the situation, especially for any analysis after the 1930s. See James P. Huzel, "The Incidence of Crime in Vancouver During the Great Depression," *Vancouver Past: Essays in Social History*, pp. 211-248 and Hamar Foster and John McLaren, eds. *Essays in the History of Canadian Law, Volume VI: British Columbia and the Yukon* (University of Toronto Press, 1995), see especially Part II: Vice, Crime and Policing. For an analysis of law, politics and justice in the British Columbia frontier in the nineteenth century, see Louis A. Knafla, ed. *Law & Justice in a New Land: Essays in Western Canadian Legal History* (Toronto: Carswell Company, 1984) esp. pp. 165 - 266. A study of more direct relevance to this thesis is Jon Swainger, "Breaking the Peace: Fictions of the Law-Abiding Peace River Country, 1940-1950," *BC Studies*, 119 (Autumn 1998), pp. 5-25. In this paper Swainger argues that the notion of northeastern British Columbia as an essentially crime free region, one that was held by the residents of the region despite readily available evidence to the contrary, was consistent with the ideals of rural life and the reasoning which first brought the inhabitants of this area to locate in the Peace River region.


18 It is not absolutely clear if the three cases involving women and their children refers to matenal murders, or women and children being killed by another individual, although the language used leads me to believe it is the former.

19 It is unimaginable that the term "brawl" would be used to describe an altercation between men at the prestigious Vancouver Club, for example. Besides being a class-based term, it is also gendered, as women would "squabble" or "bicker", perhaps even get into a "cat-fight", but not "brawl."
his audience that the “average” citizen – morally upstanding, middle-class, “white” – is not threatened by random violence. This presents an interesting picture of just whom the police force is supposed to protect. His statement also reflects the small-town mentality still harboured by much of the citizenry. Rather than being organic to the city (or even part and parcel of city living), crime is construed as an “outside” force. Nevertheless, under Mulligan’s tenure the police department grew considerably from just over 400 in 1947 to 683 by 1953. This growth is only partly explained by the police union’s insistence in 1948 that the work week be reduced to 40 hours. Another explanation is that increased civic policing responded to the perceived postwar “crime wave” threatening Vancouver. Mayor Gerry McGeer (first elected mayor in 1934, a position he held intermittently until his death in office on August 11, 1947), had taken dramatic action to ease the electorate’s concerns.

Not only was there growth in the size of the police force, but the focus of police work shifted as well. In August 1946 a Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB), complete with morality, gambling, and liquor squads, was established by the Vancouver Police Force. The CIB was a first step towards dealing with the perception of the city’s heightened criminal activity. The superintendent of this new branch was Walter Mulligan, a young sergeant of the Vancouver Police

---

21 Macdonald and O’Keefe, p. 36.

21 Certainly fear of crime and rising wealth to pay for civic services led to dramatic growth in police strength. During the 1930s and continuing throughout the war years there were between 1.2 and 1.4 police officers per 1,000 adults in Canada. In 1947, the ratio was 2.4 per 1,000. Morton and Granatstein, p. 207.

22 Macdonald and O’Keefe, p. 28. The authors credit gangs of “Zoot Suiters,” hanging out on downtown street corners, for contributing to the public’s concern with violence.
Department. By early January 1947 Mulligan had risen into a position of complete control of the CIB. On January 27, 1947 in a surprise move Mayor McGeer dismissed the incumbent police chief due to "lack of control over his men" and appointed Mulligan as his replacement. At forty-two years of age he was the youngest police chief to that date in Vancouver's history. Mulligan immediately authorized a slate of top level suspensions and firings, citing "inefficiency and neglect of duty, glaring examples of failure to suppress and prevent crime." As a result of the "astounding lack of law enforcement ... the city has suffered from an enormous influx of underworld characters." Beginning March 18th and lasting for five days the Police Commission held a public hearing in which demands for the reinstatement of some of those fired or suspended on Mulligan's recommendation were heard. The board upheld Mulligan's recommendations, and McGeer had a clean slate with which to attack crime in his city.

Not surprisingly, given Vancouver's position as a port city, most of the crime was presented by the police department as being drug-related and carried out by organized crime factions. Drugs and organized crime were perceived as essentially

---

21 Macdonald and O'Keefe, p. 30.
25 Ironically, in June 1955 an attempted suicide by a detective-sergeant in the Vancouver Police Department set off a seven month inquiry, from mid-1955 through to spring 1956, known as the Tupper Inquiry, in which Police Chief Mulligan and the Vancouver Police Department was exposed as corrupt and "riddled with rot." Mulligan was accused of accepting bribes, and the inquiry exposed a host of evidence of graft, corruption, bootleggers, bookies and even Mulligan's own black-veiled, femme fatale. To escape attention Mulligan fled to the United States in 1955, returning to retirement in Victoria in 1963.
"foreign" to a "British" city. For example, in the 1955 Senate hearings on the drug situation in Canada, Mulligan blamed the "drug crisis" of the previous decade for 60% of the city's "crime wave," claiming that the city's addict population was increasing by approximately 10% a month. By linking the increased (and increasing) crime statistics with Vancouver's position as a port city, Mulligan absolved himself and the Vancouver Police Department of much responsibility.

Violent crimes are often measured by the number of homicides and, judged by this standard, Vancouverites had some cause to be concerned. Homicide statistics for British Columbia reveal an immediate postwar rise, reaching a zenith in 1948, then slackening off until climbing again in the late 1950s (Table 4.1). The homicide rate for Vancouver climbed from 7 in 1945, to 8 in 1946, reaching 11 in both 1947 and 1948. Thus in 1947, Vancouverites would have had a sense of an increase

---

28 Certainly a major influence on the perception of drug trafficking and the attendant crimes and degradation associated with its use is that of Judge Emily Murphy, appointed Police Magistrate for Edmonton in 1916 and thus the first female judge in the British Empire. Murphy undertook a comprehensive study of the drug phenomenon, published as The Black Candle, 1922. In her tome (part of which was serialized in Maclean's magazine), she chronicles the history of non-medical opiate use in Canada and makes recommendations for its control. Most of these recommendations were incorporated in the Opium and Narcotic Drug Act of 1929, which remained in effect until 1961. Due to the general public's ignorance of drug use, her expertise was exaggerated – tainted though it was with anti-Asian racism and Christian morality. She clearly positions drug addicts as the "other" – non-white and non-Christian – who threaten the Anglo-Saxon way of life. "A man or woman who becomes an addict seeks the company of those who use the drug, and avoids those of their own social status. This explains the amazing phenomenon of an educated gentlewoman, reared in a refined atmosphere, consorting with the lowest classes of yellow and black men. ... Under the influence of the drug, the woman loses control of herself; her moral senses are blunted and she becomes a 'victim' in more sense than one." (p. 17) Vancouver is highlighted as a port in which drug trafficking is particularly prevalent, and Murphy details the insidious ways of the traffickers. Due to Murphy's high profile, the wide coverage of The Black Candle and her magazine articles, as well as her blend of statistics and sensationalistic anecdotes, her ideas contributed to Vancouverites' conflation of drug-trafficking and violent crime.

29 Macdonald and O'Keefe, p. 39.

Table 4.1: Homicide Rates for British Columbia, 1945-1960

(Per 100,000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Homicides</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Homicides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in violent crimes, although given the city’s population growth the increase in homicides seems relatively modest.

What type of crime do homicide statistics represent? Most murderers kill a family member or acquaintance. In Canada, between 1961 (when records on homicides began to be systematically recorded) until 1986, approximately 80% of homicides occurred as a result of a social dispute (i.e. a quarrel); in 10% the motive was money; about 5% were committed by people who may be classified as emotionally disturbed; a further 5% can be classified as killings for sex. Neil Boyd, who has to date most fully researched murder in twentieth century Canada, allows that these categories are not watertight and that the percentages in the categories

---

31 Culled from Vital Statistics of the Province of British Columbia, (1945 to 1960), Victoria. As homicide statistics were not uniformly gathered until 1962, any statistics prior to this time rely on the willingness of municipal police forces to report crime statistics to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Although reporting procedures improved from 1920 to 1962, it is generally agreed that any crime statistic prior to 1962 reflects an under-representation of the actual occurrence of crime (including homicide). See Boyd, p. 46.

32 Boyd, p. 17.

33 Boyd, p. 18.
may vary from 5-10% in any given year. Nevertheless, he compiles a composite portrait of the Canadian murderer: "a single unemployed male between the ages of 16 and 40, a man with few economic resources who kills for reasons of 'revenge,' 'jealousy,' 'anger or hatred,' or 'during an argument or quarrel.'" The homicide rate peaked in Canada between 1966 and 1975. Boyd argues this increase was due to two factors: one, a cluster of social changes occurring these same years that included liberalized divorce legislation, easy availability of birth control, women entering the labour force, and easy access to and increased consumption of drugs and alcohol; and two, demographics, changes associated with baby boomers who were in these years reaching young adulthood, the age at which homicide is most commonly committed. Since this time the proportional figures have remained relatively constant, at approximately 2.5 killings per year for every 100,000 Canadians. Shooting and stabbing are responsible for about 80% of all homicides, followed by beating and strangulation. Although Boyd's data reflect the post-1961 period, there are reasonable grounds to assume that the same was true of the 1945 to 1960 period. Indeed, in his research on murderers in British Columbia between

---


35 Boyd, pp. 2-4. Boyd needs to contextualize his portrait of a murderer. For example, he states: "... the murderer of 1988 doesn't seem to have very different motives from the murderer of 1958." (p. 19) Boyd neglects to account for a the fact that the definition of murder is malleable, as is society's understandings of what is normative and non-normative behaviour.

36 Boyd, p. 1

37 Boyd, p. 19.

38 The postwar years did not see a marked increase in the number of reported homicides Canada-wide. The war years witnessed an average of 129 criminal homicides a year, fewer than the average from the previous five peacetime years. In 1945 there were 152 homicides, and 146 both in 1946 and 1947. Morton and Granatstein, p. 207.
1900 and 1923 historian Angus McLaren found that the province’s murder rate was comparable to that of southern Europe and not “exceptionally high” for the time. He also discovered that the overwhelming majority of killers were men and that men also dominated as victims. Murders could thus be characterized as endogamous. “The ‘typical murder’ involved a male (likely drunk) killing an acquaintance, friend, or workmate.” Thus the statistics on homicide and composite portraits of murderers both preceding and following 1945 to 1960 suggest that men were most often the killers and they killed someone they knew. This fits well with the Woolridge case.

As much of the public debate on capital punishment occurred during the post-WWII period, and certainly provides a backdrop for the murder trials under investigation in this chapter, it deserves some discussion here. In the 1945-60 period any person convicted of murder was automatically sentenced to death; the sentencing court had no discretion in this matter. Unless the Governor General, acting on the advice of the Cabinet, commuted the sentence to life imprisonment, the individual would be executed. The maximum penalty for a conviction of manslaughter was life imprisonment. Canadians were, however, increasingly

---

39 McLaren, p. 114. McLaren places homicides at “about 5 per 100,000” in the first two decades of twentieth century British Columbia. This statistic is certainly higher (double) those which Boyd provides as a norm for the post-war period. Regrettably, McLaren does not detail how he arrived at this statistic. Of interest here is that changes in the types of weapons used and improvements in emergency medical care make statistics questionable as a basis for comparison. For example, in urban, post-war Vancouver, increased rates of gun ownership may account for higher rates of fatality, although improved access to emergency medical care may have reduced fatalities. For rural areas, it is generally argued that domestic violence fatalities involving firearms are high as there are more firearms and less emergency medical assistance.

40 McLaren, p. 115.
uncomfortable with the public spectacle of executions. Thus, for most of Canada’s history, hangings occurred within the confines of the jail and the face of the accused was covered on the scaffold.\textsuperscript{41} Beginning in 1914, a series of private member’s bills were introduced in an attempt to amend the \textit{Criminal Code} to abolish capital punishment. Although success was not fully realized until 1976, the government took incremental steps to restrict the application of the law to smaller and smaller categories of behaviour. As well, the number of convicted murderers who received mercy from the federal government in the conversion of their death sentences to prison terms increased considerably. From Confederation until 1953, only a handful of death penalties were commuted, from 1953 to 1957 Louis St. Laurent’s Liberal government commuted the death sentences of 45\% of all convicted murderers. Frank Anderson argues that the publicity surrounding murder cases heightened awareness and increased antipathy toward the death sentence. “[The 1950s were] a decade that saw an unusually large number of dramatic cases flash across the front pages of the newspapers, or blare from car radios, or occupy prime viewing time on the TV networks. It was a period, too, that saw the younger section of the public begin to stage anti-hanging demonstrations.”\textsuperscript{42} From 1958 to 1962, during Conservative John Diefenbaker’s tenure as Prime Minister, over 82\% of all convicted murderers had their sentences commuted.\textsuperscript{43} In the meantime, in an attempt to

\textsuperscript{41} A history of capital punishment written for a popular audience, one filled with many rather prurient examples of murders, executions, and executioners is Frank W. Anderson, \textit{A Concise History of Capital Punishment in Canada} (Calgary: Frontier Publishing, 1973). The author is clear in his support of the abolition of capital punishment.

\textsuperscript{42} Anderson, p. 76.

\textsuperscript{43} These statistics are taken from Boyd, p. 32.
address public clamor for an end to capital punishment, Diefenbaker’s Minister of Justice E. Davie Fulton introduced a bill in May 1961 to amend the Criminal Code so that murder was defined as either capital or non-capital. A conviction of the former resulted in an automatic death sentence; for the latter, a sentence of life imprisonment was attached.\footnote{Fulton’s proposed bill was proclaimed into law on September 1, 1961. See Homicide in Canada: A Statistical Synopsis, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, 1976, Appendix: A Review of the Historical Foundations and Development of the Law of Homicide in Canada, pp. 177-188 and Boyd, pp. 22-45. Prior to 1961 the legal definition of murder was quite fixed. However, during this same pre-1961 time period, society’s interpretations of what constituted forgivable and non-forgivable murder was rather more malleable. Thus, while the legal definition of murder was firm, the judgement was negotiable.}

However, as a matter of policy, Lester B. Pearson’s Liberals (1963-1968) and subsequent governments commuted all capital murder cases until the abolition of the death penalty in 1976. Capital punishment was a hotly debated issue. Newspaper reportage of murder trials in 1947 were portentous as a guilty verdict would render the death penalty. Murder trials were thus closely followed by the reading public, as were most criminal acts, especially those of a violent nature.

A careful reading of the entire 1947 run of Vancouver’s only morning newspaper, the \textit{Vancouver News-Herald},\footnote{The \textit{Vancouver News-Herald} was Vancouver’s only morning daily, and competed with the city’s two afternoon papers, the \textit{Province} and the \textit{Sun}. The \textit{Vancouver News-Herald} was founded in 1933 with 10,000 pre-publication subscribers. It folded in 1957, and the \textit{Province} switched to morning publication. I have been unsuccessful in obtaining circulation statistics for the newspaper.} leaves one with the impression of a city teeming with violence. The \textit{News-Herald} was a tabloid, targeted at a more working-class or populist audience, and seen by journalists as a training ground for newspaper reporters. While it had developed “a reputation for quality,”\footnote{Eric Nicol, \textit{Vancouver} (Toronto: Doubleday, 1970), p. 212.} it
certainly offered a more sensationalist casting of the day’s news. A comparison of Vancouver dailies’ coverage of certain acts of violence, indicated that the News-Herald also offered more extensive reportage – more observation, longer articles, and more extended follow-up. These are my reasons for selecting this newspaper. How does the choice of the News-Herald affect my findings and analysis? One might think that the News Herald’s seeming preoccupation with violence might expand to include domestic violence. In contrast, there is all but absolute silence on the domestic front. This silence confirms my contention that domestic violence was not front page news. It remained a private concern. Rarely and only under precise circumstances did domestic violence become newsworthy. This corresponds with Pleck’s findings that despite the wide reportage of child abuse in the early 1960s, newspapers did not begin to report on wife abuse until 1974.\(^4^\)

The Vancouver News-Herald portrays the city as rife with disorder and spontaneous outbursts of illegal activity. Despite the Vancouver Police Department’s contention that criminal activity was almost exclusively the province of those already ensconced in illegal behaviour, just the opposite is reflected in the newspaper. Front page reports tell of armed bank holdups, safecrackings, lootings, robberies, and assaults. Sometimes these are individual acts, but often they are presented as gang behaviour, “thugs” on a deliberate rampage. Several themes emerge from the newspaper: that the violence affects innocents, the innocents fight back and – in the extensive reportage of the criminal acts themselves, the trial dates

\(^4^\) Pleck, p. 182.
and the outcomes – justice is seen to be done. The public presentation of violence is striking; the violence is experienced collectively, from the acts themselves to the judicial rulings. Everyone is vulnerable; everyone is vigilant. These themes are suggested in the News-Herald’s treatment of random violence, gunfire on the streets and the ubiquity of firearms, armed robbery, resistance to violence, domestic violence and homicide.

In 1947 Constable Mulligan repeatedly explained to Vancouverites that their city was safe and that most violence was associated with the traffic in illegal drugs. In contrast, the random, even erratic nature of violence permeates the newspaper. For example, on the front page of the Tuesday, February 4th edition of the Vancouver News-Herald one headline proclaims “Thugs Slug, Kidnap Vet.” The story details the experience of a veteran who is “held up, robbed, slugged and kidnapped in his own auto, and later thrown from the vehicle by a pair of armed and masked bandits.”48 In March, under the title “Woman Thug,” the newspaper details the “strongarm team of a man and a woman [who] robbed [their victim] of $30 at 2:30 a.m. Sunday in the 300 block Dunlevy.... [the victim] said the man struck him on the jaw and held his arms, while the woman searched his pockets.”49 And, in May, a married couple allege they “were the victims of an ‘unprovoked’ attack ... at 7:50 p.m. Saturday.... [The husband] told police he and his wife were en route to a Davie Street dancehall when the three men stepped from an auto and accosted

49 Vancouver News-Herald, March 10, 1947, p. 3.
That the man was treated in the hospital for facial lacerations indicates the nature and extent of the violence. Violence was more than threatened, it was real. One did not need to have gang "membership" to be a victim of violence. Seemingly respectable couples were attacked, not just lone individuals. The haphazardness of violence is what stands out in these attacks.

As the above examples indicate, the term "thugs" is often invoked in the newspaper reports. Although the exact identity of most thugs is not clearly articulated, the general profile of thugs is male, usually white, and often identified as a veteran. There is an assumption of heterosexuality, although the attacks are not sexual in nature. There is also a certain aimlessness or transiency about these criminals, which suggests something about their class identification. These men appear rootless. Perhaps after returning from the war they have not yet been able to find employment and have "drifted" into a life of crime. Thugs do not fulfill their role as the male provider, the breadwinner, nor as taxpayer. Outside of this one-dimensional script these random figures constitute a threat to the "normal" predictable order.

Not only were citizens vulnerable to random attacks by people presumed to be strangers, but a surprising amount of gun fire was reported in the streets. Three examples describe citizens who, in going about their workaday lives, become in all probability unintended targets of gunfire. In February, a sixty-seven year old woman who was waiting for a streetcar in downtown Vancouver was shot through

---

the leg when a policeman chasing a suspect fired a warning shot. A second warning shot was discharged. Significantly, the “warning shots” were not fired into the air but horizontally at a height of about three feet. “Mrs. Annie Campbell ... is reported in good condition in hospital, suffering from a flesh wound where the bullet tore through her left leg above the knee and grazed the right leg.”

What was the suspect’s crime? “[The two constables] were running after the suspect from a cafe on Granville where he was reported to be begging.” The suspect had asked the cashier for seven cents, while “lounging” near the cash register. It is not too presumptuous to argue that, by any standards, this “crime” hardly warranted gunfire in the streets. The constables reported that “they had been led to believe [the suspect] had a gun, but no weapon was found.”

The next day it is reported that the suspect was convicted for Vagrancy D, begging, and “was sent to jail for three months with hard labor.” The injured woman was still recuperating in the hospital.

In April, a newspaper report covers two incidents of people at home who “miraculously escaped death from wild-flying bullets.” The first occurred in the West End living room of a mother and her young son. “Death in the form of a rifle slug fired through their front room window nearly took the lives at 8 p.m. of [the victims], as [they] sat side by side on the living room sofa in their small, new home

54 Vancouver News-Herald, February 18, 1947, p. 5.
.... The bullet missed [the boy] as he bent forward a split second before the missile pierced [the mother’s] left cheek as she sat reading the paper." A youth was held in connection with the incident; he admitted to using a .22 caliber rifle for target practice in the basement of his home directly behind the victims’ residence. Questions regarding the ownership of the rifle are not posed. On the same evening, a policeman was sitting in his suite in downtown Vancouver "when a bullet smashed through a window behind him, glanced off the back of the chesterfield, a foot from his head, and fell to the floor." Although the officer raced outside in search of the "gunman," no suspect was found.

These three examples of public gunplay beg the question: why such a prevalence of guns? The high degree of newspaper reportage involving firearms lend a sense of normality to guns. The possession of firearms is reported as a piece of a larger story involving gunplay, but the visibility of guns in and of itself is not deemed worthy of mention. This raises questions about access to guns – did gun ownership increase in the postwar years? Anecdotal reports tell us of veterans who brought their unlicensed weapons home from war as souvenirs. Many veterans’ homes, and those of families in and from a rural background, were repositories of firearms. What was the impact of war on society’s acceptance of these weapons as part of their lives? Certainly the war increased familiarity with guns. In a newspaper piece on Vancouver vital statistics, it is reported that “[f]irearms were

responsible for five accidental deaths in November [1946] of last year compared
with two during the same month of 1945. This suggests the increased use of
firearms.

The newspaper language regarding guns suggests a casualness of gun
ownership. Noticeable is that possession of guns, unless they were illegally
obtained, does not warrant comment. For instance, a front page article in the
February 17th edition of the News-Herald describes two police raids resulting in the
breakup of a gang and the arrest of four individuals. In the raid, the police
uncovered a cache of weapons, including twenty-four automatic pistols from the
New Westminster Armory stolen the month previous. What is significant,
according to the report, is that the discovery of the weapons solves a previous crime.
The fact that the firearms had been stolen and were at-large and that society might
want to question why they had been stolen or at least breathe a sigh of relief that the
weapons were recovered does not receive comment.

The connection between knowledge of weaponry and service in the Armed
Forces during World War II is made explicit in a short report and accompanying
photos of three individuals who pleaded guilty to a charge of robbery with violence
of a garage attendant. "To their plea they turned to crime because they were 'broke'
Magistrate H. S. Wood commented they apparently had means to acquire guns.
Two of the men served in the Canadian army." The next week finds an article on a

60 Vancouver News-Herald, May 9, 1947, p. 5.
man who admitted to using a toy gun in a five dollar holdup "as an easy way to get some money."\textsuperscript{61} The accused, who served overseas with the Seaforth Highlanders, is presented sympathetically. In justifying his relatively light sentence of one year in jail, the judge says, "A long term would ruin his life altogether."\textsuperscript{62} The fact that the suspect pretended to have a lethal weapon so as to effect a robbery, is not treated as a serious breach of public order. Finally, an article which indicates the normalcy of guns in the home narrates the tragedy of a ten year old who accidentally killed his older brother with a rifle he thought was unloaded. "A 12-year-old boy was accidentally killed in the kitchen of a Lulu Island home at 6:30 a.m. Sunday by a bullet from a .22 caliber rifle in the hands of a younger brother. ... A bullet was apparently left in the breech of the gun when [the father] removed the magazine clip Saturday night and thought the rifle was empty, police reported."\textsuperscript{63} What is fascinating here is that which is absent. There is no mention of an investigation as to why the gun was available to the boys, no further report of a charge of negligence laid against the parents, and certainly the fact that a child was playing with a gun is not presented as extraordinary.

Armed robbery of public establishments, typically banks and stores, constitutes the most frequently reported type of criminal activity detailed in the


\textsuperscript{62} Vancouver News-Herald, May 15, 1947, p. 7. This is one of the few articles in which the accused in presented in a compassionate light. This is reflected in the title "Toy Gun Bandit 'Not Really Bad' Gets 1-Yr. Term" and in the content, as testimony from the brother of the accused is presented: "He started drinking when mother passed away, and that started the trouble. He is not married but is going steady with a girl."

Vancouver News-Herald. Two aspects to armed robbery need to be noted: first, the prevalence of the crime; and second, resistance, largely in the form of females refusing to accede to the gunmen's demands. In one of the last issues of 1947, the News-Herald provides a front page synopsis of the weekend crime sheet. It begins: "Police officers and bandits 'took to their guns' over the weekend as the city chalked up a post-Christmas outbreak of crime and violence." In detailing the weekend "crime wave" two separate shootings are highlighted: "Police fired a fusillade of shots at two fleeing burglars whom they interrupted looting a Point Grey theatre box-office, and two bandits armed with 'large revolvers' snapped five shots at a Victoria Drive confectionary store proprietor, missing him by inches after robbing him of $55." The article includes a photo a smiling constable, gun in hand, with the caption "Constable D. L. McLeod . . . peppered prowlers." Police use of guns was applauded as a legitimate and appropriate response to this type of crime.

Not all armed robbery met with success. "Within stepping distance of a rush hour shopping crowd, a lone armed thug was foiled in a daring attempt to hold up two women cashiers in the information office of a downtown department store at 4:15 p.m. Tuesday." The would-be bandit thrust a note under a wicket to one of the women. It read: "This is a holdup. If you value your life don't give any alarm. Put money in envelope, all of it. Count to 90 before hollering. 2 cops were killed for less & I'm in the mood." When she glanced up at the man he threatened her with a gun

---

and said, "I'll count to three, then shoot." The woman ducked beneath the counter while the other cashier ran for assistance. The man then vanished. Although the threat to shoot was very clear – in the presence of a gun, in the note, and in the man's own words – the women did not follow his commands. They challenged him, and he faltered.

In a less successful but still defiant "battle" with a "vicious gunman," a "middle aged" woman cashier at a downtown hotel tells her story: "I struggled with him," she said, "but he pushed me aside and took the money." When the "thug" first approached her wicket and demanded money, the "plucky" woman replied: "Don't be silly." The man then pulled a gun and he and the cashier grappled through the wicket opening, despite her plea: "If you had a mother would you treat her this way?" The assailant scooped up $5.39 in cash and the cashier ran into another room to telephone the police. At press time, the police were still searching for the "Granville Gunman." Again, notwithstanding the threat of a weapon, the woman physically and aggressively (as well as verbally – appealing to him through her identity as a mother) resisted the thief's attempts to make a getaway with a relatively small amount of cash belonging to the company. In other words, not even her own money or personal property was at stake. Perhaps, however, this is the missing clue; the reason why these working women were so aggressively dauntless was precisely because their job was at stake. Fear of losing their job motivated their aggressive responses. Another possible interpretation is

---

that the focus on the women was a newspaper device to emphasize the breakdown of law and order such that respectable women had to fight back. These women are portrayed as champions of a society in distress. Remarkable here is the actual reportage of women's resistance. We are provided with two portraits of female citizens refusing to give in to crime, and actively chasing armed gunmen down the street. This does not fit with the postwar ideal of docile "feminine" behavior. However, the women's actions, coupled with the gunplay in the streets and the normalization of crime as seen through the newspapers, indicate that it was not solely women who fought back, but all members of society. Perhaps this was a legacy of the war – the entire society, when under threat, was given permission, even expected, to fight back. This was the mentality that was nurtured during the Second World War and it persisted at a civic level after war's end.

Crime in the public sphere is not the only form of violence reported in the newspapers. Readers also witness domestic violence. Although certainly not as numerous or given as high a profile (in terms of the placement of the articles in the newspaper or the length of the articles) as more public criminal acts, a handful of husbands' attacks on their wives or assaults on their children are reported. Of note is the public dimension to these private assaults. For example, in January, the newspaper recounts an incident where a man was charged with assault causing grievous bodily harm and sentenced to nine months in jail after brutally attacking

---

his wife, three year old son and an elderly neighbour who tried to assist the child.  

"He was arrested in a beer parlour one hour after the assault and police found bloodstains on his shirt." His beaten wife told the judge that her husband's trouble was "just drink." Again we see the invocation of alcoholism as a manly activity. Even though the beaten wife suggests alcohol caused her spouse's brutality, this is not perceived as a problem. Male drinking is both a legitimate male activity and a fair rationalization for assault. Neither the drinking nor the assault was questioned. Rather these behaviors are perceived as part of acceptable male culture. In another incident the next month, a man and woman were taken to hospital after what police described as "a family quarrel." Apparently the woman stabbed her husband twice in the upper left arm with a butcher knife and a tussle followed when her husband tried to seize the knife, leaving her with a gash on the back of her head and bruises. "[The woman] was found bleeding from the head and face in the doorway of a bakery shop about two blocks from her home, police reported." The couple were treated in the hospital and later discharged. No charges were laid.

Of significance in the preceding two examples is that, although both involved domestic disputes, they entered the public sphere. The first entered the public domain through the involvement of a neighbour and also because the assailant was found sitting in a beer parlour with blood on his shirt, and in the second incident the woman was found in the doorway of a bakery. If the public presentations had not

---


occurred the incidents would most likely not have been reported. In still another public display of domestic abuse a husband was charged with abducting his wife. Earlier in the year the couple were married in Tacoma, Washington, yet three days after the marriage the woman, a nineteen year old "East Indian girl," returned to her family. According to the woman, annulment proceedings had been commenced. However, the husband, with the assistance of a friend, accosted her on a public street while visiting Victoria, pinned her arms behind her, pushed her into a car, and drove up island as far as Duncan (some 100 kilometers), where all three were apprehended by police. The husband and friend were charged with unlawful assault and unlawful assault with intent to unlawfully and forcibly imprison their victim. The newspaper provides no further information on the outcome of the trial. The significance of this example is that it again indicates a public exposition of marital difficulties, hence its press coverage. The fact that the article highlights a racialized couple also bears significance. Given the dearth of newspaper reportage on strained marital relations it is significant that this couple is not white. To report and analyse this couple's public display of marital tension and breakdown does not threaten the dominant society's moral order.

---

70 This is congruent with much recent literature of wife abuse in which the extent to which the abuse has a public face has a direct correlation to the incidence of the involvement of public agencies such as the police. See, for example, Mariana Valverde, Linda McLeod and Kirsten Johnson, eds. Wife Assault and the Criminal Justice System: Issues and Policies (University of Toronto, 1995), introduction.


72 The husband was Indo-Canadian; the friend's race is unidentified.
Reports of domestic violence that are entirely contained within the private sphere are few, and are in fact difficult to discern. One rare example occurs in a brief piece on the third page of the News-Herald in a report that a husband’s assault of his wife (which resulted in “extensive facial injuries” such that hospitalization was required) ended with a one hundred dollar fine or the option of spending two months in jail.\(^\text{73}\) How charges came to be laid against the abuser are not accounted for. There are a host of plausible explanations: the wife called the police, the hospital staff where she was treated brought the police into the dispute, or family or friends were called. It is also entirely possible that the dispute occurred in a public venue but the readers are not informed. Thus, determining whether this incident is an exception to the typical circumstances in which domestic violence is reported is not possible.

A handful of violent acts (such as the Woolridge murder) resulted in a charge of homicide. Although not all eight homicides are individually pertinent here, collectively they tell much about public attitudes toward violent crime. The newspapers present a different image of the safety of the city streets than that posited by the Chief of Police, but press and trial coverage of murders very much situate this crime in the domain of the “other” – that is, non-white, non-middle-class, or those who are morally weak. Both the trials and the rulings received much public discussion, providing further evidence of the pervasiveness of violence.

\(^{73}\) *Vancouver News-Herald*, August 23, 1947, p. 3.
Receiving especially detailed coverage was the Lost Lagoon murder, in which a 27 year old married woman (she had been estranged from her husband for five months but reconciled two months previous) was found murdered by strangulation in Lost Lagoon in June. An “unnatural” sex act had been committed upon her body. She is described as having being “slight,” “sensitive” and “quiet.” A co-worker (they were both employed at a local bakery) was charged with the murder, and was found guilty of manslaughter for which he received a sentence of 12 years in jail. The murderer is described as a diminutive man, five feet tall and weighing little more than a hundred pounds. Although both Johnson, the convicted murderer, and Burton, his victim, were married (although not to each other), the trial reveals that after arranging to meet in a beer parlour on a Saturday afternoon with another couple, they later went to Stanley Park where they “necked.” Johnson left before Burton at 2:45 a.m. Although the morality of the two is not explicitly questioned, clearly the behaviour reported in the newspapers is morally unacceptable: the depiction of drinking, especially in the public space of a beer parlour, and of sexual contact, not only outside the parameters of marriage, but adulterously. The trial generated substantial public interest, apparently amongst women particularly. “The courtroom was packed ... to its utmost capacity. Many women were present.”

Pruriency aside, this murder was of interest, because it highlighted women’s

vulnerability and the danger which might overtake them if they transgressed moral
codes. It served to remind them of their permissible roles. How many spectators at
the trial felt that in murder the woman received her due? The narrative of trial
certainly confirmed the public perception that ill befalls “bad” girls. Similarly, in
Johnson’s conviction and sentencing, the murderer was seen to be treated justly.

Another murder, one with limited coverage in the Vancouver News-Herald
in 1947, involved a domestic dispute. In the province’s capital, Victoria, a well-
known and prosperous businessman was found fatally stabbed and his wife
unconscious from knife wounds in the throat. His wife (there was some uncertainty
as to whether legally she was his wife) was charged with his murder while
recovering in the hospital.79 She was later found not fit to stand trial due to a
“paranoid condition.” Psychologists determined that as her actions placed her
outside of the norms of acceptable female behaviour, she was not held accountable
for the fatal slaying of her spouse. The violent female was equated with insanity.

The most sensationalistic murder trial of the year involved Harry Medos, 22,
and William Henderson, 17, charged with the killing of two on-duty police officers
on February 27. In an attempt to foil a bank robbery the police officers met death in
a “wild gun battle” in the Great Northern Railway yards on Vancouver’s east side.80
One of the would-be robbers’ accomplices was shot and killed by a police bullet. The
civic funeral of the officers and the subsequent trial of Medos and Henderson served

to highlight crime in the city. As fate would have it, the incident occurred concurrently with McGeer’s civic electoral victory, won on the promise of cleaning up crime, and Mulligan’s appointment as Acting Chief of Police. Reportage of the trial and editorials on crime vie for attention. Medos was found guilty and hanged October 1, 1947 and Henderson, although found guilty and sentenced to death, received a stay of execution and a subsequent prison sentence, mainly due to his youth and the fact that he willingly unarmed himself prior to the shoot-out. In Henderson’s more lenient treatment evidence of the presentation of youth, conflated with, if not innocence, then an impressionable personality, saved his life. In this way, we see parallels with the Woolridge case. Both men are essentially weak and easily dominated. However, Woolridge proved his manliness in slaying his “unnatural” wife, whereas Medos wisely backed away from armed confrontation with the forces of masculine authority.

Press coverage of another four murders illustrates the deviant or “otherness” aspect of the crime. All four involve non-whites. The News-Herald highlights their racial/ethnic identities. This points to the ethnocentrism of the papers and echoes earlier comments made by the Chief of Police that crime is committed by non-white, non-middle-class – in a word, “non-normative” – individuals.

Davis Houston, 28, an “Indian,” was tried three times for the death of Beatrice Smith, a cook in the Belize Inlet (near Powell River) logging camp where Houston worked. Reportage concerns the legal and logistical aspects of the trial.

---

The first trial resulted in a hung jury; the second in his conviction; and the third was a Supreme Court appeal (based on an alleged signed confession of his father), which the appellant lost. Houston was hanged for his crime on October 1, 1947. Much was made of the suspect’s aboriginal identity as an explanation for his crime.

A highly publicized public slaying in Vancouver was that of Sydney Petrie, a bank manager who died in a successful attempt to abort a bank robbery. The assassin fled without money; Petrie paid with his life. The police connected eye witness reports with recently escaped convict, Walter Pavlukoff, a 33-year-old Doukhobor. Although a massive policeman and detective search for the ex-con was mounted, it came up empty-handed. The 1947 newspapers are replete with coverage of the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor sect in which stories of arson and polygamy abound. In the autumn of 1947 a Royal Commission into the activities of the Doukhobors was launched; this, too, received extensive coverage. Reportage of the hunt to find Pavlukoff make much of his Doukhobor identity, thereby emphasizing his “otherness.” Of course, occurring on the heels of Igor Gouzenko’s defection with documents proving a Soviet espionage network in Canada, accounts of Pavlukoff’s crime served not only to position him as “other,” but as a potential “enemy.”

83 Vancouver News-Herald, March 20, 1947, p. 3.
84 Vancouver News-Herald, June 16, 1947, p. 3.
In the third and fourth murders analysed the victims were Chinese Canadians. In late February in Victoria, a Canadian born 36-year-old Chinese vegetable peddler was "brutally beaten and robbed." The case received a high profile in the press due to its political implications. "Chinese leaders in Victoria said they are discussing the idea of sending a protest to the Chinese consul-general in Ottawa condemning the lack of protection afforded Chinese in Victoria." One Chinese Canadian spokesman is quoted as saying: "We are being beaten and pushed around and no one pays any attention to us because we are Chinese." The police commissioner's response was to promise to take a "personal interest" in this case. This particular incident was not resolved in 1947. Another murder (due to severe beating) of a Chinese Canadian named Harry Woo, age 52, this time in Vancouver in June of 1947, was followed the next day with the arrest of John Kneller, a 26-year-old truck driver, and Elinor Eva Boucher, his 21-year-old common-law wife. The press reports repeatedly call attention to Kneller's and Boucher's non-Anglo-Saxon working-class identity, as well as their immoral cohabitation. Despite counter charges that Woo entered their room and made sexual advances upon Boucher whilst her husband was in the bathroom, both Boucher and Kneller were found guilty of manslaughter. Again, this example points to the

---

89 *Vancouver News-Herald*, February 22, 1947, p. 1. It is interesting that the Chinese community in British Columbia appealed to officials in China for support. This underlines the argument that the police did not protect non-whites.
foreignness of aberrant behaviour, in which criminal activity is, literally, the play of "foreigners," not middle-class Anglo-Saxon Canadians.

An analysis of the murders covered in the press reports of the Vancouver News-Herald in 1947 indicates that homicides, at least for this year, were not as centered on males as McLaren and Boyd would have us believe. Of the eight incidents of murder only the double murder of the police officers and one other solely involves males. The rest include females, typically as victims, but twice as murderers, although in one instance the female murderer was deemed insane and in the other she is co-accomplice to a male. In one case the identity of the murderer was not solved. In total, out of eight murders five involve women. Whether or not this represents an anomaly is impossible to determine without further research.

The above analysis of newspaper coverage of murder trials in 1947 reveals that murderers were portrayed as deviants in more than the legal sense. This took a number of forms: insanity, "alienness", youth, weakness, and immorality. Significant here is that the newspaper both depict deviance, through the profile of murderers, and its antithesis, conventionality, through the articulation of just who is not represented. In this way, insanity suggests sanity, "alien" implies ethnocentrism, youth hints at wisdom, weakness insinuates strength, and immorality connotes morality. Moral judgement is imbedded in the portraits of the murderers.

This chapter concludes, as it began, with the Woolridge case. Viola May Godfrey and Malcolm Woolridge met at a dance in Edmonton, Alberta in 1943. After dating for eight or nine months they married when she became pregnant.
Malcolm was seventeen years old, Viola was nineteen. After three months of married life Malcolm joined the navy in 1944. Although originally stationed on the Atlantic Coast, Malcolm was transferred to the Pacific Coast, at which time Viola moved to Vancouver with Butch, their young son. Between 1944 and 1947 they apparently separated several times. They cared for Butch intermittently. In his first year of life, Butch alternated between living with his grandparents in Alberta and boarding out for seven months in Vancouver to a Mrs. Wells, who was under the impression that Viola was referred by the Children’s Aid Society due to marriage breakdown. After the war, Malcolm worked as a bundle staver at a local cooperage. Viola, who had been in the wartime armed services, found employment at a cleaning establishment. The only mention of kin are Malcolm’s, who lived in Edmonton and who joined him during the trial and sentencing. His mother testified in court. Although the trial testimony indicates that Viola’s parents cared for Butch as a baby, there is no other reference to them.

On the day preceding the murder, Malcolm and Viola had arranged to meet at 10:30 p.m.; the plan was to go dancing in celebration of their third wedding anniversary. Malcolm waited for Viola, but she did not return home until the next morning at 5:30 am. A lengthy and violent row ensued. When Viola refused to disclose her whereabouts, Malcolm slapped her across the face, injuring her to the extent that she sought assistance from a neighbour for a bleeding nose. Her neighbour testified that Viola “rolled up her sleeves – she was wearing a red sweater

---

91 It is not clarified if this was the Army, the Navy or the Air Force.
and said, 'I'm going up and throw him out.' When she returned to their room 10 minutes later, their quarrel resumed, culminating in a struggle during which Malcolm pulled out a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson revolver from his coat pocket—a gun he later claimed he 'found' on the street the previous day—and shot her three times at a range of 6 to 12 inches. All three shots struck her: one lodged in her heart, a second passed completely through her body, just below the throat, and the third grazed her forehead. She died instantly. The time between Viola’s return to the room and her death was a matter of minutes.

Coverage of the Woolridge trial is examined in four British Columbia newspapers (Vancouver News-Herald, Vancouver Daily Province, Vancouver Sun, and Victoria Colonist). The newspapers differ in the depth of reportage, but converge with respect to rhetoric and evaluation. All perceive Viola Woolridge as transgressing acceptable notions of motherhood and womanhood and accounts are steeped in the language of judgment. Viola is condemned by the media, while Malcolm is exonerated. The reportage can be read in several ways: the subject matter, the style of writing, and the expository structure.

The press reports appeal to the readers’ emotions, and we are persuaded to feel sympathetic toward Malcolm, horrified by Viola. A simple listing of descriptive adjectives illustrate this. Malcolm is a "frail, small, slight, trembling youth;" he is

---

93 The fact that Woolridge found the gun in a brown paper bag on the street the day previous to his murder of his wife is never questioned in the newspaper reports, and was presumably accepted as probable at the trial. This reinforces my argument about the availability and acceptance of firearms in this era.
94 The Vancouver Sun, March 6, 1947, p. 9.
"mild-mannered, pale, haggard, and nervous" and commonly referred to as a "boy." By contrast, Viola is "muscular, stocky and heavy ... well-developed and well nourished." She is an "untidy and resentful housewife" and "dirty." Viola is "nagging" and "quarrelsome"; while Malcolm is "subdued."

This simplistic characterization is reinforced by several stories replayed in the newspapers. To prove Viola's intimidating size and strength, as well as her "very violent temper," one of the witnesses relates a story of a quarrel between the Woolridges at a local dance. "She was a very heavy woman compared to Mac," he said. "She was about twice his size." "Once at a dance she got annoyed at him and literally threw him down the stairs. She followed him down to the first landing. The ticket taker stopped her."

The dichotomous presentation of Viola's muscular frame vis-à-vis Malcolm's slight and frail physique becomes the justification of self defense: Malcolm had to use a gun to literally stop Viola in her attack of him as, on

---


56 The Vancouver Daily Province, May 26, 1947, p. 1. Angus McLaren argues that the journalists', judges' and jury members' choice of nouns denotes class identities. For example, "boy" or "youth" is used in reference to a middle-class twenty-year-old male, whereas a working-class male of the same age is a "man." (p. 127) This is not the case in the trial coverage and judge's references to the accused in the Woolridge trial, where Woolridge, occupationally a member of the working class, is always called a "boy" or "youth." Perhaps the urban, middle-class judges and journalists of the province were swayed by Woolridge's self-presentation as victim or their reference to his young age speaks to their own mature years. Alternatively, as McLaren's sources derive from an earlier time period, perhaps the meaning of the terms had shifted by the postwar period.


58 The Vancouver Daily Province, March 6, 1947, p. 2.

59 The Vancouver News-Herald, May 22, 1947, p. 5.

80 The Vancouver Sun, March 18, 1947, p. 1.

81 The Vancouver Sun, May 23, 1947, p. 2.
a purely physical level, he was unable to defend himself against her.\footnote{102} Male violence is permissible, even expected, but female violence is aberrant and intolerable.

To damn Viola further, she is portrayed as an uncaring mother. First, she allowed her son to be boarded out, sufficient proof in and of itself of her maternal failure. "The child was boarded out because she didn’t want to look after him,"\footnote{103} ascertains a witness. We are also told that just days before her death, when informed by Mrs. Well’s, Butch’s caregiver, that young Butch had an eye infection, Viola did not have sufficient concern to tell Malcolm and, when he did find out and asked her to go with him to take Butch to the hospital, she apparently retorted: "I don’t give a damn what you do with him."\footnote{104} Also, Mrs. Wells testified that when she first received Butch, he "had a mastoid and was in ‘a very run down condition’."\footnote{105} By contrast, Malcolm shows his depth of concern by the oft-related act of, while waiting for the police to arrive immediately after the shooting, writing a letter to his "Mum" in Edmonton, asking her to "please come and care for my little boy."\footnote{106} What is not addressed is the testimony of James W. Buchkan, Viola’s date on the night before she was murdered. He said he left her at 5 a.m. on March 1 at

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{102} Although the media makes no direct association with Viola’s wartime enlistment with the armed forces, certainly the masculization of women was a wartime concern and carried over into the immediate postwar years. The fear was that women would lose their deference toward men and become "bossy." See Ruth Roach Pierson, "They’re Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), Chapter 4.
\footnote{103} The Vancouver Province, March 18, 1947, p. 2.
\footnote{104} The Vancouver News-Herald, May 26, 1947, p. 1
\footnote{105} The Vancouver News-Herald, May 23, 1947, p. 16.
\footnote{106} The Vancouver Sun, March 6, 1947, p. 9.
\end{footnotes}
the corner of Georgia and Hornby Streets, less than a block from her home, because "she was separated from her husband, and if neighbours saw her and Buchkan together, it might spoil her chance of getting custody of her baby."\textsuperscript{107} Such testimony suggests that Viola wanted her child and weakens the caricature of her as a "neglectful" mother, but the evidence was 'tainted' because of its association with apparent infidelity.

In a provocative analysis of violent women, more specifically, society's seeming inability to acknowledge aggression in women, Patricia Pearson argues that women who harm their children are essentially no longer considered by society to be women. Motherhood is culturally understood and celebrated as instinctive. To exist outside of this cultural form is to challenge the transcendent sentiment of a unique, innate, mother-child bond. Maternal instinct is so ingrained in our cultural beliefs that most people assume there is scientific "evidence" and that it is "natural", that women instinctively bond with babies and young children in a manner that is inherent to the female sex. "Mothers are strong, long-suffering, altruistic and resourceful. Mothers are never callous; they are not indifferent."\textsuperscript{108} To contravene this cultural script, as did Viola, would deny women's special status as nurturant.

Not only is Viola a poor mother, she also refused to fulfill her wifely duties. A witness testifies: "Mac [Woolridge] was the one who kept the house . . . . When he came home from work there was no supper for him, only a pile of dirty dishes.

\textsuperscript{107} The Vancouver News-Herald, May 22, 1947, p. 5.
When he asked where his supper was, she told him, 'If you want your supper you’ll have to get it yourself!'

Angus McLaren argues elsewhere that in the courts' careful scrutiny of the character of both the accused and the victim, the man’s morality was often judged by his attitude towards work. A bad worker, it was assumed, was a bad man, whereas a good worker, was a good man. The application of this notion weighed against Viola. The witnesses were constantly asked to comment on the work ethic of the victim. In judging her against dominant forms of femininity, namely her wifely and motherly roles, she was a bad worker. From this characterization, the jump to "bad woman" was very short indeed. It almost goes without saying that Malcolm was portrayed as a hard working man, intent on supporting his family.

In another example, Malcolm is asked by the judge to recount the swear words Viola commonly hurled at him. "When asked what names she called him, he told the Judge 'she swore often.' 'What was swearing?' asked Mr. Justice A. M. Manson. 'Very foul words, sir,' replied the accused. 'I don't like to repeat them.' 'Boy, you are on trial for your life,' encouraged the justice. 'Don't mince matters. Don't worry about it. Be frank with us.'" The impression is that Malcolm is so polite, so pure, that he has great difficulty uttering a swear word even when requested by a court of law. He refused to slander her. Later, Judge Manson told the jury: "It is highly to the credit that this boy would not slander his wife. Even to

---

109 The Vancouver Province, March 18, 1947, p. 2.
110 McLaren, pp. 121-127.
111 The Vancouver Sun, May 23, 1947, p. 1.
the hour of her death, it seems, he was still in love with her, though why he should
be, I do not know.” While on the stand during the trial, Woolridge “is on the verge
of collapse as he sobs out evidence.” These examples show that normative gender
roles are reversed: Malcolm is infantalized, while Viola is presented as callous and
domineering.

Evidence to support this characterization of Malcolm-the-good and Viola-the-
bad is provided by the neighbours, Stanley and Geraldine Lowe, clearly positioned
as the experts in this narrative. In fact, they are the chief witnesses in the trial and
the main witnesses referred to in the newspaper scripts. “The slain woman was
described by witnesses as bad-tempered, neglectful of her two-year old son, and
interested in other men.” Stanley Lowe characterizes Viola Woolridge as “a
woman with a violent temper and had ‘frequently’ fought with her husband.” He
describes an argument between the Woolridges during which “he had seen Mrs.
Woolridge ‘get so mad she stamped her feet and screamed and swore’. “She ...
always antagonized Mac,” testified Lowe. “He was very quiet but his wife was
quarrelsome. She drove him to do it.” The function of the Lowes is that they
become emblematic of the larger society. They are simultaneously the proponents
and judges of normativity.

Viola is presented as morally suspect. Much is made of her supposed relations with other men. Witnesses testify to her entertaining other men in the Woolridge’s home. “She (the dead woman) had other men in her room when her husband was out and went out with other men.”\footnote{The Vancouver News-Herald, March 6, 1947, p. 1. Brackets in original.} The reason offered for her failure to meet Malcolm to celebrate their wedding anniversary on what became the night before her death was her rendezvous with another man. As well, Viola apparently had a letter-writing relationship with a man imprisoned in Oakalla, the provincial penitentiary. In fact, it was Malcolm’s reading of a letter sent by this man to Viola – “couched in language suggestive of an improper relationship”\footnote{The Vancouver News-Herald, June 28, 1947, p. 1.} – that set off the fatal argument. She had clearly transgressed accepted moral codes for females in the postwar era.

Malcolm, on the other hand, is presented as frail and susceptible vis-à-vis a strong, large, sexual woman. At a time when concern over national security was paramount, effete, weak-willed men were seen as vulnerable, dangerous and intolerable. In the act of killing Viola, Malcolm is seen to abandon his weakness as he defends the patriarchal family and, by extension, the very foundations of the Canadian nation. To fail to do so would be a sign of weakness, perhaps even deviancy. Malcolm’s recourse to violence, so we are told by the press and the courts, was a legitimate means by which to defend his reputation. Violence was thus legitimized as a “normal” masculine response. This normalization resonates

\footnote{The Vancouver News-Herald, March 6, 1947, p. 1. Brackets in original.}
\footnote{The Vancouver News-Herald, June 28, 1947, p. 1.}
with McLaren’s analysis of the conditions upon which murder was viewed as a legitimate, “manly” act.

The accused who measured up to the model of the hard-working individual who tried to avoid violence and fought fairly when he had no other recourse, even if he had caused a death, stood a good chance of walking away from court a free man. His chances were further improved if it could be successfully argued that his adversary’s actions had threatened the accused’s very “manhood.”

Viola’s aggressive non-feminine personality and her physical size overwhelmed Malcolm and threatened his manhood. Still, the court’s narrative of their ill-fated marriage was that in the face of her betrayal he persevered, trying to create a stable family environment by being a hardworking husband and a caring father. Within this context, Malcolm’s killing of Viola was accepted.

Del Mar agrees with McLaren’s analysis that under certain conditions male violence towards women was normalized. He persuasively argues that in the postwar period Oregonian men increasingly acted violently as a means for male re-assertion against what was seen as a loss of paternal authority, both in the workplace and, significantly, at home. He points to popular culture as a site where images emphasized the opposite nature of idealized masculinity and femininity. Cartoons from the early fifties commonly featured wives who were much larger and more aggressive than their husbands. Del Mar reads these cartoons as expressions

---

120 McLaren, p. 124.

of men’s fears of women’s equality and even superiority over men. As female potency grew, male dominance inevitably waned. As male supremacy became ideologically vulnerable, men asserted their mastery in fantasies and in actual acts of violence.\(^\text{122}\) This served to normalize and sanction male violence against women.

Defence lawyers argued that Viola provoked Malcolm into an argument, attacked him, and, in self-defense, he shot her. In Justice Manson’s judgment, in which he calls for the release of Malcolm Woolridge, he brings into focus the charge against Viola:

> Upon the evidence, the jury doubtless found that after a preliminary quarrel, she returned to your room with the avowed intention of throwing you out, and it would seem clear that when she had you down on the floor, she a much bigger woman than you a man, that you had resort to a revolver which you had found by sheer accident the night before while walking the streets as you did for hours looking for her. Your shooting, I am satisfied, was entirely unpremeditated, and was shooting by a man who had, for the time being, lost control of himself. The provocation was very clear.\(^\text{123}\)

Justice Manson further argues that Woolridge has suffered enough: “The memory of your harrowing experience so far as you are concerned will be with you a long, long time. That will be your punishment.”\(^\text{124}\) He advises Woolridge to “forget the past.”\(^\text{125}\)

\(^{122}\) Del Mar, pp. 143-144.  
\(^{123}\) The Vancouver News Herald, June 28, 1947, pp. 1-2.  
\(^{124}\) The Vancouver Sun, June 28, 1947, p. 2.  
\(^{125}\) The Vancouver News Herald, June 28, 1947, p. 2.
Throughout the Woolridge trial the innocent character of Malcolm Woolridge remained intact. Indeed, the man who could have been branded a cold-blooded murderer is rehabilitated and redeemed as an honourable, hardworking family man. This stands in sharp contrast to the weak Hees and Sevigny who are branded for life. Viola, in contraposition to Malcolm, is judged and condemned because she did not appear to fit the only mold available to her - that of a virtuous, self-sacrificing wife and mother. Mirrored in the newspaper reportage of the trial are the anxieties surrounding the narrow definitions of appropriate gender/female behavior. These anxieties are framed by the context of the times. In this case it appears that the criminal was not so much defined by what he did, but by what she was. In the judicial and public courtrooms, Viola was the one on trial, not Malcolm.

An analysis of Vancouver press reports in the 1945 to 1960 Cold War Era reveals two themes: the omnipresence of public violence, and the belief that violence against women was permissible if women betrayed acceptable moral behaviour, especially in terms of their sexuality. On a local level, we see a plethora of violent acts. Vancouverites lived on a day-to-day basis surrounded by press reports depicting violence. At times, this violence affected them directly, but most often it was understood to be the purview of others - deviants, both moral and legal. Just when and in what ways violence was cast as a criminal act (rather than part-and-parcel of everyday life) had much to do with prescribed social assumptions and values, those held by the dominant society. A detailed analysis of the Woolridge murder serves to remind us that in certain situations “criminal” acts may be construed as an attempt to re-assert “normalcy.” Aggressive, large, and most
importantly, sexually unconstrained women menaced the sanctity of the two parent heterosexual family and, by extension, the nation cradling the family. In this way, the killing of such immoral outcasts was not only accepted, but applauded.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Example 1: An article in a popular women’s magazine written by a well-known and respected social worker profiles a troubled marriage in which the husband is emotionally and physically abusive towards his wife. The wife is advised to “adjust” to her husband’s personality. The author contends that in order to preserve her marriage the wife must accommodate herself to her spouse’s shortcomings.¹

Example 2: The author of a Master of Social Work dissertation describes a caseworker’s account of an alcoholic male who beats his wife and forces her to have sexual relations with him. The husband’s violence is perceived as an effect rather than a cause of the couple’s marital discord. The woman is blamed for the faltering marriage and is advised by the caseworker to analyse her subconscious reasons for desiring physical abuse. She is urged to “accept her femininity.”²

Example 3: A man kills his wife and readily admits to it. In the press reports of the court trial in which the husband is charged with murder, the dead woman is reviled as a neglectful wife and uncaring mother. Arguing that the wife’s unnatural and unfeminine behaviour provoked her husband to kill her, the defendant is found

² Wright, “Casework with the wives of alcoholics,” M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1954, pp. 66-68.
“not guilty” by a jury of his peers and is absolved of responsibility for his wife’s death.³

These three examples, although culled from very different sources, point to remarkably similar conclusions. Due to the demands of Cold War times women were expected to conform to a particular dominant model of womanhood. Canadians sought an idealized vision of home and family that domesticated and subordinated women. This model entrenched and consolidated the dominance of white, middle-class, heterosexual and patriarchal values. To transgress this singular, idealized model was to risk loss of social respect. A strong, enduring family was of primary importance to Canadians as they collectively wrestled with adapting to the modern postwar world. New problems and challenges faced the country. In an effort to keep Canada strong and to help Canadians cope with these changes, the country’s citizens were constantly reminded of their duty to their nation. And this duty was best played out in the home where, based upon gendered assumptions, each family member was expected to take her or his share of responsibility for the safety of the nation and its populace.

This dissertation reveals that domestic ideals shaped responses to family violence in the 1945 to 1960 period in English speaking Canada. The family was seen to be under threat. Whether real or fearfully imagined, concern over such troubles as marriage breakdown, divorce, crime, and women’s paid employment pointed to the need to shore up the family and also animated a more general anxiety

³ The Vancouver Daily Province, The Vancouver News-Herald, and The Vancouver Sun, March and May, 1947.
over the threat of communism and atomic annihilation. The family was the country’s most basic social institution. For women to admit to uncalled for male violence within the home was to reveal a crack in the country’s foundation. Tolerance of such a fissure was unbearable, so the reality of family violence was either hidden or individualized and pathologized according to prevalent psychological understandings that placed the blame squarely on women’s shoulders.

As a social history this dissertation tells us much about family life in postwar English Canada. In Cold War times a particular model of marriage and the family was created which placed certain obligations on men and women. Women were assumed to, naturally, want to be dutiful wives and mothers. To fail to live up to these standards, or to openly flaunt them, as Viola Woolridge was accused of doing, was to leave oneself vulnerable to moral censure and to be regarded as just the opposite of ideal: deviant. Women were encouraged to be dependent on the family for their own happiness. They were tethered to it because of their children and because it was their duty to make the home a place of affection. Due to this obligation, women were encouraged to cover up and take responsibility for male violence against them. Women who did not conform to this silencing of family violence, women who did not ensure their home was a happy and secure haven, were reminded of their commitment to their husband, their family, and their nation. Women were condemned and pathologized for their husband’s cruelty, as in the examples of social workers who viewed battered women as masochistically desiring punishment. There was a conflation between the articulation of the supposedly normal and that which was socially ideal in Cold War English Canada. Marriage
breakdown was not normal. It had to be avoided at all costs and it was a wife's duty to ensure that such did not occur. In this way, a husband's violence was seen as an effect, not a cause of marital breakdown. Male brutality in the home was almost always analysed as a response to his wife's actions, namely that she was not fulfilling her prescribed wifely roles.

As constructions of femininity and masculinity must be understood in relation to each other, the feminine ideal held certain implications for men. This thesis furthers our understanding of legitimate masculine behavior in postwar English Canada. Male violence towards wives was acceptable, almost condoned, as an aspect of true manhood, of true masculinity. Male violence took many forms, the most severe being homicide. Violence was justified as a means of admonishing women who did not conform to their prescribed roles, such as Malcolm's killing of Viola Woolridge. Male violence, if it brought women in line with normal, sanctioned standards of female behaviour or punished those women who could not be persuaded, was accepted and, in fact, approved. Family violence was often masked and also justified by drink, which was of course acceptable as part of true manhood. Many descriptions of male violence, from social workers' case reports to popular magazine articles, cavalierly and unproblematically mention alcohol as a constituent part of everyday male life.

The alternative masculine model, much to be feared, was the weak man. The weak man could not be exposed within either the professional world or the popular press, both of which were concerned with protecting men and, through men, the family. The weak man was vulnerable to strong women. Potentially unable to
control his wife, and susceptible to the lure of femmes fatales, the weak man was an intolerable threat to the family and the nation’s security. 4

In addition to providing a glimpse into the significance of the construction of gender in postwar society, this thesis tells us much about the process of social scientific professionalization. The deconstruction of the narratives around family violence reveals how social power is commanded and exercised by certain individuals and groups within society. In this thesis, we witness a host of experts – psychologists and social workers, for example – propounding the contours of family normalcy and, in so doing, determining the character of normal, and thus legitimate, family life in the postwar years. The experts imposed certain standards of behaviour and pathologized certain attitudes and practices. That this knowledge was the purview of mainly male, certainly white, and implicitly middle-class professionals situated the definition of normal within the realm of these experts’ privileged identities, their values and priorities, rather than those of ordinary Canadians. Scientific knowledge, exclusive to these authorities, legitimated their professionalization and power. That women were often handmaidens to this empiricism and were sometimes experts themselves, does not diminish the masculine cast to the authoritative expositions. Accessible media such as popular

---

4 As Veronica Strong-Boag so convincingly argues, both first- and second-wave anti-feminists blame feminism for masculine weakness. When women fail to fulfill their “natural” roles, men fall into a “brutish” state. See her “Independent Women, Problematic Man: First- and Second-Wave Anti-Feminism in Canada from Goldwin Smith to Betty Steele,” Histoire sociale / Social History XXXIX, 57 (Mai-May 1996): 1-22.
magazines and newspapers, served to disseminate and popularize the understandings of these experts.

Further, this study raises an important methodological point in that it reminds scholars of the importance of listening to silence. In the three sources studied, the magazines, dissertations, and newspapers, there is little direct mention of wife abuse. Much can be made of this silence. What does it mean? Rather than indicating an absence of abuse, the silence suggests a need to re-think and modify our investigation. Domestic violence is assumed, it is masked, it is stifled, it is inferred. It is not called domestic violence. It exists in the margins of the discourse of divorce, in understandings of alcoholism, in experts' advice on marriage saving, in Canadians' concern about crime and increasing rates of homicide, and in the articulation of appropriate male and female roles and the importance of the family to the nation.

The legacy of the silencing of family violence in postwar Canada continues to shape the lives of many Canadians. Some women, such as Viola Woolridge, were forever silenced for their sins. Others were ostracized for their inability or refusal to fit the dominant model. Men, too, suffered under the constraints of these ideological straightjackets, but in ways very different from women, as men wielded more social power than women. Certainly in their everyday lives woman and men undoubtedly broke out of or did not subscribe to these dominant principles. Still, they were censored or judged according to these white, middle-class and implicitly heterosexual ideals.
The ways in which postwar women and men interacted with these ideals in their everyday lives needs further study. An understanding of how battered women and abusive men negotiated these scripts of normalcy would also prove useful. These are exciting and essential avenues for future research. In the interim, this thesis provides important groundwork. It alerts us to the ways in which family violence was manipulated so women were blamed for their violent husbands and, at the same time, encouraged to accept their femininity and surrender their individual needs to those of their family and nation.

It is useful, by way of conclusion, to contrast historical material with the contemporary analyses of domestic violence. It is essential to examine family violence studies since the 1960s in light of the women’s movement and other anti-oppression crusades, such as the student movement, the native rights movement and civil rights campaigns. Combined, these campaigns challenged family norms in different ways, raising critical questions about “the sanctity of family privacy, the privileged position of the male head of the family, and the importance of family togetherness at all costs.”\(^5\) Besides offering a challenge to previously accepted familial norms, violence, both public (military, cultural, and political) and private (wife beating, child abuse, and incest) were brought into the open and critiqued. In this way, the ideology of separate public and private spheres was challenged. In questioning the division of public and private, social movements also cast doubt on the authority of professionals to define and cure social problems. Increasingly, self-

\(^5\) Gordon, p. 25.
help organizations for victims of family violence (including transition houses for battered women and their children as well as women's health collectives), which sought to give battered women a voice and to value the experience of women, competed with academics and professionals for hegemony.\(^6\) The incidence of family violence reported to authorities has grown dramatically throughout Canada.\(^7\)

Although this has led to a public perception that family violence is on the increase, the heightened numbers are due to a constellation of factors, principally 1983 reforms to the Criminal Code ending spousal immunity from charges of sexual assault and by the enactment of laws requiring both professionals and ordinary citizens to report abusive behaviour, as well as higher arrest and conviction rates and an increased degree of enforcement. Whether there is actually more abuse and violence than in the past remains under dispute, however.

---

\(^6\) As a comment about feminists studying family violence and advocating for female victims of male violence, an interesting book by Gillian A. Walker, *Family Violence and the Women's Movement: The Conceptual Politics of Struggle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) looks at the transformation of feminist organizing against male violence and gender inequality as it enters into the terrain of official discourse. She argues that in the very process of constructing our social concerns to bureaucratic ruling institutions we present them as 'issues', uprooted from the social relations organizing the problems of male violence for women in the home. Thus, men's social power in families is not being challenged and transformed; only their 'abuse' of this power is challenged when it goes too far. Although feminists cannot completely abandon 'issue' politics, Walker cautions that we need to become much more aware of how we name 'issues and how we participate in the construction of 'social problems.' And finally, Walker argues that women must resist the government's attempts to fragment, de-politicize, and professionalize feminists; for example, she indicates that some women's movement representatives come to be professionalized as experts speaking for and about battered women.

\(^7\) Recent figures indicate that one in ten women in Canada is psychologically, physically, or sexually abused by her husband, a number thought to be conservative by those who work directly with battered women. See Maureen Baker, *Canadian Family Policies: Cross-National Comparisons* (University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 249-254.
Definitions of family violence have significantly broadened over the past few decades. As well, scholars have increasingly sought to acknowledge differences in women's experiences, cultures and histories in their understandings of violence.\(^8\) Accompanying this widening of the scope of violence has been a broadening of the disciplines in the academic community in which violence is now studied. Whereas violence was previously the province mainly of social work, psychology and sociology, today violence is studied in many fields, among them criminology, law, history, women's studies, education, and literature.\(^9\) No longer are women viewed as being responsible for violence. Today many scholars tend to view male violence as one, among many, manifestations of the power imbalance between men and women.

The vision articulated by scholars of family violence since 1960 is complex, multilayered, conflictual, divisive, and non-linear. There are three main lenses through which violence against women has been conceptualized, though these are not necessarily discrete: the psychological lens, the sociological lens, and the feminist lens.\(^10\) Although I will briefly outline the distinctions among these different

---

\(^8\) See, for example, Dianne L. Martin and Janet E. Mosher, "Unkept Promises: Experiences of Immigrant Women With the Neo-Criminalization of Wife Abuse." *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1995: pp. 2-44.

\(^9\) The number of dissertations explicitly on family violence has grown incrementally over the past few decades, so that in the early 1990s close to a hundred English language Canadian university based theses focused on this subject every year.

\(^10\) In my research on contemporary approaches to family violence, the "post-structural" lens has not been articulated as a distinct category, although elements of what may be defined as a post-structural approach lace current conceptions of family violence. An example of a current survey of family violence in which post-structuralism is absent from the discussion of theoretical perspectives is, Ann Duffy and Julianne Momirov, *Family Violence: A Canadian Introduction* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1997).
camps, contemporary scholarship on family violence at times defies clean categorizations. These categories are by definition somewhat artificial. Although the different approaches are highly critical of one another, they are not always antithetical. And certainly some scholars might claim residency in two or all three of the categories, such as feminist sociologists who examine psychiatric discourses.

Similar to the “blame the victim” view that predominated in the post-war era through to the 1960s, the psychological lens focuses on the individual and emphasizes the psychology of the victim. An example of this perspective as it has emerged in the last few decades has been the theory of “learned helplessness.” This theory espouses that women remain in abusive relationships because they become conditioned to tolerate the abuse as a result of persistent and intermittent reinforcement from the abuser. The focus is still on the victim; women are queried as to why they stay in abusive relationships, men are not asked why they hit women. As well, in its identification of women as victims, the psychological perspective constitutes women as a population for experts to treat, rather than advocate for or empower. This individualization – the premise that problems are

---

11 An example of a contemporary approach to understanding and treating violence against women that bridges psychology and feminism is “therapeutic feminism.” This form of feminism includes codependency, “learned helplessness” and “women who love too much.” Because of its focus on the individual, I locate therapeutic feminism in the psychological lens. For a discussion of this type of approach see Jill Sandell, “Adjusting to Oppression: The Rise of Therapeutic Feminism in the United States,” in N. B. Maglin and D. Perry, eds. “Bad Girls” / “Good Girls”: Women, Sex, and Power in the Nineties (New Brunswick, N. J.” Rutgers University Press, 1996, pp. 21-35.

12 This position has been most aggressively articulated by Lenore Walker, The Battered Woman (1979) and The Battered Woman Syndrome (1984). This theory has also found strong support in the popular psychology literature, such as Women Who Love Too Much, a self-help book in which women are told that simply by being more assertive they will be able to resist abuse.
caused by individual pathology – leads to support of such educational programs such as assertiveness training, which may negate both the context within which violence occurs and larger societal forces of which violence is a symptom. While useful in understanding the dynamics of abuse and in helping to identify and support abused women, such analyses do not directly or necessarily contribute to understanding the causes, prevention, or eradication of family violence.

The sociological lens (this category as I have defined it does not include feminist sociologists) is that which informs most contemporary research on violence. This approach tends to be gender-neutral, to treat power inequalities as only one factor among many, and to attribute violence as resulting from external stress and breakdown of the family, rather than as a part of most "normally" functioning families. The sociological perspective of Murray Straus and Richard Gelles has been profoundly influential on current understandings of violence against women. Echoing Leonard Marsh’s belief in empiricism, scholars in the Straus and Gelles school believe that factors that give rise to violence can be seen as variables and hence may be studied empirically, using the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS). The CTS ranks violent acts on a continuum from least to most severe, treats male and female acts equally, and makes no allowance for the power context within which violence

---

13 An early influential work is M. Straus, R. Gelles and S. Steinmetz, Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1975); a more recent work that develops the same themes and also uses the controversial CTS scale is M. Straus and R. Gelles, Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence in 8,145 Families (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1990).
occurs. This is problematic for some scholars. As Linda Gordon and Wini Breines argue:

The CTS assumes that all violent acts are comparable and can be ranked; that violence can be ordered linearly; and, implicitly, that any pushing, hitting, or throwing is worse than any amount of verbal or emotional expression, no matter what pain the latter inflicts.14

Many researchers and scholars would argue that the context necessary for evaluation of violent actions make the data too complex for quantification. This criticism has been leveled against scholars employing the CTS or like measurement tools since the late 1950s.

Feminists, who may also be psychologists or sociologists, or belong to a host of other disciplines, link gender and power to an understanding of violence.15 Not surprisingly, scholars who view violence through the feminist lens have not been a homogenous force. Approaches to feminist inquiry have changed over time, and several varieties of feminism flourish concurrently.16 Yet, they do hold certain

16 There has been substantial discussion amongst feminists over terminology. Feminists tend to highlight the fact that the vast majority of victims are women with men as perpetrators and argue that the term “family violence” is misleading as it implies that violent behaviour is evenly distributed among family members. A term that indicates that violence in the family is gendered and has much to do with power relations is desired, yet precisely what language to replace “family violence” with has proven problematic. Some feminists prefer “woman battering,” “woman abuse,” or “femicide.” “Wife abuse” is seen by some as denoting heterosexism or locked in to the concept of marriage. However, others argue that “woman abuse” doesn’t necessarily explicate that abuse usually occurs within the private domain of the family, and suggest that “wife abuse” is a more realistic term.
beliefs in common: that violence and sexuality are socially constructed in ways that serve the interests of patriarchy, and that male domination exists as a systemic set of structures, not merely as a recognition of sexist attitudes or bad behaviour among individual men. Effective solutions, therefore, need to rectify oppressive power relations. In this way, although initially some feminists lobbied for woman-centred services such as transition houses and shelters for battered women, today there is a school of thought that argues that as these services are dependent upon public assistance for survival, this constitutes co-option by the state, resulting in nothing more than band-aid solutions that support the status quo rather than challenging the social order that creates violence against women in the first place.17

Feminist scholars have pushed the boundaries of what constitutes violence to include such issues as lesbian battering and the sexual abuse and assault of disabled individuals. Still, some scholars argue that feminist analyses that view violence as a deeply gendered tactic of coercive control are too simplistic and must take into account other variables beyond patriarchy, such as classism and racism, to develop a more complex conceptualization of violence as a socio-political phenomenon of epidemic proportions in our society today.18

New issues and questions have become central to understandings of women and family violence. By providing a historical analysis of the discursive

18 For example, see Claudia Bernard “Shifting the Margins: Black Feminist Perspectives on Discourses of Mothers in Child Sex Abuse Cases,” in Radford et al., Women, Violence and Strategies for Action, pp. 103-119.
constructions of family violence in postwar modern English-speaking Canada, it is my hope this thesis will alert us to the ways in which family violence has been and continues to be manipulated in such a manner as to draw attention away from the sufferers of domestic abuse and, in some cases, even to blame them as the architects of their own misfortunes.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Bissell, Muriel Dorothea. "Group intervention in family relationships as exemplified by the Children's Aid Society of Guelph and Wellington County." M.A., University of Toronto, 1938.


Canadian Forum. All issues between January 1945 and December 1960.

Canadian Welfare. All issues between January 1945 and December 1960.


Chatelaine. All issues between January 1945 and December 1960.


Clayden, Florence V. “The Social Service Division of the Department of Veterans’ Affairs: Its origin, setting and functions.” M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1950.


Dalhousie Review. All issues between January 1945 and December 1960.


King, Herman Lewis. “A study of 400 juvenile delinquent recidivists convicted in the province of Alberta during the years 1920-1930.” M.A., University of Alberta, 1932.


Leslie, B.S. "A social analysis of juvenile delinquents." M.A., University of Toronto, 1929.


Maclean's Magazine. All issues between January 1945 and December 1960.

Marcuse, Berthold. "Long-term dependency and maladjustment cases in a family service agency." M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1956.


McKenzie, Bruce M. "The care of an aged and disabled group in a veterans' hospital." M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1950.


*Queen’s Quarterly*. All issues between January 1945 and December 1960.


Royal Commission on Publications. 1961.


Saturday Night. All issues between January 1945 and December 1960.


Star Weekly. All issues between January 1945 and December 1960.


Tuckey, Elizabeth Ursula Townsend. “Family influences on child protection cases at the point of apprehension and in later foster care.” M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1958.

*University of Toronto Quarterly*. All issues between January 1945 and December 1960.


Vancouver City Police Department. *Annual Reports*. All reports from 1945 to 1960.


Wright, Gordon Richard. “Casework with the wives of alcoholics.” M.S.W., University of British Columbia, 1954.


Wright, Mary E. “The psychological aspects of the causes of juvenile delinquency.” M.A., University of Western Ontario, 1933.

APPENDIX ONE:
THESES INVOLVING VIOLENCE, M.S.W., UBC, 1945 to 1960

1948

Calnan, Wilfred Michael
The effectiveness of family casework; an evaluation of the case
work treatment of family relationship problems by the Family
Welfare Bureau of British Columbia.

1949

Woodward, Mary T.
Juvenile delinquency among Indian girls.

1950

Mozzanini, John S.
The Juvenile Detention Home, Vancouver.

Singleton, Genevieve
The Child Welfare Division (British Columbia): the history and
development of administration under the Provincial Protection
Act, 1901-1949.

1951

Campbell, Doreen Evelyn
Decisions of removal or retention in child neglect cases; an analysis of
the reasons for decision in the case of 20 disturbed children known
to family and children's agencies in Vancouver.

1952

Johnson, Helen L.
The development of the public child welfare program in
Saskatchewan.

1954

Dorosh, Andrew
Trends in apprehension policies.
Gerrie, Catherine Lorraine
Welfare aspects of desertion; a casework evaluation of the effects of desertion on family life, based on a sample group of cases from public and private agencies.

Smyser, Martha
Protective services for children.

Wright, Gordon Richard
Casework with the wives of alcoholics; a study of 18 cases drawn from the files of a family agency.

1955

Matison, Sonja Constance
Child neglect situation; a comparative case analysis of two neglect cases from Vancouver agencies.

1956

Marcuse, Berthold
Long-term dependency and maladjustment cases in a family service agency.

1957

Morton, Betty M.
The psychodynamics and treatment of the male partner in marital conflict cases.

Wright, Mildred M.
Social and family backgrounds as an aspect of recidivism among juvenile delinquents.

1958

Tuckey, Elizabeth U.
Family influences on child protection cases at the point of apprehension and in later foster care.
APPENDIX TWO:
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK THESES BY SUBJECT AREA
1947 - 1956

A. Public Welfare
   1. General Program 3
   2. Social Assistance 5
   3. Medical Services 9

B. Social Security 2

C. Child Welfare
   1. Child Protection Legislation 5
   2. Children's Aid Societies 8
   3. Foster Homes and Children 9
   4. Institutions 4
   5. Adoptions 5

D. Family Welfare
   1. Family Service Agencies 6
   2. Desertion, Unmarried Mothers 5

E. Welfare and Advisory Services 4

F. Services for the Aged 5

G. Other Special-Category Legislation or Services
   1. Veterans 1
   2. Immigrants 2

H. Physical Illness, Handicaps
   1. Children 7
   2. Adults 12
   3. Hospital Social Service Departments 2
I. Mental Illness
   1. Children 2
   2. Mental Health Services for Children 5
   3. Adults 11
18

J. Delinquency, Corrections, Penal Institutions
   1. Juveniles, Adolescents 8

K. Employment, Vocation Training 3

L. Housing, Community Planning 5

M. Schools 5

N. Adult or Parent Education 2

O. Recreation, Leisure-Time Services
   1. Program Development Survey 7
   2. Community Centre 5
12

P. Community Organization
   1. Social Legislation 1
   2. Social Action, Association
      for Community Development 6
   3. Community Councils, Chests 3
   4. Inter-Agency Relations 4
14

Q. Administration
   1. General Policy, Structure 3
   2. Intake, Diagnostic Screening 4
   3. Personnel 3
   4. Services 2
12

R. Social Work (Method) Analysis
   1. Family, Generic Settings 5
   2. Child and Parental Guidance Set-Ups 7
   3. Medical, Psychiatric Set-Ups 4
   4. Group Work 1
   5. Corrections 1
18
S. Social Work Training and Education 3
T. International 3

TOTAL 189