

Domestic Violence. Falsification of Statistics.

Knocked for six: the myth of a nation of wife-batterers

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Whatever he might have done, OJ Simpson is not Everyman. Whatever she may have suffered, Nicole Simpson was not Everywoman. As the trial goes on, we must expect to be told repeatedly, by domestic violence lobbyists and professional feminists, that OJ's crazed possessiveness, demented rages and alleged murderous violence symbolise and personify domestic relations between men and women.

Campaigners have already been filmed outside the court claiming that: "All women are at risk: all women are unprotected." They do not seem to care that one of OJ's two alleged victims was a man. We should be wary of these voices and their cant, for they promote one of the central fictions of our age.

Men, in general, are not violent; women, in general, are not victims. The allegations against OJ Simpson are no more typical of the behaviour of men in our time than the allegations against the mother of Rikki Neave typify women. It is now possible, for the first time, to show clearly that the phenomenon of domestic violence has been egregiously misrepresented and ludicrously exaggerated. We have all been had. Domestic violence against women has been one of the few points of social consensus in the past 25 years, agreed from left to right by feminist criminologists and journalists, agony aunts, police officers and Home Office ministers. They have all decided that women who reported violence to the police were "the tip of the iceberg".

Evidence for the existence of domestic violence as a broad phenomenon has always been profoundly shaky. **Before 1993, records were not routinely kept by British police forces of complaints about or recorded incidents of domestic violence.** The true extent of "wife battering" was, therefore, an open field for speculation, guesswork and statistical jiggery-pokery. Those most interested in the subject were ideological and media feminists, feminist criminologists, professional workers in the women's refuge business and the police. They all had much to gain from amplification of the problem. The more the public and the political establishment could be persuaded to believe that lots of men bashed their women, the more money the professionals would earn or receive.

How they jiggery-pokered. How they speculated and guessed. Throughout the past 25 years, as many figures for domestic violence have been published as there are numbers in the national lottery. None of the figures was small. All appeared to confirm the existence of a vast and menacing problem.

Figures for London may be taken as general examples. In 1990, a spokesman on domestic violence for the Metropolitan police told one of the authors of this article that it received "about 25,000 calls

a year" reporting incidents of domestic violence. That would represent 1.44% of all women in London living with a partner. Therefore, one woman in every 70 living with a man in London would be reporting domestic violence to the police. That figure, said the man from the Met, was "an extrapolation for London as a whole drawn from research in specific areas".

The research upon which the Met depended was conducted by a feminist criminologist, **Dr Susan SM Edwards**. The figure she had actually given, in The London Policing Study, was more than double the number supplied by the Met.

She wrote: "The number of women who officially reported violence to the police in the Metropolitan police district alone in one year was estimated at 58,000." That figure would represent 3.35% of

women living with a partner, or one woman in every 30 a disturbing proportion.

Not disturbing enough, though, for Sandra Horley, director of the Chiswick Family Refuge and one of Britain's leading experts on domestic violence.

According to Horley, even that terrible number of 58,000 was an immense understatement. In a letter to The Independent in 1990, she wrote: "The Metropolitan police receives approximately 100,000 calls a year from women who are trying to escape male violence."

This would represent 5.8% of women living with partners in London, or one woman in 17: an appalling number, representing a sickening general incidence of violence. Miles took Horley's figure even further. In her respectfully reviewed book, *The Rites of Man*, published in 1991, she wrote: "In the London area alone, more than **100,000 women a year** need hospital treatment after violence in the home."

This, truly, is a frightful statement. If one woman in every 17 living with a man in London needs hospital treatment for injuries inflicted by her man, the true figure

for incidents of domestic violence, including those unreported to the police and untreated by hospitals, must be gigantic. It would follow that the feminists and the violence lobbyists must be right and that they deserve all our sympathy and support.

The truth, however, is that the feminists and their supporters were and are wrong. Worse than that: they have not just made an honest mistake; they have concocted the figures upon which the domestic violence industry has depended, wilfully enlarging and simplifying an issue that is probably small in size and certainly complex in truth.

We know now that all of the figures given above are ludicrous and baseless exaggerations. It is reasonable to assume that they reflect a general pattern of grotesque misrepresentation of the domestic violence phenomenon.

Police forces in England and Wales published figures on reports of domestic violence for the first time last year. The figures were given to parliament on

October 26 when David Alton, the Liberal

Democrat MP for Liverpool Mossley Hill, put a question to Mr Maclean.

In reply, Mr Maclean produced a table of figures prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. This shows that the number of domestic violence incidents recorded by the Metropolitan police in 1993 was 11,420.

That figure is equal to 0.66% of all women living with partners in the capital, and less than half the figure of 25,000 reported incidents previously given to us by the Met. It is less than a quarter of the figure given by Edwards, whose work has been sympathetically received by the Metropolitan police. It is less than one eighth of the figure given by Horley, whose Chiswick Family Refuge has been supported by public funds.

As for the 100,000 figure given by Miles for women receiving treatment in London hospitals after domestic violence, we can now see plainly that her figure is clearly a fiction. When we telephoned her to ask where she had got the figure from, she said at first that she could not remember; and when she was asked to comment on the discrepancy between her figure and the Home Office's, she terminated the interview because "there is someone at the door".

Next day, she remembered "reading it" (the figure of 100,000) in the Evening Standard the year before the book was published"; but she could give no date, author, context or origin for this item of scholarly research.

Explaining the discrepancy between its previous estimate and the published facts, **a spokesman for the Metropolitan police said: "I can't explain that at all, but 25,000 is a wrong figure."**

Defending her figure of 58,000, Edwards told us: "You should not regard my higher figure as representative of the number of cases of domestic violence which should be regarded as crimes." Eh? Come again? Why would 58,000 London women a year be calling the police if not to report criminal violence?

"Many women," she said, "report incidents of violence which do not actually

constitute a crime." In that case, one might ask, why should anybody think of them as being battered women?

Horley was not available to be challenged on her figure of 100,000. Feminists and their fellow travellers will try to wriggle out of this exposure of their errors by answering that the figures given by the Met only include the number of recorded incidents of domestic violence. The true extent of the phenomenon is much greater, they will say, because many women who are victims of violence do not report the fact; and of those who do report it, many are not recorded.

They can go and jump off a cliff. They have been running that line for 25 years and it just ran out. We have not been arguing here about the true extent of domestic violence. We are questioning figures that have previously been stated for the number of women complaining to the police. Those figures, previously given by academics and professionals, do not stand up to examination. If, however, anybody wants to argue about the hidden extent of our domestic violence, the figures which have just been published put them and their case even deeper in trouble.

Of the 11,420 domestic violence incidents in the Metropolitan police area in 1993, how many would you guess involved the same individuals more than once? How many complaints were of the threat,

rather than the reality, of violence? How many of those incidents were reported by men who were living with men? **How many incidents of domestic violence were reported by men living with women?**

You would have to guess the answers to these questions because the facts are hard to find. For instance, Scotland Yard acknowledges that: "Every district has its share of repeat or persistent callers but the number are unquantifiable." We cannot know, therefore, how many reported or recorded incidents of violence involve the same individuals more than once. Similarly, Scotland Yard cannot say how many callers are complaining about the threat rather than the reality of an act of violence; but that 68% of reported cases of domestic violence constituted "mental cruelty" or "threats of force".

Of those incidents, a proportion are not women reporting that they have been bashed but men reporting that a woman, or another man, is bashing or threatening to bash them. If, as we have repeatedly been told for 25 years, women are reluctant to tell the police about

incident of violence from that man; but 11% of men living with women said that they had experienced an incident of violence from their woman.

It therefore follows from this survey that men are more than twice as likely to be the victims of attack in the home, though they are eight times less likely to report it.

These figures would seem to be confirmed by statistics compiled by Scotland Yard, which show that 21% of all domestic violence victims in 1993-94 were men. In that year an overall increase of 15.33% was recorded in recorded incidents of domestic violence; but there was a 35% increase in the number of male victims. Given these figures, why is the Home Office spending money on an advertising campaign to get women to report incidents of domestic violence?

Nobody denies or disputes that violence occurs in the home. Nobody denies that some men are violent to their women (though it is inconceivable to the official mind that a woman might be violent to her man). We may well believe it to be true that 0.7%, or one in 150, of women living with men in London are subjected to a criminal assault in the house. Nobody should be surprised by that figure, except the

professional parasites on the domestic violence racket who will be dismayed at the prospect of their easy money drying up.

However, if that figure is true, or even nearly true, we should ask ourselves this: is it big enough to justify the colossal national flapdoodle and panic which has been made out of domestic violence towards women for the past 25 years? Or have we all been had?

The truth is that we have no idea how many women in London or elsewhere in the country are living with men who habitually beat them up. It might be one in 100. It might be one in 200 or 1,000 or 2,000. But we do know now that the true picture is much less horrible and much less extensive than the grotesque exaggerations which have been brandished by the domestic violence racketeers.

If you doubt the reasoning and the evidence of this article, ask yourself this: how many women have you known who were regularly beaten up by their men?

If it is true that domestic violence is an unacknowledged horror of our time, a phenomenon which illustrates the general attitudes of all men to all women and the relations of power between them,

why don't you know tens or hundreds of battered women? Nicole Simpson may have been one; but how many OJs do you know?

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