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The Battered Women Movement and the Creation of the Wife Beating Problem

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Abstract

Wife beating has become the object of media attention and government policy, not because of an increase in its frequency, or because the public has

become more concerned, but because a social movement developed in the 1970s to help battered women. The growth of the battered women movement illustrates both successful resource mobilization and the creation of a social problem. Pre-existing organizational ties, structural and ideological flexibility, and, in particular, the benefits sponsors gain by supporting movement activities account for the movement's rapid growth and impact. At the same time, increasing co-optation is affecting both how wife beating is defined and managed, and the course of the movement itself.

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