

Thirty years ago in the United States, the crime of violence against women was not perceived to be a social issue. Responding to this relative void in the literature, the present study aims to expand our knowledge concerning the media's representation of femicide and the media's impact on the construction of violence against women as a social problem. It was not until the 1970s that claims-making activities by members of the "battered women's movement" convinced the public to recognize the condition of "wife abuse" as a social problem and women subjected to this condition as "battered women" (Loseke, 1992). Consequently, women's experiences with relationship abuse were only labeled a public problem within the last several decades. Previously, the crime of violence had been conceptualized as something that only happened between strangers, not family members or intimates (Bergen, 1998). According to Best (1989), public issues grow up around private troubles when the experiences of individuals are understood as exemplifying a larger social problem, and the news media, in particular, are positioned to play a vital role in the construction of such problems. The news media provide a unique forum in which personal troubles are "selectively gathered up, invested with a broader meaning, and made available for public consumption" (Sacco, 1995, p. 142). At the individual level, constructing or naming a problem is important because it helps individuals define their personal experiences and choose a course of action (Kelly, 1988).