

mechanisms for or inclination to challenge *its* own orientation to what it takes for granted.

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Everyday Harm: Domestic Violence, Court Rites, and Cultures of Reconciliation. By Mindie Lazarus-Black. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2007. Pp. xii+244. \$22.00 paper.

Reviewed by Keith Guzik, Bloomfield College

Everyday Harm: Domestic Violence, Court Rites, and Cultures of Reconciliation explores the impact of Trinidad and Tobago's 1991 Domestic Violence Act (p. 23), the first legislation in the English-speaking Caribbean giving domestic violence victims the right to petition courts for orders of protection against their abusers. The subject matter, if seemingly esoteric, is vital. Relatively little sociological research has studied the globalization of domestic violence law, one of the most striking legal phenomena of recent decades. Conceptualizing law as power-laden events and processes, author Lazarus-Black aims to answer four key questions in this work: (1) Why and when do lawmakers create domestic violence law? (2) Why does such legislation usually produce few substantive outcomes for victims? (3) What does domestic violence law mean for women's empowerment? (4) How does culture influence the law?

Lazarus-Black investigates these questions through an ambitious research design combining quantitative and qualitative methods. She collected the records of all 1,463 protection order hearings that occurred in a magistrate's court in "Pelau" over a two-year period (from January 1997 to December 1998). Over the course of three field visits to this town of some 15,000 residents, she conducted more than 100 interviews with legal professionals, litigants, and other community members regarding their views of the domestic violence law and experiences with protection order cases. On the basis of this rich data, *Everyday Harm* accomplishes most of what it sets out to do.

Chapter 1 considers the postcolonial history of Trinidad and Tobago to explain how the country's adoption of domestic violence legislation depended on different historical factors: a national embrace of modernist ideology; the expansion of public education, especially for women; relative economic prosperity that allowed residents to travel internationally and access global media; and feminist political activism. In Chapter 2, Lazarus-Black, together with Patricia McCall, provides a quantitative analysis of protection order applications in Pelau and finds much of what past research

on this topic has discovered. Courts see a high number of applications from women lodging complaints against men (more than 80 percent of all applications). Most of these (more than 77 percent) are dismissed or withdrawn, resulting in few actual orders being issued (fewer than 4 percent). Interestingly, however, and evidencing the way in which domestic violence law is localized, 19 percent of cases are adjudicated through “undertakings,” a unique provision of the Domestic Violence Act that “allows a person accused of domestic violence for the first time to sign an affidavit promising not to engage in the activities for which he or she is being charged” (p. 32).

The remaining chapters of the book explain why so few victims secure protection orders. As Lazarus-Black convincingly argues, the answer lies in “court rites” or institutionalized legal practices. These practices include the creation of an intimidating environment at court through the enforcement of its rules, which preserve class and gender hierarchies; the “time” required to process cases; and the “cultures of reconciliation” in Trinidad and Tobago that pressure parties to settle their disputes outside of court. While each of these forces is familiar from past law-and-society research, *Everyday Harm* makes a key contribution by further elaborating and systematizing them. For instance, the failure of the law to provide victims formal protection stems not only from the excessive time a successful petition requires, but also from the fact that the different actors in the process—applicant, courthouse, police, respondent, lawyer, probation officer, and magistrate—all possess their own time, which they use differently.

The only question left unanswered is what the Domestic Violence Act has meant for women’s empowerment. Absent is any systematic consideration of how women assess their experiences with the law. And while Lazarus-Black interprets the gap between protection order applications and actual orders granted as proof of the law’s failure and the permanence of gender subordination, past domestic violence research (which she cites) and cases presented in the book indicate that women themselves may interpret such outcomes differently. Some women might obtain relief from their abusive relationships simply by petitioning the court (the abuser gets the message and either changes the cited behavior or moves out), thus making their attendance at future hearings on the case unnecessary in their minds. In addition, the relatively high number of undertakings suggests a unique reworking of the gender order in Trinidad and Tobago, whereby abusive men are made to (willingly) submit themselves to the authority of the court to monitor their behavior. Women’s empowerment and structural change, then, could actually accompany the Domestic Violence Act’s failure to provide protection orders. But without the views of

the women who experienced these legal outcomes, it is difficult to determine how the law has affected them. This point notwithstanding, *Everyday Harm* is a conceptually innovative and rigorously researched book that represents a genuine contribution to socio-legal research on the power of law and domestic violence research in general.

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Words for the Taking: The Hunt for a Plagiarist. By Neal Bowers. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, [1997] 2007. Pp. xvii+152. \$14.95 paper.

Reviewed by Susan Burgess, Ohio University

Neal Bowers, a well-published poet and tenured university professor, is living the good life in Ames, Iowa. Or at least he is, until he learns that several of his poems have been plagiarized, meaning stolen and published nearly word for word under a name other than his own. This startling news rocks his life, setting him off on a search for the perpetrator that fundamentally alters his orientation to his life's work.

For the most part, this is a book of enormous disappointment and disillusionment. How could someone steal his work so brazenly? He is also disappointed in his friends and colleagues. Why do they not understand the enormity of this violation? Why are they not more sympathetic to his plight? Many of them cannot understand why he continues to be so concerned with the case, particularly once the plagiarist has been identified. Bowers cannot understand why they are not.

In addition, Bowers is disappointed with the law. Why is it so ineffectual? After discussing his case with several uninterested attorneys, he hires a local lawyer and a private detective who never quite manage to live up to Bowers's expectations despite succeeding in tracking down and extracting a letter of apology from the plagiarist, David Jones, complete with a token check for \$100 in compensation for trouble caused. Jones appears "judgment-proof," having earned a grand total of \$650 in the previous calendar year. For this, Bowers accrues more than \$4,000 in attorney's fees (some of which he contests as unfair charges).

Rather than experiencing the expected exhilaration at having finally caught up with the perpetrator, what he finds is a troublingly manipulative and rather pathetic compulsive liar who cannot seem to hold down a job teaching elementary school. When he is unsatisfied with this result, his attorney asks him what he