Key points from *Framing the Victim* (chapter 7-9)

The social justice frame is found in liberal political magazines like *The Nation* and *The Progressive*. It represents an alternative to the victim-focused frames that dominate other media.

These magazines (1) have a liberal political orientation, (2) work toward peace and social justice, and (3) avoid victim-blaming. Their readers expect articles from this perspective, not entertainment. However, they have much smaller readerships than women’s or other entertainment magazines.

Articles in this frame critique media and social attitudes and draw attention to social structure and inequality.

Social science research also uses different frames to understand violence (e.g., sociology of family violence vs. feminist approach) but media tends to draw only from research that fits its frame.

The dominant focus on victims is a result of a number of developments, including the “discovery” of domestic violence and its initial framing by the battered women movement (which subsequently lost control of shelters), social movements that changed the way we think about “victims,” victimology, and the self-help movement.

Being labeled a victim is supposed to absolve victims from blame, assign causes for harm, and specify responses. However, this process doesn’t appear to work for victims of domestic violence.

The idea of empowerment, which is supposed to include personal, interpersonal and political levels, is kept at the individual level.

In the final chapter, Berns calls for a “new social problem” that would link family violence to other types of violence. A key focus would be on how violence is learned and supported by our culture.

She also calls for diversifying sources of information, raising journalistic standards for covering social problems and cultivating an interest beyond the individual.