

Family Violence *from a Global* Perspective

A Strengths-Based Approach



Editors

Sylvia M. Asay
John DeFrain
Marcee Metzger
Bob Moyer

Family Violence *from a* Global Perspective

A Strengths-Based Approach

Editors

Sylvia M. Asay

University of Nebraska, Kearney

John DeFrain

University of Nebraska, Lincoln

Marcee Metzger

Voices of Hope

Bob Moyer

Family Violence Council



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London, EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/1 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 048763

Acquisitions Editor: Kassie Graves
Editorial Assistant: Elizabeth Luizzi
Production Editor: Jane Haenel
Copy Editor: Mark Bast
Proofreader: Kate Peterson
Typesetter: Hurix Systems Pvt. Ltd.
Indexer: Virgil Diodato
Permissions Editor: Jennifer Barron
Marketing Manager: Shari Countryman

Copyright © 2014 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Asay, Sylvia M.

Family violence from a global perspective : a strengths-based approach / Sylvia M. Asay, University of Nebraska, Kearney, John DeFrain, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Marcee Metzger, Voices of Hope, Bob Moyer, Family Violence Council.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4129-9933-5 (alk. paper)

1. Family violence—Case studies. I. Title.

HV6626.A83 2013

362.82'92—dc23

2013005422

This book is printed on acid-free paper.



13 14 15 16 17 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Family Violence
from a Global
Perspective

We dedicate this book to all the stories we haven't heard. To all the men, women, and children who have been affected by family violence, we wish you peace and safety.

Introduction

Sylvia M. Asay, John DeFrain,
Marcee Metzger, and Bob Moyer

*F*amily Violence From a Global Perspective: A Strengths-Based Approach is the first major text to focus on family violence worldwide. Most studies focus on a particular community or culture or a handful of countries. This book tells the story of family violence worldwide by sampling 16 countries, including 17 cultures representing all seven of the world's major geo-cultural areas:

Africa: South Africa, Botswana, and Kenya

Asia: China, India, and Korea

Europe: Greece, Moldova, and Russia

Latin America: Brazil and Mexico

The Middle East: Israel/Palestine

North America: Canada and the United States

Oceania: Australia and New Zealand

We designed the study in this way so that the reader for the first time can gain a broad understanding of family violence around the world, not just from one cultural perspective but many. And we designed the study in this way so that useful ideas—success stories, if you will—can be shared from one place to another, from one person to another.

The reader will find that the countries and cultures represented in this study are in many ways remarkably similar, in regard to the dynamics of family violence. The reader will also find fascinating differences from culture to culture as people living in environments with vastly different social, political, economic, and historical backgrounds struggle to deal with a universal phenomenon—the physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse of family members by other family members.

Perhaps most important of all, because the study takes a strengths-based perspective on family violence, the reader will see how different countries and cultures have found ways to begin to effectively deal with family violence and help to eliminate needless suffering. We will

also see, up close and personal, how individuals escape the devastation of intimate-partner violence by tapping into their personal strengths, the strengths of their family and close friends, the strengths of their community, and the strengths of their society. We learn, in essence, how by doing this countless survivors today are finding ways to rise above their misery and build a new life.

The process is long and difficult, but the results can be powerful and certainly warm the heart.

What works in one country does not translate perfectly to another very different country. However, what works in one country can certainly be readily adapted to other countries. And so, we believe that many benefits from this study are likely to accrue around the world through the simple act of sharing success stories from one country to another.

In each chapter, eminent teachers, researchers, and practitioners share information about family violence in their country. To breathe life into the facts and figures, the reader will also learn directly from the survivors themselves as they tell their stories of experiencing, surviving, and in many cases rising above family violence.

A useful way to explain the interconnectedness and influence of systems is to examine the ecological systems theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). The ecological model describes how the individual, the organization, the community, and the culture intersect and influence each other. In this study we use an ecological model emphasizing strengths around the world, which was developed by John DeFrain and Sylvia M. Asay (2007). Adapting the model to this research, the strengths we focus on include the following:

- *Individual strengths*—critical thinking, hope and optimism, good problem-solving skills, adaptability, openness to change, the ability to see a crisis in life as an opportunity, and the courage to reach out to others
- *Family strengths*—strong relationships with other family members and extended family, when possible, and connections with close friends who are willing and able to help
- *Community strengths*—availability of safe shelters and victim services, support of local authorities, laws that ensure the rights of women and children
- *Cultural strengths*—the condemnation of violence in the family on the national level and an emphasis on gender equity, human rights, and dignity

Historical Background and Definitions

The problem of violence between intimate partners first received significant public attention in the early 1970s in the United States and England. Since that time, a great deal of information has been distributed to inform the public about the problems associated with family violence. In the United States and other Western societies, a multitude of books describe the survivors and perpetrators, the theory behind their behaviors, the reasons why family violence persists, the effects on those involved, and the societal response to end family violence.

This increased awareness has resulted in the understanding that family violence exists in all countries, but the awareness and response to the problem vary widely. One major challenge is that little is known about family violence in specific countries.

Family violence is often associated only with violence that occurs between married or intimate partners. Indeed, the primary relationship is often the beginning of violence within the home. Many of the chapters throughout the book focus on violence between intimate partners. However, it should be noted that this kind of violence precipitates other forms of violence over time, and you will notice in reading many of the stories of family violence that child abuse and elder abuse are also natural outcomes of the original violent behavior between partners. It is difficult to separate the reasons and causes of violence between what occurs within the intimate relationship and violence that includes all family members, as they are often intertwined.

You, the reader, may have a good idea about what we mean when we talk about family violence from your previous reading and from personal experience. We felt it was useful to give some definitions at the beginning of the text as a way for all to have a common understanding throughout the book.

Child maltreatment/abuse/neglect includes all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, development, or dignity (World Health Organization, 2010).

Domestic violence/abuse occurs between intimate partners and is an attempt to control the behavioral, emotional, and/or intellectual life of another person and to diminish or prevent that person's free choice. Abuse can include physical harm such as sexual violence, arousing fear through intimidation, verbal abuse, economic abuse, isolation, coercion, and/or threats or preventing a victim from doing what he or she wishes. Relationships in which one intimate partner uses assault and coercion can be found among married and unmarried heterosexuals, lesbians, and gay males (Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition, 2012).

Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust that causes harm or distress to an older person (World Health Organization, 2010).

Family is two or more people who are committed to each other and who share intimacy, resources, decision-making responsibilities, and values (Olson, DeFrain, & Skogrand, 2011, pp. 5–6). There are, of course, innumerable definitions of family. This particular definition is inclusive and allows for diversity in family structure, family values, and ethnic groups.

Family violence includes all types of violent crime committed by an offender who is related to the survivor either biologically or legally through marriage or adoption (Durose et al., 2005).

Intimate partner means a spouse or former spouse, a person who shares a child in common with another person, a person who cohabits or has cohabited with another person, or a person who has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature (Crimes and Criminal Procedure, 2006).

Intimate-partner violence describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. This type of violence can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).

Family Violence Worldwide

Family violence is a serious problem in every country where it has been studied. Violence within families includes child abuse and neglect, intimate-partner violence, and elder abuse (Phinney & de Hovre, 2003). Intimate-partner violence is often the most recognized form of family violence, with women most often being the survivor of abuse. Findings from the World Health Organization's multicountry study on domestic abuse confirm a reported prevalence of physical or sexual violence among partners varied from 15% to 71% among 24,097 women in 10 countries (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). Half of the women involved in a homicide worldwide die from injuries inflicted by a current or former partner (McCue, 2008). It has only been in the past 30 years that this kind of widespread violence against women is regarded as a serious human rights issue internationally (Kishor & Johnson, 2004).

In addition, family violence contributes to public health concerns as many survivors have limited access to health care, are not allowed to seek medical attention by their abuser, or may intentionally be infected with HIV by their partner (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; McCue, 2008). This risk contributes inadvertently to the health of children as well when mothers are denied prenatal and postnatal care (Kishor & Johnson, 2004).

Because of the various definitions and the differences in the ways statistics are gathered, it is more difficult to get an accurate picture of the scope of child maltreatment around the world. However, it is estimated that from 25% to 50% of all children report being physically abused (World Health Organization, 2010). This does not include emotional abuse and neglect or intimate-partner abuse that disrupts family stability and nurturance. Other, more serious long-term consequences can result, such as poor brain development, risk of future behavioral or mental health problems, and chronic health issues.

With the projected rapid increase in the number of elderly over the next decade, along with rapid social changes, the World Health Organization (2008) predicts an increase in the incidence and prevalence of elder abuse around the world. They recognize that elder abuse continues to be ignored and may not even be considered when looking at abuse within the family. Around the world, dependence, isolation, and health problems increase the vulnerabilities of elderly people.

While family violence is a common experience worldwide, in many countries there are problems addressing it that include incidents never reported, police and other officials who do not take the reports seriously, abusers who are rarely removed or prosecuted, and a lack of legal and social services for survivors. In some countries, violence against a spouse is not considered a crime and is often considered a private matter that should not involve the police or the court system (Maryniak, 2000). Similarly, other types of family violence may be disregarded because they are not culturally accepted (Adams, 2004). McCue (2008) suggests that there is a *culture of silence* that contributes to the widespread belief that family violence is private and may be a factor in underreporting and lack of response from family, community, and government.

In some areas of the world, family violence also has a connection to religious beliefs and practices. The culture of silence continues as some religious sects perceive women as inferior, view the marriage and other family relationships as private, refuse to allow women to leave an abusive relationship, or offer little or no help when violence occurs. Although many turn to religion for help, most religious leaders have had no training in responding to family violence.

Although there is great diversity among religions, most religious leaders reluctantly support divorce or separation as the answer to family violence and view it as a private matter. Some leaders even blame the survivor for the abuse (Levitt & Ware, 2006).

Reports of family violence vary in relation to level of economic development. More industrialized countries show lower incidence of partner violence. Some countries report higher rates of family violence in more traditional rural areas than in urban areas (Garcia-Mereno et al., 2006). Although patriarchal ideologies continue around the world, each setting holds a specific set of behaviors within the sociocultural context that change the experience of violence for women (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002). McCue (2008) suggests that these patriarchal norms and traditions affect not only the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence but the responses to it as well.

Johnson and Ferraro (2000) advocate for caution in making assumptions about the global context in light of the complexities that separate populations. These complexities include cultural differences, social and economic structures, and the consequences of political conflict. They suggest that the social, cultural, and political layers of any society must be considered and not carelessly generalized in discussing violence in the home.

Finally, family violence varies by type. Most violence involves a man being violent with a woman, but not all. Johnson (1995, 2000) argues that there are four basic patterns of partner violence to consider. These are *common couple violence*, *intimate terrorism*, *violent resistance*, and *mutual violent control*. Keep these types in mind when looking at the cultural context of family violence worldwide. Common couple violence begins with an argument where one or both partners use physical violence to retaliate. This type of violence is not likely to get worse and is often mutual between the partners. Intimate terrorism represents what most people think of when they hear of family violence. This violence arises from a pattern of abusive behaviors by one person against another based on that person's belief that he or she is entitled to use these abusive behaviors to exert power and control over the other party to gain sought-after outcomes. In response to these patterns of abusive behavior, some survivors respond violently as a matter of self-defense as in the case of violent resistance. Mutual violent control arises between couples who have poor coping skills or other problems, such as anger control or mental health issues. This type of violence occurs when both partners are violent and both want control.

The Importance of Studying Family Violence From a Strengths-Based Perspective

Families in all their diversity are the basic, foundational social units in every society. So, healthy individuals within healthy families are essential to the core of a healthy society. Creating a positive environment for all families is in the self-interest of people in all societies. On the other hand, unhealthy, dysfunctional relationships create serious problems that can persist from one generation to the next.

A Historical Perspective on Family Strengths Research

Family theorists have tried to create one theory or framework that explains the family and the place it holds within society since the beginning of the 20th century. According to

White (2005), early family theory focused on the family and how it fit within society, creating frameworks that borrowed from other disciplines such as anthropology and economics. In the last half of the 20th century, the focus moved to the functions of the family, using typologies to classify families. An interest in cross-cultural comparisons also led to a new look at previous perspectives in an attempt to internationalize family theory. Since that time, researchers have largely failed to advance any new theories about the family. It may be possible that the reason no one theory has come to explain families around the world in the 21st century is that the uniqueness of families and the ways they function cannot be collected into one understanding.

The focus on family strengths brings into a more reasonable balance our understanding of how families succeed in the face of life's inherent difficulties. By concentrating only on a family's problems and failings, we ignore the fact that success requires a positive approach. The family strengths perspective is a positive and optimistic worldview or orientation toward life and families grounded in research conducted around the world. Family problems are not ignored but are seen as vehicles for testing our capacity as families and reaffirming our vital human connections with each other.

Most research about families has focused primarily on the problems or weaknesses of families or the individuals within the family. Early research on family strengths began in the 1930s with Woodhouse's (1930) study of 250 successful families during the Great Depression, followed by Otto's work on strong families and family strengths in the early 1960s (Gabler & Otto, 1964; Otto, 1962, 1963).

Not until the 1970s did family strengths research begin to gain momentum when Nick Stinnett began his work at Oklahoma State University in 1974 and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, in 1977. Stinnett, John DeFrain, and colleagues then began publishing a continuous series of articles and books (Casas, Stinnett, DeFrain, & Lee, 1984; DeFrain & Asay, 2007; DeFrain, DeFrain, & Lepard, 1994; DeFrain & Stinnett, 2002; Olson, DeFrain, & Skogrand, 2011; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985; Stinnett & O'Donnell, 1996; Stinnett & Sauer, 1977; Xie, DeFrain, Meredith, & Combs, 1996). Family strengths conferences, beginning in 1978, proved to be a catalyst for research on strong families. The International Family Strengths Network (IFSN) began working on a series of family strengths conferences worldwide in the late 1990s and continues today. More than 35 conferences have been held in Africa, Asia, Australia, Latin America, and North America.

Over the past four decades researchers at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, led by John DeFrain; the University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa, led by Nick Stinnett; the University of Minnesota-St. Paul, led by David H. Olson; and affiliated institutions in the United States and around the world have studied families from a strengths-based perspective. Researchers in 38 countries have found remarkable similarities from culture to culture when studying family strengths. When family members around the world talk about what makes their family strong, these are some traits they commonly talk about:

- Appreciation and affection
- Commitment
- Positive communication
- Enjoyable time together
- Spiritual well-being and shared values
- The ability to manage stress and crisis effectively

Research on strong families has not only resulted in models to better understand the qualities of strong families; it helps us look more clearly at families in general and how we can successfully live in our own families.

Propositions Derived From Family Strengths Research

The study of family strengths from a global perspective cannot be reduced to a static set of ideas or rigorously testable hypotheses. The process of studying family strengths is more like the process of life in a family itself: a constantly growing and changing dialogue about the nature of strong marriages, intimate partners, and strong families. Our training as skeptical social and behavioral scientists teaches us to be cautious when talking about universals. Yet our studies of strong families in North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Oceania lead us to conclude there are remarkable similarities among families who feel good about their lives together and express pride and satisfaction in their ability to deal with life's challenges. These similarities are much more apparent than the differences from culture to culture.

Over the past 40 years, researchers looking at couples and families from a strengths perspective have developed the following propositions (DeFrain & Stinnett, 2002):

- Families, in all their remarkable diversity, are the basic foundation of human cultures.
- Not all families are strong, but all families have strengths.
- Function, not structure, is most important.
- Strong marriages and intimate partners are the center of many strong families.
- Strong families tend to produce great kids.
- If you grew up in a strong family as a child, it will probably be easier for you to create a strong family of your own as an adult.
- The relationship between money and family strengths is weak.
- Strengths develop over time.
- Strengths are often developed in response to challenges.
- Strong families don't think much about their strengths, they just live them.
- Strong families, like people, are not perfect.
- When seeking to bring together groups, communities, and even nations, uniting around the cause of strengthening families can be a powerful strategy.
- Human beings have the right and responsibility to feel safe, comfortable, happy, and loved.

The International Family Strengths Model

A positive and useful approach to conceptualizing families from a global perspective links family strengths, community strengths, and cultural strengths and demonstrates how families use these strengths to meet the many challenges they face (DeFrain & Asay, 2007). Researchers developed a conceptual model incorporating all three levels of strength in an analysis of the strengths and challenges of families in 18 countries. Understanding family strengths requires understanding the cultural contexts in which families live. People live within the context of

their family, their extended family, the community, and the broader national culture that cannot be easily understood, labeled, or judged. Numerous external factors enmesh and influence families, sometimes proving helpful and useful to individual families but at other times proving harmful and demanding. Families from culture to culture live in a desperately confounding environment. To judge them without understanding the social context in which they live is unfair.

In addition to the six major qualities of a strong family outlined earlier, a number of important community strengths were identified. Community strengths are infused in the immediate neighborhood or area in which the family lives. These strengths include the following:

- A supportive social environment that genuinely values families and a general willingness and natural generosity infused in the community to help when families are in need
- An effective educational delivery system
- Religious communities for families seeking this kind of support
- Family service programs developed by government and nongovernmental organizations for families who cannot find the help they need from their own extended family, friends, and neighbors
- A safe, secure, and healthful environment

In addition to family and community strengths, cultural strengths were identified. Cultural strengths cover a broader area than just a local community and have developed in social and historical context over time. Cultural strengths include the following:

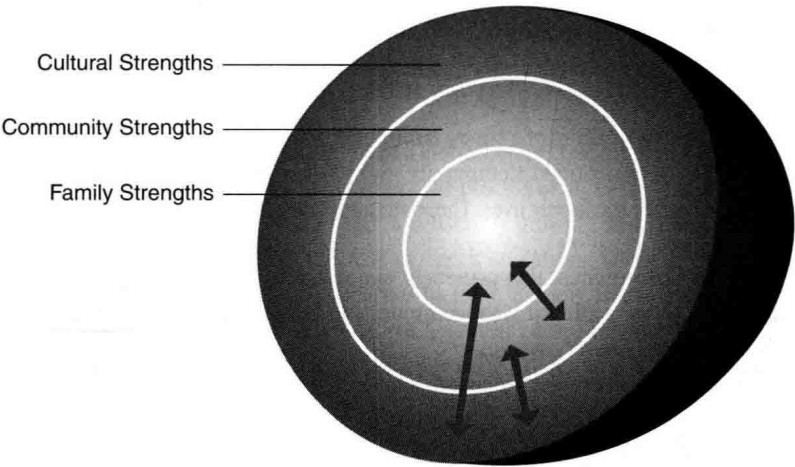
- A rich cultural history
- Shared cultural meanings
- A stable political process
- A viable economy
- An understanding of the global society

Using two visual models, DeFrain and Asay (2007) envisioned the strong family as that where the three areas of strengths intersect. A family that possesses not only internal family strengths but enjoys support from the community and a positive and empowering heritage is, indeed, in an excellent position in the world.

Obviously, the influences among the circles are reciprocal in that the influence of the family on the community and culture can be as significant as the influence that the community and culture have on the local family unit. From this examination of families around the world, families demonstrate the ability to take on different structures in different circumstances.

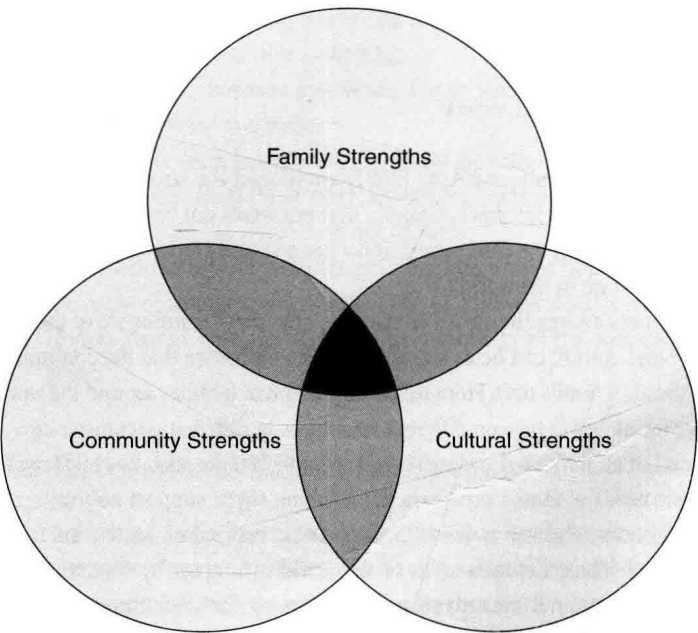
The common trend of all families, however, is to accomplish tasks such as childbearing, providing for the basic needs of family members, establishing social support networks, and establishing family traditions. The way in which these tasks are realized ultimately influences the way society functions. Those living in areas of the world torn apart by war, famine, or harsh political conditions can still create and maintain strong families, though the task becomes much more difficult because of external stressors impinging upon the family. In difficult circumstances such as these, families search for a new state of equilibrium within the community and/or within their culture.

Figure 1.1 The Relationship of Family, Community, and Cultural Strengths: Concentric Circles



Note: In this model, the three areas of strengths move out and away from the single-family unit to the broader context related in a concentric fashion. The three areas not only interact from dimension to dimension but also have depth and, thus, interact on various levels.

Figure 1.2 The Relationship of Family, Community, and Cultural Strengths: A Venn Diagram



Note: In this model, the family, community, and cultural strengths intersect. Although this intersection represents the strong family, when one or more areas are lacking, a state of equilibrium may be reached and a strong family is still possible.

In this type of situation, the stability of the families is dependent almost solely on the strengths of the individual family and its immediate community. Even though there may be chaos in the larger environment, the family can continue to nurture each other and to function as an effective family, though their cultural heritage is being threatened. Using the model, this equilibrium is represented by the intersection of only family strengths and community strengths. When political order is reestablished, cultural strengths will again have a positive influence within the family. This illustrates the truly amazing ways that families all over the world are able to use their strengths to triumph over even the most horrendous conditions and insecure situations. Strengths also help families who live in relative prosperity and freedom to rise above complacency and the subtle erosion of the family. Certainly communities and cultural heritage contribute to the stability and support of families in all types of circumstances, but ultimately we believe that the individual internal strengths of families provide the basic foundation for what keeps the family from gradually eroding.

Applying the Strengths Approach to Family Violence Worldwide

Heise (1998) used an ecological model as a visual picture of family violence to illustrate the complexity of domestic violence and to show the overlap of perspectives present. The model focuses on the individual as the perpetrator of family violence and how the contextual factors of the relationship, the community, and society factor into partner abuse. According to the model, individual factors such as witnessing violence as a child and alcohol use, relationship factors such as marital conflict and the need for control, community factors such as poverty and isolation, and societal factors such as traditional gender roles and acceptance of violence all contribute to the likelihood that an individual will abuse his or her partner.

An ecological model was also used by the World Health Organization in the *World Report on Violence and Health* (Krug et al., 2002) to illustrate the complexities faced by the female survivor of family violence. Individual risk factors include a lack of good reasoning skills on the woman's part; relationship risk factors, such as not having access to family or friends; community risk factors, such as lack of services for battered women; and societal risk factors, such as a disregard for the value of women. All these factors help us better understand how the violence continues and why the woman fails to escape the violent relationship.

Although the previous attempts to illustrate how individuals and their close relationships connect to their community and culture within the context of family violence do give us valuable information about the perpetrators and risk factors for survivors, very little thought is given to factors that can help an individual and his or her family to rise above the challenges of family violence. Much of the literature presented on family violence around the world focuses on how control is maintained by the perpetrator through the persistent use of tactics such as threats, coercion, economic and verbal abuse, and isolating victims from support and help, in addition to violence. This literature points to the failures of the government or embedded social structures to recognize the abuse and therefore support effective interventions and changes. This failure to recognize abuse leads to little attention paid to the strengths that individuals and families possess and how these strengths can be used to stop abuse and help develop resiliency in those facing abuse.

The focus of the following chapters about family violence in countries around the world is not only to draw attention to violence that occurs in individual countries, but to show how individuals and families, communities, and cultures use their strengths to overcome the challenges that family violence presents. We have used the international family strengths model to illustrate our findings. Through our analysis of the countries represented we discovered something new as we examined the stories of family violence and, along with family strengths, have included strengths of individuals that help them to personally overcome violence.

Reading through the chapters, you will be amazed at the striking similarities about family violence that seem to affect every culture. At the same time, you will also notice the uniqueness in how violence is defined and addressed across cultures. In the epilogue, we have set out some conclusions about family violence from a global viewpoint using a strengths-based perspective. However, as you will see, the research is ongoing and continually evolving as we continue to learn more about violence in families across this vast world.

Why We Want to Share This Story

Each member of our research team had different reasons for wanting to create this book and help spread the message about family violence around the world and what we all can do to help prevent abuse and build strong families from a global perspective. Although we share a passion for ending violence within families, we also share a desire to strengthen families at all levels to become better equipped to deal with the challenges that arise within intimate relationships. We recognize that family violence is extremely complex and cannot be changed overnight. Here are our credentials and some personal reflections that reveal the reasons for our participation in this project.

Sylvia M. Asay, PhD, is a professor and chair of family studies at the University of Nebraska, Kearney, where she has been teaching for 20 years. Her research has focused on the strengths of families in postcommunist countries, and she has published several articles that describe her qualitative approach to research. She recently conducted a research project in Romania and Moldova on family violence in the evangelical community and is working on phase two of the project to provide online family violence training to clergy in Eastern Europe. Asay has coauthored the books *Strong Families Around the World: Strengths-Based Research and Practice* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis) and *Family Resource Management* (Sage). She currently teaches marriage and family relationships, cross-cultural family patterns, and families in crisis from a family strengths perspective.

As a professor, I have long been involved with educating students about the tremendous challenges of family violence. I have seen the consequences to students who have experienced this in their own homes and feel deeply for those who are struggling to make sense of their role and responsibility as they contemplate their future family life. I want to share with students the complexities of family violence around the world, but at the same time I want that message to be one of hope. I truly believe that change is possible and that the cycle of violence can be broken with each generation in every country around the world. By focusing on and building the strengths of individuals and families, by strengthening the resources and resolve of the community, and by drawing upon the strengths of the culture to shift from some of the negative messages that have emerged over time families can rise above this problem.

John DeFrain, PhD, is a professor emeritus of family studies and extension family and community development specialist at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, where he has been a teacher, international researcher, and outreach specialist for 37 years. The focus of his professional career has been in better understanding how families learn to live happily together around the world. He cofounded the Parent Aide Support Service, a program in Lincoln, Nebraska, that served parents under severe stress for 25 years, and cofounded the National and International Symposium on Building Family Strengths, which has cooperated in creating more than 35 family strengths conferences nationally and internationally since 1978. He has coauthored more than 160 professional articles and 30 books, including *Surviving and Transcending a Traumatic Childhood: The Dark Thread* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis), *Getting Connected, Staying Connected: Loving Each Other Day by Day* (iUniverse), *Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths* (7th ed.; McGraw-Hill), and *Strong Families Around the World: Strengths-Based Research and Practice* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis). DeFrain has extensive experience abroad, including research as a Fulbright Scholar in the South Pacific and work with colleges and universities in Australia, China, Czech Republic, Fiji, Greece, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, and Russia.

My international work over the past 25 years has shown me quite clearly that people are people are people, and families are families are families. As human beings around the world we share many more similarities than differences. In every culture there are families in trouble and families with amazing strengths. And every culture in the world is struggling with family violence and how to deal with it effectively.

I wanted to create this book so that we could help share good ideas with each other from country to country and gain energy from each other for the long struggle against family violence that lies ahead. In the long run I am optimistic about the direction the world is going because I have seen so many good things happen already over my long career.

Marcee Metzger is executive director of Voices of Hope, formerly Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center, and has been in this role since 1989. She has worked toward ending violence against women since 1976 in many roles, including crisis line staff, shelter worker, Spouse Abuse Services program director, University of Nebraska's Women's Resource Center director, and interpersonal violence victim advocate and president of Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition. She has served on numerous committees and created and provided training, education, and technical consultation to local, national, and international professionals responding to violence against women and children.

I have been privileged to spend more than 35 years working to end violence against women and children. Most of these years were primarily focused on victim/survivor safety and raising awareness about the cultural and community norms that create an environment that perpetuates this violence. All this work was through the lens of a feminist philosophy and with an empowerment focus.

When John approached Bob and me to assist in a seminar on family violence in collaboration with the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Sociology in Shanghai, China, I was delighted. This created an opportunity to dialogue with two brilliant scholars on family violence. Their focus on perpetrator accountability, child abuse, and family strengths and my activist focus on domestic violence, victim safety, and women's rights provided for many spirited discussions. Learning from our colleagues in China fueled my desire to continue these dialogues worldwide.