

Overcoming Domestic Violence

Creating a Dialogue Around
Vulnerable Populations

Myra F. Taylor, Ph.D.
Julie Ann Pooley, Ph.D.
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Editors

Social Issues, Justice and Status

NOVA

SOCIAL ISSUES, JUSTICE AND STATUS

OVERCOMING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
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VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

MYRA F. TAYLOR, PH.D.
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AND
ROBERT S. TAYLOR, PH.D.
EDITORS

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SOCIAL ISSUES, JUSTICE AND STATUS

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PREFACE

This book presents a range of interesting and diverse papers in order to demonstrate the importance and need for intervention programs that deal with the harmful effects that domestic violence causes to primary and secondary victims as well as to perpetrators. These papers reveal that the traditional within family home male-upon-female definitional understanding of domestic violence in the modern needs era to be broadened to include such experiences as dating violence, LGBT intimate partner violence and the childhood witnessing of domestic violence, to name but a few. Additionally, it is argued that intervention programs, given the scale of the domestic violence problem within society, need to be delivered in a non-gendered and non-stigmatizing manner to both the survivor and the perpetrator. For, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator, it is the act itself of committing violence that needs to be eradicated. Moreover, it is argued that this eradication will best be achieved through eliminating the destructive construct of blame which is embedded within society's understanding of domestic violence. The need to eliminate the harms blame is evident in the debilitating intergenerational transfer of the abused-abuser perpetrator label. For embedded in this label is the suggestion that a cycle of violence exists in which maltreated children (i.e., children who have experienced or witnessed abuse) are destined to grow up to be abusive perpetrators of domestic violence and/or child abuse. The editors contend that the way forward lies in changing this embedded notion and in altering the public's indifference or acceptance of domestic violence, educating the upcoming generation of youth on the unacceptability of fiduciary relationship violence and in creating resilient futures for both the primary and secondary survivors of domestic violence as well as for perpetrators.

The chapters are based on recent research conducted in different countries by researchers from multiple disciplines (e.g., medicine, social work, psychology, law, nursing, sexology, health sciences, education) situated in universities around the world (e.g., Australia, Canada, England, Lebanon, Scotland, Spain, and the United States of America). The book is comprised of seven separate sections that aim to provide diverse perspectives on the issue of domestic violence.

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INTRODUCTION

— J. P. Taylor and John Ann Healey

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive survey of the current state of knowledge in the field of the history of the world. It is intended for students and scholars alike, and is designed to be both a reference work and a text for the classroom.

World History

The world has a long and complex history, and it is the purpose of this book to provide a comprehensive survey of the current state of knowledge in the field of the history of the world. It is intended for students and scholars alike, and is designed to be both a reference work and a text for the classroom. The book is divided into two main parts: the first part covers the history of the world from the beginning of time to the present, and the second part covers the history of the world from the present to the future. The first part is divided into three main sections: the history of the world from the beginning of time to the present, the history of the world from the present to the future, and the history of the world from the future to the present. The second part is divided into two main sections: the history of the world from the present to the future, and the history of the world from the future to the present.

Chapter 1

BROADENING THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEBATE

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INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is without doubt one of society's most pressing issues. Within this book a range of interesting and diverse papers are presented all of which have as their central aim the broadening of the current domestic violence debate. To achieve this aim the papers are grouped into five sections.

SECTION ONE: DEFINING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In Section One, Chapter 1, readers are challenged to think beyond the traditional definition of domestic violence so as to include all people involved in a fiduciary relationship. A fiduciary relationship being one wherein one person within the relationship knows the other person's personal information, beliefs, frailties, and emotional fears and, then, breaks these intimate trusts by intentionally wounding the other person either psychologically or physically. In particular, Allan and Allan analyze the key role that trust plays within fiduciary relationships. They then examine the various forms (verbal, physical, sexual, financial, social, spiritual, and legal) which domestic violence can take. The readers are then provided with information on both the personal features and the environmental influences that can predispose some people to either be a perpetrator or a victim of domestic violence. Next the factors that contribute to victim vulnerability are described and the consequences that domestic violence can have on both the primary and secondary victims are detailed. Following on from there a brief account of the prevalence of domestic violence is provided. The sole chapter in this section reaches a conclusion that assistance needs to be provided to both the primary and secondary victims and perpetrators of domestic violence if a meaningful reduction is to occur in the occurrence of this vexing social issue.

SECTION TWO: DATING VIOLENCE

The second section is an exposition of a little considered aspect of domestic violence, namely, dating violence. In the first chapter in this section Ellis and McCarry analyze the prevention discourse as a means of addressing a range of social issues, but with particular reference to young people's experience of abuse and violence in dating relationships in the United Kingdom.

They argue that the current governmental focus on prevention is an attempt to discipline the future through identifying and predicting future occurrences of a present day social problem. Moreover, they claim that this approach is problematic because it does not explain or solve current manifestations of violence within the youth population. They recommend that a greater focus be placed on improving existing services while at the same supporting research. For instance, research into why some young people consider relationship violence to be an acceptable form of behaviour.

Carter-Snell in the second chapter in this section discusses the different types of dating violence (e.g., bullying, non-consensual sexting, harassment, stalking, physical and sexual violence) that mainstream secondary and post-secondary students commonly experience, as well as the risk factors for such violence. She contends that risk is a multilevel construct which occurs at an individual level (e.g., child abuse, child witnessing of parental violence, substance abuse, low education, early sexual activity), a family relationship level (e.g., older parents, low parental income, non-conforming parental norms, and parental power dynamic imbalance), at a community level (e.g., insufficient support and normalization of violence) and at a societal level (e.g., gender inequalities). Carter-Snell concludes by positing that given dating violence is a multilevel construct there is a need for greater multidisciplinary collaboration among professionals working in the field of youth violence.

In the third chapter of this section Blais, Hébert, and Gervais detail the prevalence of dating violence in sexual minority youth (SMY) (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transidentified, queer, and questioning [LGBTQ]). They contend that while SMY face the same dating violence risk factors as do youth in the general population, however, SMY also have the added vulnerabilities of internalized heterosexism, sexual identity concealment shame, outing threats, and a lack of older sexual-minority survivor role models. The chapter concludes by recommending that greater awareness needs to be raised within the sexual minority community of the manifestations of dating violence and, in addition, SMY need to be provided with greater LGBTQ support services.

SECTION THREE: THE FEMALE PERSPECTIVE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Section Three presents the prevailing feminist conceptualization of domestic violence that exists within society and the body of abuse literature, namely, that women are overwhelmingly the victims of domestic violence and men overwhelmingly are the perpetrators. Consequently, the common recommendation emanating out of Section Three's nine chapters is for governments to increase and improve the legal protections and practical resources made available to females exiting an abusive relationship.

The first chapter in this section opens with Henderson, Thurston, and Roy revealing the plight of immigrant women in Canada and the systemic harms (i.e., financial and housing insecurities) they experience when attempting to leave a domestic violence situation. This situation is made worse, the authors contend, by the women's social isolation, their uncertainty about what formal services are available to them, as well as the inadvertent policies and poorly delivered programs that are provided for them as they all add to the female victimization experience. The challenge the authors see for society is to improve the training and understanding of service providers (e.g., police, language educators, social welfare workers, settlement agents, clinicians and shelter staff) so that they can provide immigrant women with the information and intervention programs they need in a non-stigmatizing manner.

In the next chapter Sabri contends that domestic violence among South Asian women is a major social and public health concern given that the culture's understanding of domestic violence is rooted in socio-cultural factors such as patriarchal family structures, rigid gendered norms, and the justification of domestic violence in instances where women are viewed as not confirming to expected gender norms. Using an ecological perspective, Sabri reviews the literature on risk and protective factors, as well as the outcomes of domestic violence among South Asian women. The focus of the chapter is on macro-level factors (e.g., cultural beliefs, traditional gender norms), exosystem-level factors (e.g. access to resources, community sanctions against domestic violence), micro-system factors (e.g., relationship conflict, alcohol problems) and individual-level factors (e.g., socio-demographic characteristics such as young age, low socio-economic status). The chapter concludes by identifying the barriers at the different ecological levels that affect South Asian women's responses to violence and, then, relates these barriers to their implications for practice and policy implementation.

Mahapatra and Schatz in the third chapter of this section provide an explanation of the domestic violence incident factors that are specific to the South Asian migrant community (i.e., migrants from India, Pakistan, & Bangladesh). In this regard, the chapter uses real life vignettes to illustrate the varied roles practitioners and domestic violence agency workers perform in providing formal assessments, resilience building programs, and informational services to migrant women separating from an abusive partner in the United States of America. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that as women are 'harbingers of change within the migrant South Asian community', they should be 'applauded' and acknowledged for their efforts to instigate change through ending their own experiences of domestic violence.

In the fourth chapter Schineanu and Earnest present an overview of the domestic violence situation within India. They detail the coping strategies (i.e., social support, spirituality and Eastern beliefs) used by Indian women experiencing domestic violence. Although, they conclude that spirituality in reality appears to be the only refuge for many Indian women. They suggest that changes in the prevalence rates of domestic violence in India will not occur until 'men take responsibility for their actions' and, until 'policy makers institute programs that engage men... to change their attitudes towards domestic violence and protect women'.

McInnes in the fifth chapter clearly articulates the reporting difficulties that women face when engaging with the systems and services that exist to help them exit an abusive relationship. She argues for the better integration of front-line government services as well as for an end to the requirements placed on Australian women to not only disclose the nature of

the abuse they have experienced, but also to prove that violence was committed before they are deemed eligible for assistance.

The sixth chapter in this section petitions for a broader acceptance of the existence of interpersonal violence within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community within America's Deep South. Schroeder, Osby and Bruns claim that Southern homophobic attitudes are continuing to marginalize and stigmatize Southerners. Whereas, formerly they claim Southern discrimination was a facet of skin colour, now they suggest it exists in relation to a person's sexual orientation. In this regard, they use a case study of a lesbian who was subjected to sustained violence by her partner to highlight the types of institutionalized heterosexism she encountered when trying to end her violent relationship. The authors conclude by suggesting that a pressing need exists to not only end interpersonal LGBT violence discrimination within America's Southern states, but also to improve the emergency services available to same sex victims of violent fiduciary relationships.

The seventh chapter by Williams, Gavine and Carnochan asserts that domestic violence is a public health problem and that its burden is overwhelmingly shouldered by women and their children who witness violence in the family home. Drawing on the Cycle of Violence Hypothesis they add their support to its overarching contention, namely, that children who witness domestic violence are likely to grow up to be the next generation of abusers. Hence, the authors recommend that family processes need to be the primary focus of domestic violence primary prevention programs if an intergenerational cycle of violence is to be broken.

Usta and Singh in the eighth chapter of this section contend that although women traditionally have been less likely to orchestrate and perpetuate war, they continue to endure a high proportion of the psychological, physical and social harms experienced in times of war. In particular, they point to *structural* (e.g., patriarchy, gender inequalities, displacement, lawlessness, & poverty), *community* (e.g., altered gender ratio, changed societal norms, increased availability of weaponry), *relationship* (e.g., radical shift in gender role) and *individual* (e.g., perpetrator abuse of alcohol) factors which exacerbate the female experience of domestic violence during wartime. Hence, they claim that advocating for greater gender equality is the logical preventive measure to decrease female fiduciary relationship violence.

In the penultimate chapter in this section Ferrer-Pérez and Bosch-Fiol assert that violence and intimate partner violence are health problems of epidemic and global proportions. While recognizing that there is no single perpetrator or victim profile or individual/ family socio-demographic social indicators for domestic violence, they suggest that the inadequate social supports and economic protections that are available to females are the underlying reasons why women continue to struggle to exit domestic violence situations. They conclude by cautioning that while the effects of the austerity policies that many Western countries put in place to deal with the last economic crisis are not yet visible, in their estimation they are likely to further contribute to the invisibilization of the problems female victims of domestic violence face.

While acknowledging that the link between domestic violence and sport is at present correlational and, as such, further research needs to be completed to unequivocally prove the link, Williams and Neville in the last chapter of this section posit that the 'holy trinity' of sports, alcohol, and hegemonic masculinity are the underpinning factors that contribute to domestic violence. As such, they suggest sport has a pivotal role in combating domestic violence through engaging players and spectators *'in confronting and tackling the toxic*

practices that are often associated with hegemonic masculinity, in conjunction with female empowerment and the pursuit of gender equality'.

SECTION FOUR: THE MALE PERSPECTIVE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Given that the domestic violence discourse up to now has been largely driven and dominated by the feminist perspective this section attempts to bring some gendered balance to the current understanding of domestic violence by providing a male perspective. In this regard, Section Four is comprised of five chapters. The first four chapters relate to a study which examined the adult repercussions of childhood experiences of maltreatment in males. The fifth and final chapter in this section by Wells, Turner, and Cooper suggests that the way to reduce the occurrence of domestic violence is to strengthen the fathering role.

The opening chapter of this section provides a definitional description of two components parts of the umbrella term 'child maltreatment', which encapsulates both the abuse and the witnessing aspects of domestic violence. In addition, prevalence figures, risk factors and gender differences are provided for both child abuse and child witnessing acts. Next, the authors provide a detailed description of the methodology used in the design, data collection and analysis of the study's findings. The chapter closes with a discussion of the difficulties associated with research which is reliant on its participants' reflected memories.

In the second chapter Taylor, Goddard and Pooley document adult males' recollections of their childhood experiences of child maltreatment, as well as their lives as young boys growing up in dysfunctional and abusive family environments. The chapter culminates by detailing the progressive adolescent realization that child abuse and interparental domestic violence are not acceptable societal norms. The authors conclude that although adolescents are able by weight of their increased physicality and independence to end their '*walking on ice*' maltreatment experiences, however, by this juncture in their development considerable damage has already often been done to their psyche.

In the third chapter of this section Taylor, Goddard, Pooley detail the repercussions that childhood experiences of maltreatment can have had on male victims' adult lives. The males' collective experiences are summarized in the chapter's core theme: '*Damaged lives*'. The chapter opens by describing how certain triggers can reignite adult males' childhood memories of being abused and/or of their witnessing of acts of domestic violence in the family home, which in turn lessens their adult sense of internal control. Moreover, how this loss of control allows their former childhood emotions of shame, guilt and anger to resurface and, in doing so, weaken their adult sense of self-worth. The study's males claim that these negative emotions contributed to their failed adult interpersonal relationships and their consequent disillusionment with life. The chapter closes with a discussion of the harm that society's widely held 'abused child – adult abuser' hypothesis has had on the males' adult lives.

In the fourth chapter in this section Goddard, Taylor, and Pooley reveal the pathway that the study's males took towards establishing a more fulfilled adult life. This pathway is encapsulated in the chapter's core theme: '*Endeavouring to move forward through engaging in the therapeutic process of psyche repair*'. The first step along this adult male journey was to create external strategies for dealing with the triggers that unleash their loss of internal

control and negative thoughts. Indeed, it was through a process of establishing practical coping strategies that the men revealed they were first able to begin to configure a pathway forward. This pathway involved seeking professional therapeutic assistance for their underlying problems. This help-seeking process enabled them to create a resilience platform on which their damaged psyche could be repaired. Once this resilience platform was in place, then the adult male victims experienced a noticeable growth in their emotional intelligence. The chapter closes with a discussion on the need for therapeutic services for males and an increased societal understanding of the factors that precipitate incidents of domestic violence.

The final chapter in this male perspective section is contributed by Wells, Turner, and Cooper. They maintain that the entrenched gender dyad of 'female victim' and 'male perpetrator' in the domestic violence discourse undoubtedly influences the underlying philosophy and assumptions that guide the design of government policies, programs and community activities aimed at reducing the prevalence of domestic violence as well as limiting the systematic long-term, dismantling of the socio-cultural conditions which allow violence to exist. The authors contend that what is also needed is the promotion of a positive fatherhood social perspective, as well as a constructive strategy for engaging boys and men in current domestic violence prevention efforts. For, they maintain that it is only through broadening the current gendered conception of vulnerability to domestic violence that a societal shift will occur.

SECTION FIVE: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the concluding chapter, Taylor and Pooley summarize the main message arising out of each of the chapters, present a series of interlinked strategies for reducing the occurrence of domestic violence, provide suggestions of what could be done to empower all individuals damaged by experiences of domestic violence, and, importantly, to help them devise resilient posttraumatic growth pathways forward in their lives. While, collectively and unequivocally all contributing scholars involved with this book are united in their condemnation of acts of domestic violence, the book's Editors are hopeful that this book will broaden the debate both around what acts constitute domestic violence and, as well generate a wider acceptance that it is the act of domestic violence that is intolerable and, as such, what is needed is a gender inclusive approach to solving this pressing societal issue.

We trust you will find this collection thought provoking.