

THE DARK SIDE OF FAMILIES

Current Family Violence Research

Edited by

DAVID FINKELHOR

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TO: Murray A. Straus

Dedicating a book to someone whose name appears as a co-editor is an unconventional gesture. We believe there is a sound explanation for this.

The field of family violence research, and three of the co-editors of this volume, owe a particular debt to Murray Straus. Murray was already a leading scholar in the field of family studies when he began his work on family violence. His own research blazed the trail for, and inspired the work of, most of the contributors to this volume. The volume itself grew out of a conference convened to mark the tenth anniversary of the University of New Hampshire Family Violence Research Program, which itself grew out of the work of Murray Straus.

We, the co-editors of this book were all trained by Murray Straus. We each could have chosen one of our own books to dedicate to him. But this book is the proper volume in which to make that dedication. We hope that Murray and the readers of this book will accept and understand this dedication.

**David Finkelhor
Richard J. Gelles
Gerald T. Hotaling**

Preface

This book has many names on the cover, still more names in the Table of Contents, and there are yet more people who helped make it possible. The book grew out of the National Conference for Family Violence Researchers held in Durham, New Hampshire in the summer of 1981. Nearly 160 researchers participated in that conference, and the quality of the presentations and discussion was high. We wish we could have included more of the papers in the present volume. Many had to be excluded only because of space limitations and the fact that in some cases they did not fit readily into the ultimate organization of the volume. We want to thank all those who participated in the conference and all those who submitted papers for consideration. The quality of their work was the inspiration behind this book.

Several people played key roles in the preparation of the conference and the manuscript. The enterprise was set in motion by Richard Gelles, who first proposed holding a conference to take stock of where we are in research on family violence, and to mark the tenth anniversary of the Family Violence Research Program at the University of New Hampshire. Conferences, however, take more than ideas. There must also be a dedicated staff to handle an endless amount of paper, starting with 16 copies of a grant application and ending on that happy day when the final manuscript was put together for mailing to the publisher. No one could have done this better than Sieglinde Fizz, Ruth Miller, and Elaine Hashem.

Financial assistance for the conference and book came from two sources. The Elliott Trust Fund Committee of the University of New Hampshire provided the initial grant that allowed us to plan the conference. The Center for Crime and Delinquency at the National Institute for Mental Health provided a major portion of the funds that made the project possible. In particular we would like to thank Saleem Shah and Tom Lalley for enthusiastic support all the way through.

A special word is needed about the important role that was played in the whole project by Gerry Hotaling. Much of the positive reaction to the conference was due in no small part to his effort as conference coordi-

Editors' Note: The names of editors of this volume are listed alphabetically to reflect their shared work on this project.

nator. Through careful planning and attention to detail, he anticipated many of the potential problems and solved them before they arose. He put in long hours tracking down and communicating with conference participants. His efforts built a reservoir of good humor and goodwill that infused the proceedings.

Gerry also coordinated the assembly of this volume. His colleagues want to thank him for handling the correspondence, the phone contacts, and much of the dirty work that goes into putting a book like this together. Above all, we are indebted to him for the knowledge and theoretical insight which he brought to the editing of this book.

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

This volume is a collection of writing by some of the best-known authorities on family violence and abuse. It contains not only some of the newest research and theoretical perspectives on family violence and abuse, but also articles from a wide range of academic disciplines. Contributors include sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, physicians, human developmental theorists, social work researchers, social policy researchers, and others. In addition to the diversity of its authors, this is one of the only works on this topic that pays attention to many of the forms family violence and abuse take. The book covers a broad spectrum of issues and controversies in wife abuse, child abuse, the sexual abuse of children, and marital rape. Two of these subjects, sexual abuse and marital rape, have not been widely researched or written about previously.

The selection of articles for this volume was guided by three broad objectives: first, to create a state-of-the-art volume on family violence and abuse; second, to crystallize the key interdisciplinary issues confronting family violence and abuse researchers; and third, to lay out a research agenda for the coming years.

Taken singly, the chapters are quite diverse. But the diversity is misleading. A number of common themes and issues are focused on in this volume. First, many chapters share the perspective that violence and abuse grow out of the nature of social arrangements. Second, even though many different forms of family violence and abuse are written about, several articles explore the commonalities and important etiological differences among these forms (Finkelhor, Chapter 1; Gelles, Chapter 9; Berkowitz, Chapter 10; Sebastian, Chapter 11; and Straus, Chapter 13). Relatedly, several articles examine the common effects of victimization across forms of family violence and abuse (Walker, Chapter 2; Shields and Hanneke, Chapter 8; Finkelhor and Yllo, Chapter 7; and Stark and Flitcraft, Chapter 21).

A third theme that runs through this volume is an expansion of research concern to groups other than victims of family violence and abuse. There are chapters that examine the individual and social characteristics of male perpetrators of both wife abuse and child abuse (Walker, Chapter 2; Fagan et al., Chapter 3; and Martin, Chapter 18) and chapters that focus on the attitudes and behaviors of professional groups concerned with the treatment of victims of family violence and abuse (Stark and Flitcraft, Chapter 21; and O'Toole and Turbett, Chapter 22). The motivations of those who

conduct family violence research are also the focus of examination (Wardell et al., Chapter 4; and Washburne, Chapter 17).

Perhaps the most important shared aspect of this volume is the greater methodological diversity and attention to theoretical detail evidenced by the chapters. Compared to past research, the chapters included here reveal distinct signs of a more comprehensive social science approach to the study of family violence and abuse.

Past research on family violence has certainly not been atheoretical or devoid of methodological rigor. However, past research was primarily concerned with more pressing problems, such as definitions of terms like "violence" and "abuse" and establishing estimates of the prevalence of forms of family violence.

The state of family violence and abuse research during the 1970s was the focus of two recent review articles by Zigler (1979) and Gelles (1980). These authors concur that theoretical and methodological refinement is critical in the years ahead for progress in this field of study.

The more prominent recommendations made by Zigler (1979) and Gelles (1980) are the following:

- (1) linking the study of forms of family violence and abuse to more well-established research literatures;
- (2) the use of more nonclinical samples;
- (3) increased diversity of measurement instruments, data collection techniques, and research designs; and
- (4) systematic theory building and testing.

Based on these criteria, the chapters in this volume represent a step toward greater theoretical and methodological sophistication in research on family violence and abuse.

LINKS TO BETTER-ESTABLISHED RESEARCH LITERATURES

In an article directed to child abuse researchers, Zigler (1979) called for an expansion of theoretical horizons. He urged researchers to move from a view of abuse as an isolated phenomenon to one that orders data from better-developed research traditions. His remarks are just as applicable to research on other forms of family violence and abuse.

It is evident that the articles presented here reflect this advice. Authors have borrowed propositions from a number of theoretical perspectives and applied them to the family violence and abuse literature. For example, Berkowitz (Chapter 10) looks at family violence in light of his vast work in the social psychology of human aggression. Sebastian (Chapter 11) examines violence in families from work in the social psychology of aggression—specifically attraction theory and attribution theory. Herzberger (Chapter 20) takes a social cognitive approach to the issue of the cross-generational transmission of abuse. She pays particular attention to the merits of attribution theory for this issue. In an attempt to tie together findings from several forms of family violence and abuse, Gelles (Chapter 9) uses