

Handbook **of Family Violence**

Edited by

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Plenum Press • New York and London

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Handbook of family violence.

Includes bibliographies and indexes.

1. Family violence—United States. I. Van Hasselt, Vincent B. [DNLM: 1. Family. 2. Violence. HQ 809 H236]

HQ809.3.U5H35 1987

362.8'2

87-7204

ISBN 0-306-42648-X

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A Division of Plenum Publishing Corporation

233 Spring Street, New York, N.Y. 10013

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Printed in the United States of America

To our parents

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Preface

In the last decade there has been heightened clinical and investigative activity in the area of family violence. This, of course, is partly attributable to recent surveys showing a high incidence of family violence in the United States. For example, there are indications that nearly 30% of married women in this country are victims of physical abuse by spouses at some point in their marriage. Further, FBI statistics show that approximately 13% of all homicides are husband–wife killings. Moreover, it has been projected that such figures are likely to increase over the next several years.

Consistent with these trends, funding of family violence research by both federal and private agencies has increased. Indeed, federal agencies, such as the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, have provided considerable support for work in this area. In addition, family violence, particularly wifebattering, child abuse, and sexual abuse of children has been the focus of media attention at the national level, and has generated intensive interest in both lay and professional publications. Moreover, there have been several recent governmental hearings and investigations regarding the prevalence of these problems.

Despite the fact that we still have much to learn about the victims and perpetrators of family violence, in recent years an increasingly large body of empirical data have been adduced about this issue. These data have appeared in disparate journals and books. That being the case, we and our editor at Plenum (Eliot Werner) felt that a *Handbook* now was warranted.

The *Handbook of Family Violence* is divided into four parts and includes 19 chapters. Part I (Introduction) consists of an overview of the field. In Part II (Theoretical Models) there are three chapters representing the psychoanalytic, social learning, and sociological perspectives. Part III (Forms of Family Violence) consists of eight chapters, ranging from the physical abuse of children, to marital rape, and to elder abuse. Chapters in this section present descriptions of the problems, epidemiological findings, assessment and treatment, case illustrations, current research status, ethical and legal issues, and future directions.

In Part IV (Special Issues) we have seven chapters: Violence among Intimates; An Epidemiological Review; Prevention of Wife Abuse; Neurological Factors; Alcohol, Alcoholism, and Family Violence; Domestic Abuse: The Pariah of the Legal System; Family Violence in Cross-Cultural Perspective; and Research Issues Concerning Family Violence.

Many people have contributed of their time and effort to bring this volume to

fruition. First, we thank our gracious contributors for sharing their expertise with us. Second, we thank our technical assistants for their contributions: Mary Anne Frederick, Mary Jo Horgan, Florence Levito, Judith A. Kowalski, Jenifer McKelvy, Louise B. Moore, and Mary H. Newell. And finally, once again we thank our editor at Plenum, Eliot Werner, for agreeing about the timeliness of this project and for his willingness to tolerate the inevitable problems and delays.

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I

INTRODUCTION

1

Overview

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PREVALENCE

The past decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in the scope and magnitude of clinical and investigative interest in family violence. Indeed, epidemiological, evaluation, and intervention efforts have encompassed a wide range of problems. Some of these include wife battering, physical and sexual abuse of children, incest, marital rape, and domestic homicide. More recently, elder or parent abuse and husband battering have been recognized as warranting attention as well. Heightened activity in this area is attributable to a number of factors. First, there is a growing awareness that violence in the home is a burgeoning public health problem. This has been evinced by research that has revealed alarmingly high prevalence rates of the various forms of violence and victimization. For example, epidemiological studies indicate that there were 929,310 documented cases of child abuse and neglect nationwide in 1982 (American Humane Association, 1984). This represents a 123% increase since 1976 and a 9% increase over 1981. With regard to spouse abuse, Steinmetz (1977a) estimated that out of the total married population of 47 million couples, 3.3 million wives and over a quarter of a million husbands are subjected to severe beatings from their spouses. Also, Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics show that as many as 13% of all homicides in the United States are husband–wife killings. And whereas husbands are responsible for substantially more violent acts, husbands and wives are relatively comparable in terms of committing domestic homicide (Gelles, 1972; Steinmetz, 1977b).

IMPACT

A second reason for the greater attention to family violence is the accumulation of clinical and research findings documenting the deleterious effects of this problem on its

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victims. Illustrative of this point is a recent review by Browne and Finkelhor (1986) that examined initial and long-term effects of child sexual abuse. These investigators found a body of empirical data attesting to initial reactions of anxiety, depression, aggression, anger and hostility, and sexually inappropriate behavior in some portion of sexually abused children. Some consistent long-term difficulties were depression, self-destructive behavior, anxiety, and sexual maladjustment, to name a few. A similar overview of the clinical literature on consequences of physical abuse and neglect in children found consistent evidence of deficits in intellectual and academic functioning, as well as a variety of internalizing and externalizing disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety, aggressiveness, social withdrawal, conduct problems) in this population (Ammerman, Cassisi, Hersen, & Van Hasselt, 1986).

Numerous investigations also have clearly shown the physical and psychological toll exacted by wife battering. Many victims of this type of violence report such difficulties as somatic illness, depression (Gayford, 1975), suicide attempts, and drug or alcohol abuse (Stark, Flitcraft, & Frazier, 1983). The clinical literature is replete with descriptions of the severely damaging impact of other forms of family violence (e.g., incest, marital rape, elder abuse) on the physical, social, and emotional functioning of their victims.

SOCIAL AND LEGAL ACTIVISM

Another impetus for the expansion of direct services and the increased number of research endeavors in the area of family violence has been the widespread social and legal activism on behalf of the rights of victims. In particular, systematic lobbying and organizational activities by feminist groups and social welfare representatives have played a crucial role in heightening public and professional awareness of the extent and magnitude of family violence and in implementing steps to deal with the problem. For example, the plight of battered women was made known primarily as a result of actions by the women's movement, which also is responsible for the initial programs and service agencies (e.g., women's shelters and health centers, consciousness raising and support groups, women's law collectives, the National Organization for Women's Legal and Educational Defense Fund) for battered wives. An important study by Kalmuss and Straus (1983) has shown, in fact, that

the level of feminist organization in a state is a significant determinant of the number of wife abuse services in that state. Moreover, the level of feminist organization is a more potent predictor of programs for battered women than is per capita income, political culture, individual feminist sentiment, or domestic violence legislation that allocates funds for services. (p. 372)

Kalmuss and Strauss (1983) also pointed out, however, that interest groups are unable to impact directly on policy and legislative initiatives: "Since they cannot pass legislation themselves, they must rely on lobbying, persuading, and pressuring policy makers" (p. 373). Fortunately, the tireless and concerted efforts of these groups have met with considerable success in achieving policy changes. By 1980, most states had enacted some form of domestic violence legislation. This included assignment of civil and/or criminal remedies for victims of family violence. For example, Act PC273D in California underscores the unacceptability of spouse abuse by making it a felony for an individual to hit and cause traumatic injury to his or her partner. Further, nearly half of the states in this country have passed laws that provide appropriations to domestic violence programs. Programs for the prevention and treatment of child abuse have been boosted substantially

nationwide by the Child Abuse and Treatment Act. This bill has been beneficial in providing funding for research and demonstration projects designed to assess and remediate the problem. This piece of legislation also widens the traditional scope of child abuse programs by including victims involved in child pornography and infants with severe, life-threatening birth defects.

FUNDING AND DISSEMINATION

As part of the response to the large public outcry concerning the enormity and severity of family violence, increased state and federal funding of research and direct services has occurred in recent years. For example, the National Institute of Mental Health, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, National Institute for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect are but a few of the federal agencies that have provided support for work in this area. This assistance has enabled investigators to garner information on the incidence of various forms of family violence, identify etiological factors, determine consequences, and develop prevention and treatment strategies for the various forms of violence in the home.

Further, dissemination of information and research findings to professionals and the general public has increased exponentially. Numerous governmental hearings and investigations on physical and sexual abuse of children and wife battering have been conducted over the past 5 years. In addition, dissemination of results of empirical studies has been carried out by professionals from a wide range of disciplines, including clinical and counseling psychology, sociology, psychology, psychiatry, public health, criminology, law, marital counseling, and social work. Most investigations are being published in the numerous professional journals (*Child Abuse and Neglect*, *Family Violence Bulletin*, *Journal of Family Violence*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *Violence and Victims*, *Victimology: An International Journal*) that have recently emerged as dissemination outlets specifically geared toward family violence research.

SCOPE OF THE HANDBOOK

Given the wide range of problems encompassed by family violence, coupled with the increased professional, public, and legislative attention it has received, we believe that the burgeoning information needed to be included under one cover in the form of a handbook. A sourcebook on family violence is, in our opinion, long overdue. In the present volume, we review the major developments in light of the theoretical perspectives, specific forms of family violence, and special issues relevant to the field. The book begins with chapters on each of the major theoretical orientations to family violence. Each of these chapters attempts to highlight the heuristic value of the different orientations for furthering both clinical and research endeavors. In Chapter 2, Susan McLeer provides a particularly thoughtful treatise regarding psychoanalytic perspectives on family violence. As many of our contributors elected to do in order to provide more detailed discussion, McLeer's chapter focuses on just one type of family violence: wife abuse. Applications of psychoanalytic theory to family violence have been the target of considerable criticism. McLeer's chapter helps the reader to understand controversial elements of the theory, and deals directly with some very difficult issues regarding the implications of the perspective.

In Chapter 3, K. Daniel O'Leary discusses social learning theory as it relates to

family violence, and once again, devotes particular attention to spousal aggression. In Chapter 4, Carl Bersani and Huey-Tsyh Chen review sociological theories on family violence. As they demonstrate, “the sociological model” is more accurately a group of diverse sociological explanations for the phenomena of family violence. Here again, the issue of heuristic value receives particular consideration, as the authors conclude that theorizing and empirical research in family violence has been misaligned. One factor in this regard undoubtedly has been, as indicated earlier, the diversity of professions that have attempted to investigate the problem. Psychological, psychiatric, sociological, and legal perspectives have been emphasized in the literature on family violence. The research armamentarium, knowledge base, and interests of investigators from each of these camps have differed considerably. It is our hope that this book will serve to increase communication, understanding, and collaboration across clinicians and researchers from disparate orientations, and thus help to facilitate progress in the area. Alternatively, one must recognize that family violence is multiply determined. Any one theory can account for some, but not all, of the variance in the problem.

In Chapter 5, Gayla Margolin, Linda Gorin Sibner, and Lisa Gleberman review current knowledge on the topic of wife battering. The complexities of this literature are highlighted, beginning with a discussion of definitional issues. Assessment and treatment strategies are reviewed, including legal and education/community action alternatives to curtailing violence. (A more detailed account of prevention approaches is provided by Andrea Sedlak in Chapter 14.)

The next chapter (6), by Raymond Starr, provides an examination of similar issues as they apply to physical abuse of children. This chapter is, by design, limited to consideration of physical abuse. In many respects, the findings concerning physical abuse of children form the cornerstone of research and theory on family violence in general. More empirical data have been accrued on this problem than on any other form of family violence. Further, there are more reports available pertaining to treatment efficacy on this topic. Nevertheless, Starr’s chapter concludes with a discussion of the many areas of uncertainty in the literature on child abuse, and the shortcomings of primary prevention efforts that have been carried out to date.

Physical abuse is but one type of violence that can occur within the home. Increasing attention recently has been focused on sexual violence and abuse within families. This problem takes three forms: child sexual abuse, incest, and marital rape. Perhaps as an outgrowth of the considerable clinical and investigative activity with physically abused children, child sexual abuse has received the most scrutiny. Child protection laws, which have resulted from widely publicized cases of child sexual abuses, also have brought child sexual abuse to the forefront. In Chapter 7, David Wolfe, Vicky Wolfe, and Connie Best discuss the impact of sexual abuse on child victims. Data regarding incidence and severity of child sexual abuse are presented. Common psychological sequelae in child victims are described, as are relevant assessment and treatment strategies.

Chapter 8, by Judith Becker and Emily Coleman, reviews the problem of incest. Here, characteristics of the perpetrators of intrafamily sexual abuse are described. Assessment measures for use with the offender are reviewed, and a cognitive-behavioral treatment package is outlined. Although intended specifically for use with perpetrators of incest, certain techniques that are covered may be appropriate for use with other sexual offenders, such as the husband who rapes his wife. However, as highlighted by Becker and Coleman, it is imperative to match the intervention strategy with the results of comprehensive assessment. This is necessary to provide an accurate focus on critical

symptoms and/or dysfunctions exhibited by individuals in treatment for incestuous behavior.

In Chapter 9, Mildred Daley Pagelow reviews marital rape, which almost exclusively takes the form of wife rape. The complex issues surrounding marital exemptions in rape laws comprise a major portion of Pagelow's analysis. The role of economic pressures in keeping women in sexually abusive relationships is discussed. Other factors that may contribute to the incidence of marital rape also are offered, including the potential role of pornography. Issues in assessment and treatment of rape victims are considered, and comparisons and contrasts to the literature on nonmarital rape are provided.

Whereas child abuse and wife abuse have received the most clinical and investigative attention, and have been shown to be reaching epidemic proportions, other forms of abuse more recently have been reported to be occurring at disturbing rates. In Chapter 10, Suzanne Steinmetz and Joseph Lucca review the literature on husband battering. This problem frequently has been dismissed as inconsequential. However, the authors contend that husband abuse, like any form of violence within the family, is never insignificant. Although the imminent danger of any single attack against a husband by his wife may be minimal, the possibility of escalation, or counter-violence by the husband clearly exists.

A form of family violence that has been a topic of considerable media attention, but for which few empirical data are available, is elder abuse. The problem of battered elders is addressed in Chapter 11 by Karl Pillemer and J. Jill Suitor, who incorporate the gerontological literature on adult children-parent relationships and research on the quality of marital relationships in their analysis. These authors argue that beyond being a distinct phenomenon, elder abuse "can also be understood in part as an outgrowth of family conflict later in life."

In Chapter 12, Angela Browne reviews her findings on homicides committed by women involved in severely abusive relationships. Homicides between partners represent the most pernicious escalation of family violence. The FBI's Uniform Crime reports indicate that almost 20% of homicides occur within a family, and that about half of those involve a spouse killing his or her partner. Browne relates the occurrence of homicide by an abused woman to increasingly severe episodes of abuse within the context of that woman's perceptions of the potential danger and the survival alternatives available to her.

Epidemiological findings pertaining to domestic violence are reviewed in Chapter 13 by Evan Stark and Anne Flitcraft. The chapter examines the components and sequelae of domestic violence. In addition, it considers risk factors that could potentially be targeted for community interventions. Chapter 14 by Andrea Sedlak considers prevention issues in greater detail, and evaluates current knowledge regarding critical elements of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention programs.

Although socioeconomic and cultural factors have been the focus of considerable study with regard to the etiology of family violence, neuropsychological and metabolic factors also have been implicated as possible causative variables. In Chapter 15, Frank Elliot provides a succinct overview of current data on these factors. Yet another disorder that may impact on the likelihood of family violence is alcoholism. Numerous investigators have cited alcohol use, or abuse, as a contributor to family violence. However, its precise role has yet to be determined. Kenneth Leonard and Theodore Jacob consider the multidimensional nature of alcoholism and alcohol use and their association with the similarly diverse problem of family violence in Chapter 16.

Family violence clearly is multifaceted, and multiply determined. Individual, familial, and societal-cultural variables must be taken into account in relation to both assess-

ment and treatment. A highly relevant societal factor is the legal system. Treatment responses to family violence cannot be isolated from the backdrop of significant legal issues specific to this area. Indeed, offenders often are court referred for intervention. In Chapter 17, Patricia Micklow traces the history of the legal perspective on domestic violence and discusses current legislative initiatives enacted to deal with the problem. A number of critical legal issues are reviewed and future directions for legislative efforts are considered.

There has been much controversy surrounding the influence of cultural variables on the incidence and patterns of family violence. In Chapter 18, David Levinson examines cross-cultural data bearing on this issue, and presents findings from a study of 90 societies. Factors relating to family sexual types, (in)equality, and social organizations are described and their potential impact on family violence rates is discussed.

The book concludes with a chapter (19) on research issues, by Robert Geffner, Alan Rosenbaum, and Honore Hughes. Following an overview of conceptual and methodological issues in family violence research and treatment, these authors provide specific recommendations for future investigative strategies.

We trust that the information and recommendations presented throughout our handbook will stimulate additional clinical and research endeavors in this relatively new field of study. Further, we expect that the *Handbook of Family Violence* will be beneficial to practitioners, researchers, educators, legislators, public health officials, and students alike.

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