

Cindy L. Miller-Perrin & Robin D. Perrin

Child Maltreatment

An Introduction



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SAGE Publications

International Educational and Professional Publisher
Thousand Oaks London New Delhi

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Portions of this book were originally published in *Family Violence Across the Lifespan*, 1997, by O. W. Barnett, C. L. Miller-Perrin, and R. D. Perrin. Copyright © 1997 by Sage Publications, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Sage Publications, Inc., and Ola W. Barnett.

For information:



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2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
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SAGE Publications Ltd.
6 Bonhill Street
London EC2A 4PU
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
M-32 Market
Greater Kailash I
New Delhi 110 048 India

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Miller-Perrin, Cindy L. (Cindy Lou), 1962-
Child maltreatment: An introduction / by Cindy L. Miller-Perrin and Robin D. Perrin.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7619-1577-X (cloth: alk. paper)

ISBN 0-7619-1578-8 (pbk: alk. paper)

I. Child abuse—United States. I. Perrin, Robin D. II. Title.

HV6626.S2 .M545 1999

362.76'0973—dc21

99-6011

00 01 02 03 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

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Child

Maltreatment

*We would like to dedicate this book to our children, Madison and Jacob,
who are a constant reminder of God's most precious gift;*

*To our parents, Helen, Emerson, Ken, and Libby, who gave us healthy and happy
childhoods and continue to nurture us through their love and support; and*

To the memory of John Nicks, a dear friend who so loved children.

Preface

The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused.

deMause, 1974, p. 1

Even a cursory examination of history reminds us that child maltreatment is not a new phenomenon. It has probably existed in families since the beginning of time. The mistreatment of children, however, did not receive serious attention as a social problem until the child-saving movement of the mid- to late 1800s. The research community essentially ignored the problem until the 1960s, when Colorado physician Dr. C. Henry Kempe first publicized his research on the multiple bone fractures appearing in the X rays of abused children.

Since the discovery of child maltreatment in the 1960s, progress in the field has been rapid, as many grassroots organizations, mental health professionals, university researchers, lawmakers, medical personnel, criminal justice workers, and the media have mobilized their efforts to understand the problem. The combined efforts of these groups have led to a growing national concern about child maltreatment. Today, with news coverage of highly publicized cases, cover stories in magazines, television programs, and movies, we are familiar with child maltreatment. Although the media exposure has helped make people more aware, much is still unknown about this complex and multifaceted problem.

It is our hope that this book, *Child Maltreatment: An Introduction*, will serve us all in our attempt to “discover” and understand this serious social problem. We, as authors, want to continue to bring the topic into the mainstream of public

knowledge. To achieve these goals, we have drawn together a voluminous research literature that describes the magnitude, consequences, and explanations of child maltreatment. We also discuss the professional and social response to child maltreatment, in hopes of furthering our understanding of how to treat child maltreatment victims and how to prevent child maltreatment.

The information in this volume is organized to present a broad overview and summary of research findings. Throughout the book, we have attempted to keep our commitment to responsible scholarship and have made every attempt to control our own biases when presenting research on controversial topics. We have tried to cultivate the reader's interest by highlighting a number of current controversies within boxed inserts. Six chapters begin with an interview of a nationally or internationally known expert, providing an example of the variety of philosophies and training typical of the many professionals working in the field of child maltreatment. For readers who are interested in obtaining further details on specific topics, additional references and resources can be found in appendixes at the end of the book.

It is, perhaps, only fair to acknowledge that our ultimate goal is a lofty one: We hope that we have presented the content in such a way that readers can find their own personal roles in the struggle to end child maltreatment. Child maltreatment is a pervasive problem that affects families and communities all over the world. An effective response to the problem will require the commitment of many individuals from a variety of segments within society. We hope that this text will increase understanding about child maltreatment and motivate readers to join the effort to combat this problem.

We have many people to thank for their contributions to this text. First, we wish to acknowledge C. Terry Hendrix, senior editor at Sage Publications, as well as the other involved staff at Sage. This is our second opportunity to work with Sage, and through both the expected and the unexpected, Terry has always been encouraging and helpful. He is absolutely marvelous to work with and is a true leader in the battle to end child maltreatment. We also wish to thank Ann West for her support, guidance, and perceptive comments. The reviewers deserve everlasting praise for their careful reading of the text. We learned much from their insights. We are also indebted to the scholars who granted us permission to interview them, for their willingness to be involved in this project and for their contributions to the field.

Finally, we want to thank our friends, colleagues, and students at Pepperdine University. We are so fortunate to be able to work in a supportive environment and with such caring people. Special thanks go to Steve Monsma, the chair of our division, who continues to encourage us in our work, and to Melissa Houghton, who tackled many a cumbersome task for us, often on short notice.

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