

# Preface

Most of the knowledge on partner violence has been accumulated through intensive research over the past four decades. Some of the studies examined the origins of the violent behaviors, and others examined their outcomes. Questions regarding the development of partner conflicts that escalate to violence, such as how partner conflicts begin, evolve, and end have received no empirical examination or supported answers. Answering such questions is critical for understanding and effective coping with what, in recent decades, has become one of the most difficult social problems in many cultures and societies. Recently, it has become clearer to theoreticians, researchers, and practitioners that more such effort is required to promote knowledge in the field. The purpose of this book is to contribute to the development and advancement of this perspective. In the upcoming chapters, I focus on the escalatory partner conflict while relying on existing knowledge, case studies, and accumulated practical experience. Past and present core issues are reviewed, discussed, and criticized and are sometimes rephrased and developed into a comprehensive, integrative approach.

The book begins by examining the role of gender in the problem of partner violence. This has been a longstanding, highly controversial core issue. As such, it provides the opportunity to review and examine various typical perspectives on partner violence, as a theoretical starting point for addressing more advanced issues discussed later in the book. The second chapter addresses the association between dominance and control and partner violence. This is a natural extension of the subject addressed in Chap. 1, leading to a deeper discussion on the role of gender in partner violence. It also serves as the basis for further discussion of issues that are not necessarily gender related. The discussion on dominance and control points to violence as an illegitimate means of forcing one person's will on another. Inherent in this perspective is the assumption explored in the third chapter—that using violence is a rational choice. This view is largely consistent with numerous general behavioral theories, the most prominent of which are the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1973). Such theories are reviewed in the fourth chapter and their suitability and applicability to the field of partner violence

research are examined, presenting a series of factors that predict violence with different probabilities. Nevertheless, despite the importance of these theories for understanding partner violence, they do not presume to describe or explain the process leading up to this behavior. The fifth chapter makes a preliminary attempt to describe, explain, and expand this process using the social information processing model of Dodge and colleagues (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 1980).

The theoretical and empirical infrastructure laid in the book's first five chapters serves to develop the framework toward an understanding of the dynamics of partner conflicts, especially conflicts that escalate to violence. Escalation is at the heart of the approach laid out in the second part of this book. This term describes a tendency to increasing severity of aggressive behaviors. The sixth chapter discusses the escalation of partner conflicts across relationship periods, and the seventh chapter examines escalation within a conflict. Chapter 8 proposes an approach by which the theoretical framework of conflict dynamics can be implemented in the study of partner violence. Chapter 9 reverts to the issue discussed at the beginning—gender differences in partner violence, this time using the dynamic approach developed throughout the second part of the book. The tenth and final chapter endeavors to conceptualize the ideas developed throughout the previous chapters, proposing a new paradigm, which has the potential to promote our understanding of the problem of partner violence.

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Partner Violence

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