

Eckstein, J. J. (2013). Murray A. Straus. In L. L. Finley (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of domestic violence and abuse* (pp. 483-484). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO. ISBN: 978-1610690010



Copyrighted Material

Encyclopedia of Domestic Violence and Abuse

• LAURA L. FINLEY, EDITOR

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

Encyclopedia of Domestic Violence and Abuse

Volume 1: A–R

LAURA L. FINLEY, EDITOR



Santa Barbara, California • Denver, Colorado • Oxford, England

Copyrighted Material

STRAUS, MURRAY

Murray Straus is professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire. In 1968, he founded and continues to serve as co-director of the Family Research Laboratory. Dr. Straus received his PhD in 1956 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is the founding editor of *Teaching Sociology* and *Journal of Family Issues*, and the author or coauthor of over 250 articles and over 20 books on crime, corporal punishment, aggression, partner violence, and measurement of conflict tactics in family relationships. His work, controversial in some academic circles, is yet renowned for its cross-national and -cultural applications. Best known for his studies of aggression, corporal punishment, and domestic abuse in families, Dr. Straus and his colleagues have consistently researched provocative areas with methods subject to scrutiny in many disciplines.

Classified within the “family violence perspective” of domestic abuse research, Dr. Straus created the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) in the early 1970s. The CTS are typically used to measure conflict and individuals’ potential for violence in interpersonal relationships. The CTS, whether in its original or revised CTS2 form, has been implemented in over 1,000 studies. Originally created to measure three categories of conflict resolution—Reasoning, Verbal Aggression, and Violence—the CTS2, in response to many criticisms, relabeled the items in these categories: the revision included Physical Assault (formerly Violence), Physical Injury (added), Psychological Aggression (formerly Verbal Aggression), Sexual Coercion (added), and Negotiation (formerly Reasoning). The CTS, most commonly used to assess abuse by family violence researchers, is also the source of the most debate in the domestic abuse literature. Criticisms focus on failures of the CTS and family violence researchers to assess context, injury, fear, coercion, and control or to accurately reflect victims’ experiences in the form of specific violent relationships.

Straus and colleagues reported that abuse may occur in 60 percent of all marriages (Straus & Gelles, 1990). Although prevalence of domestic abuse in the United States was initially tracked in the late 1960s, the emergence of Straus’s work with the CTS marked the point at which prevalence findings became controversial. A second controversy surrounding family violence perspectives—and Straus’s work in particular—is the consistent finding that men and women report similar frequencies of victimization. The finding that women perpetrate abuse as often as or more

than men, reported by family violence researchers using both the CTS and other measures, has been documented in over 200 individual studies. However, critics of the CTS and the family violence perspective discount these findings, arguing the research fails to account for context, injury, and relationship types.

Another controversy sparked by research from Straus and colleagues, using the Parent-Child version of the CTS (CTS-PC), was the finding that parental use of corporal punishment may increase children's likelihood of a lowered IQ and increased antisocial behavior, read by some as abuse perpetration, later in life (Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims, 1997). To date, the CTS, in all its versions, is the most frequently used assessment of abusive tactics in family relationships. As a result, the research of Dr. Straus remains the most referenced—both critically and positively regarded—in the field of domestic abuse research and applied professions.

See also: Child Abuse and Domestic Abuse; Children, Impact of Domestic Abuse on; Female Perpetrators; Male Victims of Domestic Abuse

Further Reading

Family Research Laboratory: <http://www.unh.edu/rlf/>

Fiebert, M. S. (2011). *References examining assaults by women on their spouses or male partners: An annotated bibliography*. Retrieved from California State University, Psychology Department website: <http://www.csulb.edu/~mfiebert/assault.htm>

National Institute of Justice on Measuring Domestic Abuse: <http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/intimate-partner-violence/measuring.htm>

Straus, M. A. (2004). Cross-cultural reliability and validity of the Revised Conflict Tactics Scales: A study of university student dating couples in 17 nations. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 38, 407–432.

Straus, M. A., & Gelles, R. J. (1986). Societal change and change in family violence from 1975 to 1985 as revealed by two national surveys. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 48, 465–479.

Straus, M. A., & Gelles, R. J. (1990). *Physical violence in American families: Risk factors and adaptations to violence in 8,145 families*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Straus, M. A., Hamby, S. L., & Warren, W. L. (2003). *The Conflict Tactics Scales handbook: Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2), CTS, Parent-Child Version (CTS-PC)*. Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services.

Straus, M. A., Sugarman, D., & Giles-Sims, J. (1997). Corporal punishment by parents and subsequent anti-social behavior of children. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 151, 761–767.

Jessica J. Eckstein