

Domestic Violence in The Black Prince

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the theories about aggression and violence in general, and what motivates such behaviour. Next, the focus will shift to marital violence and its causes. After pointing out the problems involved in the measurement of violence and aggression, Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince* will be analyzed as a novel both illustrating and supporting the theories about aggression and violence.

Key words: violence, aggression, family, reasons for violence, theories, Iris Murdoch, *The Black Prince*

Özet

Makalenin amacı önce saldırganlık ve şiddetle ilgili genel kuramları verdikten sonra bu tür davranışların nedenlerini irdelemek ve evlilik kurumunda yaygın olan şiddet ve saldırganlık olayları ile ilgili görüşleri ele almaktır. Daha sonra şiddet ve saldırganlığın ölçümü ile ilgili metodolojik sorunlar ortaya konulacaktır. Iris Murdoch'ın *The Black Prince* adlı yapıtı bu konudaki kuramları destekleyen ve örnekleyen bir eser olarak incelenecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Şiddet, saldırganlık, aile kurumu, şiddet nedenleri, kuramlar, Iris Murdoch, *The Black Prince*

Aggression is a multifaceted phenomenon that has many determinants and serves many purposes; therefore, a large set of variables governing diverse facets of aggression must be taken into account in a complete theory of aggression (Bandura, 1983: 1). To Edward Wilson, human beings are innately aggressive and have a marked hereditary disposition to aggressive behaviour, as evidenced by warfare, representing the most organized technique of aggression, which has been endemic to every form of society throughout history (2001: 14). And no doubt acts of violence and wilful neglect within families have been occurring for as long as there have been human families. However, concern for spouse assault, especially when women are victims, has become marked only in the recent decades with the women's movement, which has led to the growth of shelter movement and law reform efforts (Ohlin and Tonry, 1989: 1-2).

Psychological abuse appears to be a precursor to other forms of violence, including life-threatening behaviour, and to accompany physical abuse (Arias, 1989:

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144). Negative consequences of physical and psychological abuse of women have been found to include, apart from physical injury, increased risk for homicide, fear, terror, inability to trust, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, feelings of inferiority, loneliness, pessimism, increased risk for suicide and psychophysiological complaints, such as restlessness, fatigue, insomnia (Arias, 1989: 140-1).

The high rate of domestic assault could be explained by the fact that an implicit cultural rule allows and expects a relaxation within the family of the usual standards of social interaction; also, since domestic assault usually occurs in private, both men and women can easily get away with it (Straus, 1999: 30).

In *The Black Prince*, a novel by Iris Murdoch, a rewriting of *Hamlet*, we encounter various forms of violence, mostly marital violence directed against women. Murdoch's moral philosophy and fiction have been greatly influenced by Plato. She constantly dwells on Platonic concepts and themes, and imagery from Platonic myths arises frequently in her work. One of them is the Apollo-Marsyas myth, which Murdoch links to "unselfing". In the myth, Marsyas, a mortal of uncommon musical abilities, hubriastically challenges the god of music, Apollo, to a contest, which he naturally loses. His penalty is flaying, a horrible and painful death. The Neo-Platonists interpreted this as a Bacchic pain leading to the clarity of Apollo. The way to perfection, goodness and self-discovery was by this road (Dipple, 1982: 107-8). As the means to the Platonic Good, both art and love possess this unselfing quality. In the novel Loxias is "the dear friend" of Bradley Pearson, the main character, and the editor of his novel. Loxias is one of the names of Apollo, the god of art and also a murderer who killed Marsyas by flaying him alive. As god of art Apollo is associated with the Black Eros, destructive and violent. Patara, to which Bradley dreams about going in order to write his masterpiece, was a city sacred to Apollo in ancient times (Spear 77). These connections between the novel and certain Greek myths lead us to expect considerable violence in the novel.

A brief summary of the novel is needed before analysing the aggressive and violent incidents in the novel: Bradley Pearson, a blocked writer aged 58, has packed his suitcases and is about to leave for Patara, where he hopes to write his great book in solitude when his plan is disrupted by three unexpected happenings. First, the doorbell rings and his ex-wife's brother, Francis Marloe, shows up to announce his ex-wife Christian is back from the States because her husband has died. Then his close friend Arnold Baffin, a one-book-a-year writer of popular novels, phones to say he thinks he has just killed his wife and asks Bradley to come. At the Baffins' Arnold tells Bradley that he and his wife Rachel had an argument over one of his novels and he accidentally hit her. Rachel has locked herself up in the bedroom, but lets Bradley in; she is in tears, her face is swollen and she has a black eye. Bradley notices that both Arnold and Rachel smell of alcohol. Rachel tells him that this is not

the first time such an incident has occurred and that she will never forgive Arnold, neither will she forgive Bradley for seeing her in such a state. After calming her down Bradley returns home in order to start on his journey at once only to have his sister Priscilla walk in in tears, saying she has left her husband Roger, who hates her and was trying to poison her. Priscilla is in a depressed state and threatens to commit suicide if Bradley goes away and leaves her alone. In the meantime Christian wants to renew their relationship, but Bradley responds in a very hostile manner. Arnold, on the other hand, becomes attracted to Christian, which makes Bradley jealous. Rachel initiates a sort of close relationship with Bradley, which makes him feel guilty. Bradley falls in love with Arnold and Rachel's teenage daughter Julian. When her parents find out about it, they become very aggressive, lock Julian up in her room to stop her seeing Bradley. Bradley and Julian run away to Patara, where Bradley is informed by Francis that Priscilla has committed suicide. As Bradley's attempts to make love to Julian properly have failed so far, Bradley does not want to return to London until he has done so. Soon after reading the cable, he brutally rapes her. Arnold has discovered where they are and breaks into the cottage. Bradley threatens to use violence if Arnold tries to take Julian away by force and Arnold leaves. But so does Julian too, without informing Bradley. After they are all back in London, Rachel kills Arnold upon finding the letter he wrote to Bradley about his intention to marry Christian Rachel arranges the evidence in such a way as to make Bradley appear guilty of the murder. Bradley is imprisoned and dies of cancer in prison where, having suffered Bacchic pain, he is able to write his great book, *The Black Prince*.

As depicted above, *The Black Prince* contains a considerable degree of violence, mainly family violence. Diane Goldstein claims that the occurrence of marital violence is hardly a new phenomenon. As early as Biblical times men were given the social and legal right to physically abuse their wives. In the fifteenth-century, the rights of husbands to use physical force on their wives became legally sanctioned in church and common law doctrine. Although wife-beating is no longer legally sanctioned, it is implicitly legitimized through the sex-role attitudes of the criminal justice system and western society in general (1983: 37-8). Since the 1970s attention to male-perpetrated violence has increased dramatically and violence against women has been identified as a critical economic, criminal justice and public health issue (Koss et al., 1994: ix). Spouse abuse is usually defined as inflicting serious and/or repeated physical injury by one spouse on the other. Many women who are raped are physically assaulted as well by their male partners (Koss et al. 15). Interestingly, the vast majority of acts of violence against women are perpetrated by men who have an intimate relationship with their victims (xvii). "Psychological" battering is also considered abusive behaviour by some researchers. One of the consistent findings of the research on marital violence in the U.S.A. has been that

abuse is not associated with geographic area, ethnic, racial or religious background or income level (Goldstein, 1983: 40). Yet, research indicated that rates of violence are higher in lower socioeconomic status, especially those marked by underemployment and unemployment, where financial pressures can lead to distress within the family (Burgess and Daper, 1989: 87). Factors associated with being the target or perpetrator of violent behaviours include sex-role attitudes, self-esteem, experiencing or witnessing violence in one's family of origin and interpersonal communication (Arriaga and Oskamp, 1999: 6). Despite the contribution of both spouses to the cycle of marital violence, researchers suggest that battered women need to be recognized as the "primary" victims because in comparison to their husbands, they are more likely to be seriously injured and they are locked into the marriage more due to economic and social constraints. It is widely recognized that women, on average, suffer much more frequent and more severe injury (physical, psychological and economic) than men (Straus, 1999: 21). Men, relative to women, have the potential to cause more physical damage, to protect themselves more effectively from harm because of their size and strength advantages. Furthermore, women's greater social and economic dependence often prevents their escaping abusive relationships.

Acts of aggression against women are commonplace. Gender-related norms, roles and cultural myths have been shown to sanction battery, sexual assault and sexual harassment of women by failing to hold men accountable for their actions and by trivializing the consequences of the violence (Koss et al., 1994: xvii). Violence against women is so pervasive and tenacious that it cannot be explained as solely the product of individual psychopathology or faulty communication. Multiple levels of coinfluences from societal to individual determine the expression of violence (3).

Aggression is defined as a response that delivers noxious stimuli to another organism. The noxious stimuli include attack and annoyers. Aggression can be physical or verbal, active or passive, direct or indirect (Buss, 1961: 3-4). It has to do with harming another person, possibly self and objects too. The notion of intention, whether conscious or unconscious, is important. The injury it causes may be physical or may cause psychological impairment (Bandura, 1983: 2). In the novel we witness all these different types of aggression. In a modern society aggressive styles of behaviour can be adopted from three main sources: family members, the subculture the person belongs to, and the modelling provided by the mass media as inhibitions over aggression are affected by exposure to televised violence (Bandura, 1983: 7). Physical aggression when successful leads to pain, but not necessarily to injury. Sexual aggression is insulting and degrading for women. The noxious stimuli delivered in verbal aggression are rejection and threat, like Bradley's treatment of Christian and Francis. Verbal threat is defined as a response that symbolizes or is

anticipatory of subsequent attack (Buss, 1961: 5-7). Assault includes overcoming or removing a barrier and eliminating the source of noxious stimulation. Bradley's behaviour toward Arnold when the latter tries to keep him away from his daughter is of this type.

Anger intensifies aggression by leading to a tension state, which is diminished by violent aggression (Buss, 1961: 10-11). Arnold's battering of Rachel is triggered by his anger at her persistence in criticizing his work. There are differences in anger arousal between males and females. Moreover, as females have a greater capacity for empathy, they are more sensitive to the consequences of aggression for the victim (White, 1983: 17). Hostility involves negative feelings and negative evaluations of people and events, like Bradley's feelings for Christian and Francis. Hostility may be part of an aggressive response in that there is strong resentment of and negative evaluation of the victim of the attack (Buss, 1961: 10-2). Hostility feeds on itself and may lead to vengeful aggression years after the actual stimuli have disappeared. When the opportunity presents itself, hostility over rejections, attacks and disappointments may erupt into violent revenge (Buss, 1961: 15) as seen in Rachel's murder of her husband. Christian takes her revenge after Bradley is accused of murder by claiming that everything that Bradley wrote about their marriage was false. Frustration may also be listed as an antecedent of aggression. John Dollard et al. in their article titled "Frustration and Aggression" take, as their starting point, the assumption that aggression is always a consequence of frustration and frustration occurs when an interference makes one's goal inaccessible (2001: 57-61). Bradley's rape of Julian is a result of his failure to make love properly in the preceding days. Strength of aggression is determined by the degree of interference and the number of frustration sequences due to barriers, failure, and conflict. Roger's abusive behaviours toward Priscilla may be accounted for by Priscilla's forming a barrier to his becoming officially the father of the child Marigold is going to give birth to. The closer an individual is to a goal, the more frustrating will be a blocking incident (Buss, 1961: 19-22). The news of Priscilla's suicide coming after Bradley's repeated failures with Julian is such an interference and is another factor which leads to his violent behaviour. In extremely inhibited people, like Bradley, the blocking of the aggressive response engenders additional frustration, and instigation to aggression builds up over time and may reach the point where it exceeds even his excessive defences (Megargee, 1970: 108-11).

For all its usefulness, frustration-aggression theory was gradually replaced by greater emphasis on external environmental cues as psychologists came to search for the precise circumstances that elicit aggression and violence. Attention shifted to the role of learning (Dollard, 2001: 66). According to social learning theory, frustration

or anger arousal is a facilitative but not a necessary condition for aggression. Frustration is likely to provoke aggression in people who have learned to respond to aversive treatment with aggressive behaviour. Moreover, people do not have to be angered or emotionally aroused to behave aggressively (73-6).

To Freud, the death instinct, which is a biological force in all living beings, is directed against itself and is a self-destructive drive, or it is directed outward, and in this case, tends to destroy others. It follows that aggression is not essentially a reaction to stimuli but a constantly flowing impulse rooted in the constitution of the human organism (in Fromm, 1973:15). Freud maintained that although the aggressive drives have a biological basis, inhibitions develop during childhood in the course of the child's interaction with his family, or as a result of the resolution of the Oedipus complex and the consequent formation of the superego (1970: 11). The Freudian belief that man is innately aggressive endorsed the views of conservative philosophers from Hobbes to Ortega y Gasset, however it was challenged by Fromm, Horney and Maslow, who claimed that aggression is the result of specific types of social milieu rather than being an instinctual drive. According to their thinking, man's behaviour is exclusively molded by the influence of the environment, i.e. by social and cultural factors as opposed to innate factors (Fromm, 1973:33).

To Wilson, human aggression cannot be explained as a bestial instinct or a dark angelic flaw. Nor is it the pathological symbol of upbringing in a cruel environment. Human beings are strongly predisposed to respond with unreasoning hatred to external threats and to escalate their hostility sufficiently to overwhelm the source of the threat by a wide margin of safety. Our tendency is to solve conflict by aggression. These learning rules have conferred a biological advantage on those who conformed to them (Wilson 2001: 20).

An understanding of the way in which biological-physiological factors influence aggression can increase our ability to predict as well as to control aggression in humans. Yet, there is no consensus among researchers related to the significance of gender differences in aggressive behaviour. The existing evidence suggests that there are a sufficient number of exceptions to the pattern of more aggression in males than in females to suggest that biological contribution is minimal relative to situation-socialization factors (White, 1983: 4). Studies have suggested that males may be more physically aggressive whereas females are more verbally aggressive (White, 1983:12). However, the biological, hormonal and physiological factors that are part of every individual preclude the possibility of making definite causal statements about one's gender and aggressive behaviour. Research in this field suggests that a variety of parental and environmental variables may mediate gender differences (White, 1983: 9).

Marital violence represents a complex social and psychological problem which is determined by individual, social-psychological and socio-cultural factors. Goldstein states that all individuals have a certain vulnerability to engage in spouse abuse as either the assailant or the victim, when optimum stress level, which varies between individuals, is exceeded (1983: 49). Three theoretical models have been proposed as ways of understanding marital violence. The first is the psychiatric, or individual, model. It is suggested that batterers are not psychopaths but ordinary men who have low self-esteem and resort to violence when life stresses become intolerable. Similarly, abused wives are seen as normal women who become locked in a cycle of marital violence because they are emotionally, often financially, dependent on their battering husbands. When women are aggressive, their behaviour tends to be defensive, as when a woman kills a man who has abused her, like Rachel (Barash and Lipton, 2001: 37). D. M. Moore contends that “She is all ages, all ethnicities, from all socio-economic groups, has a low level of self-esteem, and for the most part has very traditional notions of male and female behaviour” (qtd. in Goldstein, 1983: 41). Such women are characterized as being psychologically dependent on their husbands because many of these women have grown up believing they need a man to take care of them (Goldstein, 1983: 45). To L. E. Walker, the experience of repeated batterings produces a “learned helplessness” response in abused wives who become convinced that nothing they can do will stop the abuse. Feelings of anxiety and paralysis and depression are common in such wives (in Goldstein, 1983: 41), since they come to perceive themselves as worthless and incompetent, deserving to be beaten, like Rachel and Priscilla. These may be the reasons why they are unable to leave the battering relationship. Battered women are often treated with anti-depressants and tranquilizers, and may attempt suicide due to a pervasive sense of hopelessness and despair about themselves and their lives (Goldstein 1983: 46), which is the case with Priscilla.

Low self-esteem, dependency, alcohol use, lack of responsibility and traditional attitudes about the roles of men and women have been identified as psychological characteristics of abusive husbands. With regard to low self-esteem, marital abuse has been viewed as the husband’s attempt to overcome his feelings of powerlessness and inadequacy and to defend his self-esteem, like Arnold’s attacking his wife because of her negative comments about his work and his own sense of being a failure. He takes it as a misbehaviour slighting or denigrating his personal identity. The need for women to defend their identity and interests in family roles is as great as for men, and Rachel voices this need caused by cultural norms which presume that the husband is the master (Straus, 1999: 34):

Dependency, implying either the husband’s attempt to defend against needing his wife, or his frustration at her not living up to his expectations of the “ideal” wife, has been posited to lead to the occurrence of marital violence. Roger’s abusive

treatment of Priscilla seems to be triggered by her being far from the “ideal” wife when compared to Marigold. Wife-beaters have often been described as childlike, remorseful and yearning for nurturance when they are beating their wives, and particularly during the make-up phase of the violence, like Arnold. Several investigations have shown that abusive men often become suicidal and they panic emotionally when their wives leave or threaten to leave them (Goldstein, 1983: 44). The failure to take responsibility for their actions and endorsement of traditional attitudes toward men and women are the other two qualities used to describe wife-beaters. Such husbands believe that it is socially acceptable for them to beat their wives, and denying that anything is wrong with them do not seek outside help. Being low in self-esteem, these men may be particularly vulnerable to situations that threaten their authority; hence they blame their wives for provoking them and claim that they could not help themselves (Goldstein, 1983: 45).

The second, social-psychological model, or social learning model, emphasizes the contribution of family factors in the development of wife-beating. Aggression in this model is conceptualized as an active response to an aversive stimulus and such models focus on observation as a major factor in the acquisition of aggressive habits (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1999: 73). In terms of acquiring the predisposition to becoming an abusing husband or an abused wife, learned behaviour patterns from one’s family of origin have been noted as the most significant influence. Studies have consistently shown that wife-beating is the product of witnessing and/or experiencing physical violence during childhood. In this model it is assumed that violent behaviour is acquired in one’s family of origin and will be elicited and maintained in one’s family of procreation by situational factors, such as stress (Goldstein, 1983: 42). However, social learning theory does not argue that observation is the only way of acquiring an aggressive habit as the majority of those who witness parental aggression do not become spouse abusers or child abusers (Dutton, 1999: 76). What produces a powerful traumatic source is the combination of witnessing parental violence, being shamed and being insecurely attached over prolonged and vulnerable developmental phases (82). Bradley’s parental background, his position in, relations with and attitude to his family provide a good example to this view. Moreover, trauma produces not only aggression also an inability to modulate arousal, an unstable sense of self, and insecure attachment, as well as a tendency to externalize blame (Dutton, 1999: 83). All these can be seen in Bradley’s relations with his ex-wife, Rachel and Julian; besides, Bradley blames Christian for the failure of their marriage and Arnold for Julian’s deserting him. Although investigations with abused wives have produced mixed results in this respect, such findings have not negated the importance of identifying patterns in the woman’s family of origin (Goldstein, 1983: 47). In the novel, Bradley and Priscilla

as well as Christian and Francis have witnessed wife-beating in their childhood, but its effect is seen mainly on Francis, Bradley and Priscilla. Priscilla has low self-esteem and suffers Roger's abusive behaviours until it becomes life-threatening before she can leave him. By this time she is in a state of extreme depression and anxiety. In the case of Francis, witnessing the abuse of his mother by his father has undermined his psychological adjustment. He has a very low self-esteem and believes everyone hates and scorns him for being an alcoholic and a homosexual.

Research shows that children who have grown up in violent homes and learned to use violence as a problem solving strategy will engage in marital violence when pressures become too great. Unfortunately, since the violence will not ultimately resolve the problem situation, stress will accumulate again in the marital relationship until another violent episode (Goldstein, 1983: 48). The accumulation of stress and its outburst in aggressive behaviour are witnessed in the Baffin marriage; however, there is no background information about their childhood to show that it is a learned strategy.

Sex-role socialization, another factor in spouse abuse, is influenced by both family and cultural norms, and includes learned behaviour patterns as well as the development of the attitudes about the roles of men and women. Both clinical and empirical investigations have shown that traditionalist values frequently contribute to a person becoming a battering man or a battered woman (Goldstein, 1983: 48). Arnold's attitude toward Rachel, and Bradley's toward Priscilla and Rachel reveal that they both believe that it is women's lot to suffer such abuse.

In all cultures females hold a lower status and since most societies socialize children in preparation for adult roles, it follows that males would have more opportunities for learning and performing aggressive acts. Socialization for males teaches them to be masculine, that is, dominant and assertive, using forceful and aggressive language, while socialization for females teaches them to be feminine, that is, passive, nurturant, empathetic, using a more tentative language. In general, traditional socialization practices foster adherence to sex-role stereotypes, which in turn will amplify gender differences in aggression (White, 1983: 21). According to White, studies suggest that males will increase their aggression toward women when sex-role expectations are violated (10); it is also seen that males with traditional attitudes toward the role of women are more aggressive than males with more liberal attitudes (12). On the other hand, non-traditional socialization practices can eliminate and reverse these differences (21).

Another important approach to the social-psychological model is the cycle theory of marital violence. The main idea has been that spouse abuse is maintained through repetitive cycles of battering and conciliatory behaviour. Studies have shown that after a beating husbands act remorseful and try to make up with their

wives, which frequently persuades the women to remain in the battering relationship (Goldstein, 1983: 42). The Baffin marriage is typical of such a relationship.

The socio-cultural model has been the third approach to understanding family violence. The main factors implicated in this model were sex-role attitudes, sexual inequality and the cultural legitimization of violence through societal practices and values popularized by the mass media, the patriarchal structure of western society maintained by economic and social pressures; cultural norms and values which support female subordination and male dominance also contribute to patterns of male aggression and female subordination (Goldstein, 1983: 42). TV and motion pictures have played a powerful role in culturally legitimizing the use of violence in general. Several researchers have reported a relationship between the amount of media violence and the acquisition of norms, values and attitudes which favour violence (Goldstein, 1983: 43). W. J. Goode introduced the concepts of power and status as determining factors in marital violence. Identifying three other types of family resources – money, respect, likability – he hypothesized that husbands with sufficient amount of these resources would not need to use violence to preserve their position and power. Research has supported the contribution of power and status factors in the occurrence of spouse abuse (in Goldstein, 1983: 42).

Lloyd suggests that violence is as much an instrumental behaviour aimed at control as it is an expressive action reflecting anger (1999: 91). Lloyd conceptualizes violence as a gendered communicative act designed to enact control in relationships. As a tactic of control violence gives male batterers a unique ability to use the fear of physical violence as a mechanism of psychological control over their wives (Lloyd: 1999: 93). Feminist scholars have suggested that male violence involves attempts to overpower and terrorize female victims. Aggression often occurs in a context of negative interaction and is accompanied by hostility and anger, but is simultaneously an expressive and instrumental action and has a control-based underlying intent (93-4). The struggle for relational control dominates the interactions in violent marriages with a strong pattern of nonacceptance of the other's assertions. Battering men reject influence from women and react with contempt, battering or defensiveness, as they consider influence from the wife unmasculine. As Burgess and Daper have pointed out researchers report that men with a history of wife-battering hold more conservative sex-role attitudes in comparison with their wives, and with non-battering men too the assumption of patriarchal rule by males is common enough. Women and children because of their physical limitations have always been in weak positions to take an individual stand against male domination. The social structure, in which primary social and economic control is in the hands of males, can insure the subordination of women. The occurrence of marital violence seems to be related significantly to the existence

of patriarchal norms and values. When men control the wealth, they thereby gain a power advantage over women (Burgess and Daper, 1989: 80-6). In the novel, Rachel and Priscilla were subjected to abuse continually due to their being housewives, completely dependent on their husbands.

Since violence and crime are socially and psychologically complex phenomena, they need to be investigated in all their complexity (Ohlin and Tonry, 1989: 2). Problems emerge due to, firstly, the differences in the definition of violence. The narrow definition restricts it to the act of assault, whereas the broad one defines violence to include multiple models of mistreatment and the resulting injury (Straus, 1999: 37). The main methodological problem that has arisen in dealing with the factors associated with marital violence is the impossibility of separating the effects of marital discord inherent in an abusive relationship from the occurrence of physical violence since most studies have failed to include a comparison group of maritally discordant, non-abusive partners and satisfactorily married couples (Goldstein, 1983: 43). Another serious problem with family violence research is that it tends to be exceedingly weak methodologically because ethical considerations and ideological preferences make it very difficult for many researchers to take a detached interest in the integrity of their designs (Ohlin and Tonry, 1989: 4). Research on family violence is research on a sensitive topic in a sensitive setting. Inquiry into violent behaviour between offenders and victims who have close, personal relationships is difficult to conduct. The family is a very private social group with most interaction and behaviour invisible to outsiders. Moreover, social interaction between family members is intimate, and thus, more intense, emotional and consequential than other interactions. These characteristics of the traditional family unit make research in this area difficult. Moreover, violence itself is a sensitive topic and people do not like to be exposed to public scrutiny and judgement (Weis, 1989: 127-8). In the novel both Arnold and Rachel imply that although they have allowed Bradley to witness an unpleasant event in their family, they still consider him an outsider, incapable of understanding either their love or hatred for each other.

Increasingly complex theoretical models and sophisticated methodologies are being used to study violence. Arriga and Oskamp note that models of violence present unique measurement challenges because of the difficulty of assessing physical and psychological abuse (1999: 11). Apart from that, research has shown that responses that constitute help-seeking are not very common: only one half of females and one quarter of males do so, and typically talk with a friend rather than discuss their violent episode with a counsellor, physician, or criminal justice authority (Arriaga and Oskamp, 1999: 13), whereas to provide a realistic basis for programs designed to aid the victims and to end domestic violence, findings based

on crime studies are needed. At the same time, in order to understand assaults on partners which seldom involve injury and for primary prevention efforts, it is crucial to have family conflict data on the most 'harmless' slap (Straus, 1999: 28-9), for regardless whether an injury occurs or not, the intrinsic moral wrong of assaulting a partner is a fundamental issue.

The measurement of study variables involves another problem. There are practically as many different measures as there are researchers. Some measures represent family violence as a unidimensional phenomenon, others see it as a more multidimensional one. The former approaches focus on acts, the latter on the outcomes and situation characteristics (Weis, 1989: 146).

Another methodological problem has been the use of self-report as the primary and often only source of data. Failure to include standardized measures to obtain information from couples involved in marital violence has limited both the validity and the generalizability of the data gathered; for instance, descriptions of battering men are often based on their wives' reports only, which could lead to distorted conclusions. Furthermore, even on self-report, people may be reluctant to disclose certain aspects of their personal lives and may distort facts about the occurrence of the violence (Goldstein, 1983: 43). For example, Bradley is given different versions of the battering incident by wife and husband.

Bradley Pearson, in the novel, is a rather complex character. He is a self-contained, perfectionist puritan, pathologically restrained and cold, with an obsessive desire for a planned, disciplined life-style. Rachel says he is "repressed and all tied-up" (*BP* 125). He lacks self-confidence and a sense of identity. He seems to suffer from an Oedipus complex and to have a homosexual tendency. His worst fear is contingency since anything unexpected and unpredictable may disturb the balance of his orderly life and cause him to lose control of himself and the world around him. He simply refuses to hear about things that may disturb him. He is reluctant to respond to Arnold Baffin's phone call, in which Arnold asks Bradley to come over because he may have killed his wife, although he admits "We naturally take in the catastrophes of our friends a pleasure" (*BP* 8) and feels an "unholy excitement" (*BP* 28) about it. After settling things at the Baffins', he is uneasy and filled with anxiety because he fears that Rachel and Arnold may later resent his role in the family drama and wish to punish him for it, which Rachel does eventually. The appearance of Francis Marloe with the news that his ex-wife Christian is back is another shattering event, which he tries to suppress by saying he is not interested in her at all, hates her and does not want to have anything to do with either one of them. The letters he writes to Francis and Christian express his hostile feelings towards both of them. He makes a scapegoat of Francis, displacing his aggression from Christian to him because he is less able to retaliate, and accuses Christian of cruelty

and destructiveness and states that any approach from either one of them will be rejected. All his following communications with Christian bear the same note of hostility and threat. Since the frequency of verbal aggression is positively related with physical aggression, we rather expect Bradley to become brutal, which he does not with Christian, but with Julian when he rapes her.

Bradley displays an Oedipus complex, yet it is not clear whether he identifies himself with his father or mother. In general he hates women and regards them as death-bringers and destroyers, and smelly beings. He says he loved his mother and she was important to him as a child, but when he senses the lack of communication between his parents, he increasingly identifies with his father, who was timid, upright and conventional, and disapproved of his wife's worldliness and he was extremely afraid of making some mistake that would reveal his lack of education. Bradley says he shared his father's disapproval and anxiety; felt pain and shame for his mother, but that did not diminish his love for her (BP 56). However, after seeing Roger with Marigold, he groups his mother together with Marigold and Christian as one of the "destroyers" and "predatory women" (BP 81). He has transferred many of his feelings for his mother to Priscilla, but loves her less. When Priscilla comes after deserting Roger and complains, "my life has become a bad dream", "it's been awful, awful, awful", "Roger has become a devil" (BP 47), "he's been sort of willing my death He tried to poison me", "he hates me" (BP 48), Bradley, indifferent to her emotional state, says, "Women just have to put up with selfish men, it's their lot" (BP 49). His traditional sex-role attitude is thus made obvious. He adds, "You can't leave him, there isn't anywhere else for you to go"; "You're in a thoroughly nervous state. Women of your age often are" (BP 49). He tells her he cannot support her, and anyway he is going away. (BP 59-60). His feelings for Priscilla are a mixture of "pity, annoyance, guilt, disgust" (BP 56). Incapable of empathizing with her, he looks upon her as a burden. He is determined to discourage her so as not to let her interfere with his work.

It is implied by both Francis and Rachel that there is a homosexual affinity between Arnold and Bradley. Rachel claims that Arnold cares more for Bradley than for her (BP 143) and Francis thinks Bradley sees Arnold as his distorted image. Bradley himself notes that Arnold "was like an alter-ego" to him (BP 152). Francis tells Bradley that he is "a repressed homosexual" (BP121), that he and Arnold are crazy about each other and that Bradley has taken up with Rachel and Arnold with Christian to make the other jealous. Bradley himself admits that one of the factors in his involvement with Rachel was "the idea of scoring off Arnold" (BP 150), and envy of Arnold was another factor (BP 152). Thinking about his relations with Arnold, Bradley remarks "He was the most important man in my life. ... Arnold fascinated me" (BP 151). However, as he admits, he is irritated by Arnold's worldly

success and his own worldly failure, because as Arnold's "discoverer" he has always seen Arnold as a sort of son figure (*BP* 151-2). Bradley falls in love with the Baffins' daughter Julian when he mistakes her for a boy and achieves sexual intercourse with her only after he sees her dressed up as Hamlet. He identifies himself with the Post Office Tower seen from his window and he refers to it as a "serene austere erection" (*BP* 2).

Bradley's aggressiveness is most of the time verbal and passive even though owing to his repressed personality one would expect more physical violence from him. In addition, he had witnessed his father beating his mother as a child (*BP* 187). He uses threatening language mostly with Christian and Francis, and sometimes with Arnold. Blaming Arnold for Julian's disappearance, he writes Arnold a threatening letter, where he says, "I do not care for threats and hints of violence. I have, I assure you, quite enough violence inside myself ready to be provoked" (*BP* 303). After that, when Arnold's complete works, which Bradley had ordered when he was in a generous mood, arrive, he tears and destroys all the books with the help of Francis (*BP* 313), thus giving vent to his bottled up hostility. His hostile behaviour toward Christian appears to arise from his fear of falling in love with her again. Although he insists that he hates her and does not want to see her again, he does go to see her on the pretence that he wants to put an end to her bothering him with her phone calls, and his mind is all the time preoccupied with the thought whether Arnold and Christian are having an affair. His hostility toward Francis may be accounted for by the disgust he feels, as a puritan, for his homosexuality, untidiness, and drunkenness. Also, he may unconsciously be aware of his own latent homosexuality, and feel a threat in Francis and tries to avert it by insulting Francis; toward Priscilla he behaves indifferently to the extent of callousness. He resorts to physical violence when Julian is involved; for example, against Arnold upon finding out that he has locked up Julian in her room to prevent her meeting Bradley; when Arnold breaks into the cottage in Patara to take away Julian, Bradley bars the door with the spanner, but does not use it; his most aggressive act is his brutal raping of Julian when he sees her dressed as Hamlet. He tries to explain his behaviour as follows: "What had made me like that? Had I suddenly felt that Julian had killed Priscilla? No. The fury, the anger was directed to myself through Julian. Or directed against fate through Julian and through myself. Yet of course this fury was love too" (*BP* 281). Coming right after the news about Priscilla's suicide, whom he had left alone in London in order to be with Julian, this violent scene is the outcome of his accumulated sense of guilt at Priscilla's death and his decision not to go back for the funeral, frustration at his earlier inability to make love to Julian properly and resentment at Arnold and Rachel's opposition to this relationship. What Diane Goldstein calls his "optimum stress level" (1983: 49) has been exceeded. His

inability to understand the change for the negative in Julian's feelings for him shows how insensitive he is to the psychological effects of his assault on the girl and therefore unable to perceive how degraded and insulted the young girl feels.

Accused of murder, Bradley does not protest his innocence passionately as might be expected of an innocent person. He feels partly guilty of something wicked because he had detested and envied Arnold, neglected Priscilla and abandoned Rachel (*BP* 335). He looks upon his accusation as an ordeal since the book he will write will immortalize Julian; and he accepts "the unjust judgement" of the court (*BP* 336).

Arnold emerges as the most physically aggressive character despite the fact that he is famous and successful as a writer which would enable him to assert his power and status without resorting to violence, according to Goode's theory. His lack of self-confidence despite his fame may be the reason. The battering occurs when Rachel makes a negative remark about his work. He becomes terribly upset after reading Bradley's rather unpleasant review of his latest novel and tells Bradley, "The offence is unforgivable" (*BP* 138). His being so touchy about his work indicates his own dissatisfaction with it, which he admits to Bradley at one stage: "I live with an absolutely continuous sense of failure. I am always defeated" (*BP* 139). Arnold also becomes violent with Bradley when Julian is involved and with Julian herself after she tells her parents that she and Bradley are in love with each other. "He was quite violent. ... he shook me till I was quite giddy and he broke a lot of things in my room" says Julian to Bradley (*BP* 249). She adds that her parents went on quarrelling; Arnold accused Rachel of being jealous of Julian and Rachel shouted that Arnold was in love with his daughter (*BP* 250), both of which accusations may have truth in them.

The first instance in the novel of his use of violence against his wife is motivated by Rachel's belittling and hurtful remark about his work. Although he tells Bradley that he did not mean to hit her but was trying to defend himself against Rachel, who clawed his face and went on screaming, Rachel's story is quite different: she says, "He has hit me before, Oh, this isn't the first time by any means"; "He has taken my whole life from me"; "I've always been afraid of him. ... All men despise all women really. All women fear men really. Men are physically stronger, that's what it comes to, that's what's behind it all" (*BP* 18). "I shall – die of shame" she cries (*BP* 17). This incident alone is enough to show that although there are many couples who engage in marital violence, the husband's level of violence is higher than that of the wife. She further complains that he would not let her take a job although she is as clever as he is and has spoilt her whole life. This event endorses the suggestion of certain researchers that although both spouses may contribute to the cycle of marital violence, women are the primary victims because

physically they are more vulnerable, and economically and socially they are more constrained. Rachel's words to Bradley exemplify this: "Tomorrow I will be as usual. There will be no recriminations, no reproaches. ... How can I reproach him? He will become angry again, he will frighten me again. Better to be a slave. ...of course he knows that" (BP 19). Arnold is immediately relieved when Bradley brings him the message, recovers his composure and seems to forget what he has done: "She was shamming furious. She really isn't badly hurt, Bradley"; "It's fake wrath anyway" (BP 22). To save himself from further embarrassment he talks about marriages in general: "Marriage is a long journey at close quarters. Of course nerves get frayed. Every married person is a Jekyll and Hyde" (BP 22). Arnold acts remorseful after the beating and does his best to make up with Rachel, who, even if she does not trust him and does not believe that violence will not recur, is unable to reproach or leave him for two reasons: she is afraid of him and financially she is dependent on him. During a conversation Arnold acknowledges to Bradley that Rachel is intelligent but the job he finds her suitable for is that of a secretary, which shows his low opinion of her talents. Bradley thinks of Rachel in similar terms – that she is an intelligent woman; however, being "married to a famous man Such a woman instinctively behaves as a function of her husband. ... One does not expect such a woman to have ambition" (BP 121). Arnold's infidelities and quick temper together with his callous treatment of Rachel have filled her with hatred for him. She wants to form an alliance with Bradley (BP 99) because she has been unhappy with Arnold for so long and feels caged. "I'm Arnold's wife forever," she says (BP 109). There is no way out of the marriage bond unless Arnold decides to break it. Arnold has played the tyrant for too long (BP 125). She sums up the lot of married women as follows: "A married woman has no dignity. ... She's a subdivision of her husband's mind, and he can release misery into her consciousness whenever he pleases"; "You're free. You've got money. My life is all compulsory"; "I've no being of my own" (BP 142).

Priscilla's complaints about Roger are similar to Rachel's: "lately it's been sort of pure intense hell, he's been sort of willing my death" (BP 48). "All my life has been taken away from me" (BP 49). The fact that she eventually does leave Roger, despite her economic dependency on him, endorses the view which Arias's research puts forward: motivation to leave a relationship is better predicted by psychological abuse than by physical abuse (1999: 11). Bradley's non-committal response is: "Life is unjust. Do stop whingeing and try to be practical" (BP 59). Upon receiving no encouragement from Bradley, Priscilla considers going back to Roger, but she is afraid of him, and asks, "If I'm quiet he won't hurt me, will he?" (BP 186). Moreover, she has been brought up by her mother to believe that she needs a man to take care of her; therefore, she is psychologically dependent on Roger.

What Priscilla reveals about her mother shows that she was also an abused wife: “Mummy would have left Dad if she could have afforded it, she told me so when she was dying” (*BP* 60). Priscilla says that Roger was always shouting at her or else not talking at all; that Roger threatened to have her certified as mad and shut up, that Roger was killing her mind, breaking things and saying she had done it and could not remember (*BP* 119). All these threats have produced in her such a state of helplessness and anxiety that she can only be pacified by tranquilizers; she makes two attempts at suicide. Although she is saved in the first attempt, she dies in the second.

Priscilla and Rachel illustrate the difficulty of leaving an abusive partner. Ego-strength is necessary for undertaking such a step, which is often lacking in abused wives. All they can do is to develop a plan of action, which will reduce distress by providing an outlet. Rachel’s first plan is to establish an emotional relationship with Bradley. When that does not work, she plans her husband’s murder in such a way as to punish Bradley as well. Priscilla, on the other hand, attempts to make her home beautiful and herself attractive, but realizing that her husband still scorns and humiliates her, she leaves him. However, she soon regrets it and is prevented by her brother from returning to Roger.

When Bradley goes to Bristol to get the things that have importance for Priscilla, Roger refuses to return anything except her clothes, excluding the mink stole, claiming that as she had no income of her own, she bought them with his money and so they belong to him now. It is a great relief for him to be rid of Priscilla as he can now marry his young mistress, Marigold. Bradley feels for the first time how unjust life has been to his sister and he is “humiliated and defeated” in her humiliation and defeat (*BP* 81). Priscilla becomes hysterical when Bradley tells her about Roger and Marigold, and Christian slaps her to stop her screaming. Bradley, feeling faint starts to weep and says he hates violence (*BP* 188).

Another wife who suffered violence was the mother of Christian and Francis. Francis tells Bradley that their father was a very violent man, who often beat him horribly and probably killed their mother (*BP* 118).

The most violent event is of course Arnold’s murder by Rachel, with the poker that Arnold had earlier used to give Rachel a black eye. Rachel thus puts into effect her early threats: I “shall never forgive” Arnold and “I won’t forgive you [Bradley] either for having seen me like this” (*BP* 17, 18). She takes a perfect revenge on the two men in her life by killing one and causing the other’s imprisonment. Another reason for her revenge is jealousy. As Bradley quotes, “Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned” (*BP* 330). Arnold’s decision to leave her and marry Christian and Bradley’s disregard of her love and his passion for Julian bring her to this frame of mind. As she had said earlier, “The first time he hit me our

marriage came to an end” (BP 18), thus she has nothing to lose; her marriage has ceased to exist long ago.

During the *Hamlet* tutorial Bradley gives Julian his own version of the murder of Old Hamlet: it is that Gertrude killed her husband because he was having a love affair with Claudius. This throws a new light on Rachel’s murder of Arnold: her jealousy of the close relationship between Bradley and her husband could have led to the murder.

Research on family violence is in its early day. The quality of research is uneven and findings are often inconsistent. Better studies and more accurate data are needed to improve our understanding of family violence (Weis, 1989: 117).

To conclude, violence, as stated earlier, is a multifaceted phenomenon composed of a large set of variables, and marital violence is one of its most prevalent forms. Research findings suggest that this kind of violence cannot be associated with either income level or racial, ethnic and religious background. Although both spouses play a role in precipitating marital violence, women are usually the primary victims due to physiological, economic and social constraints. In the first place, men being physically stronger are more likely to be the batterers. In addition, women are often financially dependent on their husbands. Traditional socialization practices and sex-role learning are the other factors that that amplify gender differences in aggression.

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