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# HEROES OF THEIR OWN LIVES

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THE POLITICS AND HISTORY  
OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

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BOSTON 1880-1960

Linda Gordon



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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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A book that consumes as much time as this one did accumulates many meanings and lessons for its author as well as its readers. Doubting that any scholar can achieve "objectivity," if that means detachment from prevailing cultural norms, I think one can move closer to that goal by consciousness of what one's own values and biases are. Here are some of mine.

In positing the family as a subject of study, some historians have conceptualized it as a homogeneous unit. This mistake not only masks intrafamily conflicts of interests, and particularly the interests of women and children, but it stands in the way of a good understanding of family change and relations between family and the larger society. The topic of family violence provides a case in point for the necessity of seeing families as conflictual as well as harmonious. Moreover, much family