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cultural universal." Not even those social forms to which the term

"family" is usually applied are universal, except in the most limited and technical sense suggested by Weigert and Thomas (1971). However,

the family in the sense used by Murdock (1949) is an example of a

social form which is so widespread that it constitutes what might be

called a "near universal." A "near universal" obviously does not have

the same theoretical importance as a true universal would have--if

such existed. But a near universal is none the less extremely impor-

tant because (by definition) it affects such a large proportion of

humanity, and also for theoretical reasons. The theoretical value

of attention to near universals stems from the assumption that any

social form which occurs that frequently must somehow be related to the

most fundamental aspects of human association. Hence the importance

of the first objective of this paper: To explore the question of

whether intrafamily violence (i.e., physical aggression between family

members) is so frequent that it can be considered a near universal. I

will also summarize some of the cross-cultural research on the factors

which may make intrafamily aggression typical of most societies, and

then conclude with a consideration of the wider theoretical import of

violence in the family, and specifically, the view that the level of

intrafamily violence is related to the ecological conditions in which

a society is operating and the society's "technico-economic" adaption

to these ecological realities and to changes in the subsistence basis

of the society. I will also suggest that these relationships can be

understood best from the perspective of general systems theory because

this perspective focuses on morphological changes in society as a mode

of system maintenance.

SOCIETAL MORPHOGENESIS AND INTRAFAMILY VIOLENCE
IN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Murray A. Straus
University of New Hampshire

NCJRS

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ACQUISITIONS

"How do I know that he loves me if he doesn't
beat me?" (Statement by a Mangaina wife),³⁷

"What makes you think he doesn't love you any
more" asks a woman on a BBC program in the Spring of
1974. The reply: "He hasn't bashed me in a fortnight."

There is an obvious similarity between what these two inhabitants
of such vastly dissimilar islands are saying: Namely, that the marital
relationship is tinged by physical aggression--to say nothing of other
forms of aggression.^{**/} The fact that the marital relationship is also
often characterized by warmth, affection, or solidarity is not incon-
sistent with the simultaneous existence of aggression because aggressive
acts can be counter-normative, or because norms permitting or encour-
aging aggression between spouses can and do exist simultaneously with
norms stressing warmth and solidarity.⁶⁴

I began this paper with these two quotations because they drama-
tically illustrate the high frequency--or perhaps even the near
universality--with which aggression and violence of all types occur
within the family. Obviously, I need hardly comment to a group such
as this on the danger of referring to any phenomenon as a "cross-

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THE PREVALENCE OF CONJUGAL VIOLENCE

In previous books and papers, my colleagues and I have presented evidence that in the United States--and probably also in most other Euroamerican societies--the family is the preeminent social setting for all types of aggression and violence, ranging from the cutting remark to slaps, kicks, torture, and murder. (Gelles, ^{22, 58, 62, 63} ~~1974; Steinmetz and Straus, 1974; Straus, 1974a, b~~). The frequency of aggressive acts between children (who will often be siblings) is remarkably constant across the societies of the Six Cultures Study, (³² ~~Lambert, 1974: 444-447~~), and probably also including societies such as the !Ko-Bushmen who are renowned for their non-aggressive and peaceful social patterns. (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1974:10). In the USA, Straus found that 62% of his sample engaged in a non-playful physical fight with a sibling during their senior year in high school. Parent-child physical violence is truly ubiquitous in the form of physical punishment, not only in the US and Britain, (^{58, 59, 60} ~~Steinmetz and Straus, 1974; Straus, 1974; Steinmetz, 1974~~) also but in many other societies, again including the !Ko (¹⁹ ~~Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1974:14~~).

Probably the most dramatic cross-cultural evidence on intrafamily violence is found for murder. Because murder is such an extreme and difficult to conceal form of violence, it is the subject of official recording in many societies and is more readily researched in all societies than "ordinary" wife (or husband) beating. Thus, Bohannan (⁹ 1960) and his collaborator were able to collect what seems to be reasonably good statistical evidence in four different African societies. As a result, there is evidence covering a number of societies. This evidence clearly indicates that more murders take place between members of

the same family than any other murderer-victim relationship. This assertion holds for all 18 societies for which data is summarized in the recent book by Curtis on criminal violence. (¹⁶ ~~1974; Table 3.3~~). To this we can add the Mexican village studied by June Nash. (⁴⁰ 1967). My tabulation of the data given in her Table 1 reveals that a family member or lover was the probable killer in 52% of the instances in which a suspect was identified.

In considering these statistics on the high proportion of homicides which occur within families, there are numerous complications. For example, although the largest proportion of homicides are between kin, and especially husbands and wives, in absolute terms killing one's husband or wife is rare even in those societies which have a high homicide rate. In fact, the figures are somewhat deceptive because there is some tendency for the proportion of all homicides which are intrafamily to be greatest in the low overall homicide societies. For example, the Danish homicide rate is only 0.2 per 100,000 compared to the US rate of about 7 or 8 per 100,000. Thus the very high proportion of within-family homicides in Denmark (57% as compared with the US figure of about 25%) must be seen as a large slice of a very small pie. But perhaps a more telling interpretation of these relationships is the possibility of their having the following meaning: Even in societies such as Denmark, in which homicide has practically been eliminated, the last remaining locus of this form of aggression is within the family.

Less drastic forms of aggression between family members are of course more prevalent in the absolute sense. This can be seen both within American society, where my colleagues and I have been gathering such data, and in a few cross-cultural studies. In the United States, the evidence

we have gathered---although tentative---suggests that perhaps 60 to 70% of all couples have used physical violence at least once in their marriage, and that for about 1 out of 4 couples, there has been a recurring pattern of physical violence between the couple. (Gelles, 1974; Steinmetz, 1974; Straus, 1974a, b). These rates are somewhat lower for middle class couples, but not enough lower to support the widely held view that husband-wife violence is primarily found in the lowest socioeconomic strata.

Turning to other societies, my general impression is that high rates of conjugal violence characterize many other societies, including urban-industrial, agrarian, non-literate societies; and also including societies that are otherwise low in violence, such as England. But on theoretical grounds which I will come to shortly, we can expect the highest rates of husband-wife violence to be in those societies which have high rates of violence in other institutional spheres. Thus, it is doubtful that many other societies could match the frequency and intensity of assaults by husbands on their wives which is found among "the fierce people" as the Yanomamo call themselves. (Bosee, 1969; Chagnon, 1968). Finally, we can gain some idea of the prevalence of conjugal violence from Schlegel's ratings of 45 societies. Her analysis reveals that 75 % of these societies permitted husbands to aggress against their wives. On the other hand, I do not know how representative Schlegel's 45 societies are, and only a relative limited number of more detailed ethnogenies cited at various places in this paper. So, although what evidence there is points to high rates of conjugal violence in a great many societies, the question of the "prevalence" much less the "near-universality" of intrafamily violence is far from definitively established.

THE CAUSES OF CONJUGAL VIOLENCE

A full causal explanation of the ubiquity of conjugal violence is a vast undertaking. Richard Gelles and I have made a start in that direction in a long chapter of a forthcoming book. For example, among the factors we examined in that paper are (1) "Time at risk" i.e. the fact that in many societies family members spend considerable amounts of time with each other. Other things being equal, they therefore are more likely to engage in disputes and conflicts with each other than with whom those they spend less time. But of course, other things are not equal, and particularly: (2) Family members are likely to share a wider range of activities and interests with each than with others with whom they may also spend much time. This means that there are more "events" over which a dispute or a failure to meet expectations can occur. (3) Not only is there a greater probability of hurting family members than others because of the greater time exposure and the greater number of spheres of overlapping activity and interests, but in addition, the degree of injury experienced when the problem arises with a family member is greater than when it arises with someone else because of the intensity of involvement and attachment which is typical of family relationships. (4) Sexual inequality and the typical pattern of ascribed superior position for the husband has a high conflict potential built in because it is inevitable that not all husbands will be able to perform the culturally expected leadership role an/or not all wives will be willing to accept the subordinate role. (5) The privacy of the family in many societies insults it from both assistance in coping with intrafamily disputes and from social control by neighbors and other kin. This factor is, of course, most present

in the conjugal family of urban-industrial societies and least present among societies such as the Bushmen where virtually all of family life is carried within the small circle of the Bushmen camp and is open to immediate intercession by others. (6) Cultural norms legitimizing the use of violence between members of the same family in situations which would make violence a serious normative violation if it occurred outside the family. In Euroamerican societies, to this day, there is a strong, though largely un verbalized, norm which makes the marriage licence also a hitting licence. (Straus, 1975).

Each of the above, together with other factors, merits detailed consideration. However, within the confines of this paper there is only room to consider those causal factors which have been empirically studied in at least two societies. Although this is not adequate theoretical basis for selection, it has the merits of being appropriate for the focus of this conference and of reducing the range of materials to be considered to what can be fitted within the pages of a single paper.

Aggression as a cultural and structural pattern. I have already alluded to what may be the most general causal factor. This is the fact

that, as Russel (1972:291) notes on the basis of a factor analysis of 73 variables for the societies in Textor's Cross Cultural Summary (1967): "...all forms of aggression tend to be strongly related to each other." This finding and its theoretical explication stands in sharp contrast to drive theories of aggression. Drive theories assume that aggression expressed in one sphere of activity will--roughly to that extent--not be expressed in other spheres of social interaction. Steinmetz and I (1974:14-16) have elsewhere called this the "catharsis myth" because of the large number of studies which not only fail to support the idea of catharsis, but which almost always show exactly the opposite: that the more aggression in one sphere, the more in others.

Excellent and devastating reviews of the research on aggression catharsis at the individual level have been published by Bandura (1973), Berkowitz (1973), and Hokanson (1979); and a study by Straus (1974) of within-family "ventilation" of aggression shows clearly that verbal, symbolic, and physical aggression, rather than being substitutes for each other, are highly correlated. Consequently, in this paper, I will mention only cross-cultural studies which bear on aggression as a pervasive cultural pattern. An interesting starting place is Sipes (1973) study of the relationship between aggressive sports and warfare. He shows that both cross-culturally and in a time series analysis for the USA, the higher the level of armed combat, the more common are aggressive sports. Vayda's review of anthropological explanations of primitive warfare and aggression is also critical of the catharsis theory. A recent study by Archer of 110 nation states finds that, contrary to the catharsis theory, homicide rates increase with the occurrence of war. In respect to the mass media, the nations or

periods with the most actual violence are those with the most violent popular literature. (Comstock and Rubinstein, 1972; Huggins and Straus, 1975; Singer, 1971). Finally, in respect to husband-wife violence itself, Steinmetz (1974b) studied the families of university students in an American and a Canadian city using identical instruments. She wanted to compare Canadian and American families because these two societies are alike in so many ways, yet Canadian rates for homicide, assault and rape are only a fraction of the US rates. The Canadian families turned out to have a considerably lower frequency of husband-wife physical aggression. I conclude from these and other studies that each modality of aggression in a society, rather than serving as a means of "draining off hostility", serves as a kind of cultural and structural "theme" (Opler, 1946), template, or paradigm for interaction in other spheres of activity.

Aggression as a family pattern. The same theoretical principle also applies within the family. That is, violence in one family role is associated with violence in other family roles. Thus, studies of child abusing parents in three countries found that such parents had themselves experienced severe physical punishment as children. (Pack and Collmer, 1975) At the macro level of analysis, although child abuse statistics can be best considered only as educated guesses, there seems to be some correlation with the frequency with which physical punishment occurs in a society. Goode, (1971), for example, suggests that child abuse is rare in Japan because physical punishment is rarely used. Finally, the study by Steinmetz of US and Canadian families found that couples who use physical force on each other use physical punishment more often than

other couples. Moreover, their children, in turn, use physical aggression against siblings more often than do the children of parents who do not hit each other.

Protest masculinity. There is an impressive group of studies--both cross cultural and studies within a number of societies--which suggest that what might be called "psychological father absence" or low saliency of the father during infancy or childhood leads to a pattern of male behavior which has variously been called protest masculinity, hyper-aggressive masculinity, compulsive masculinity, etc. It is probably most widely known to social scientists in the USA as the traits characterizing the machismo pattern of many Latin American males. The low saliency of the father is most obvious in mother-child households, but it is sometimes possible for the father to be a salient figure in the lives of children even if not physically present, as in the Kibbutzim. Conversely, the father can be physically but not psychologically present as often happens in the extremely sex role differentiated pattern of the urban lower class.

Low father saliency--however it is manifested--has been found to be associated with such traits as a preference for segregated sex roles, subordination of women, aggressive sexuality, and the glorification of physical aggression. (Beacon, Child, and Barry, 1963; Bohannon, 1969; A McKinley, 1964; Ferracuti and Dinnita, 1974; Toby, 1966; B. Whiting, 1965). Within the family, this manifests itself in a high frequency of wife-beating, and cross-culturally is also associated with probably the most violent marital arrangement of all--true bride theft as opposed to mock bride theft. (Ayers, 1974). Ayers summarizes the theory accounting for these relationships as follows:

The widely accepted explanation for these relationships is that such behaviors represent exaggerated attempts to demonstrate masculinity by individuals who have a high level of sex identity conflict and anxiety. This conflict arises when individuals who have formed an initial feminine identification during infancy come into contact with society's demand that adult males show assertive behavior and assume dominant status. The resulting initiation ceremonies, crime and delinquency, are interpreted as resolving the conflict and enhancing the individual's sense of masculinity.

Male dominance. Since I have elsewhere devoted most of two entire papers to the issue of the linkage between sexual inequality and wife-beating in just one society, (Allen and Straus, 1975; Straus, 1975), it is clear that only the briefest summary of the complex links between male dominance and intrafamily violence can be presented here. Probably the best place to begin is with Schlegel's finding that 88% of the male dominant societies in her sample permitted aggression by husbands against wives, as compared to only 33% of the non-male dominant societies. (1972: 63).

A number of factors underly this relationship, starting with the simple fact that men in all societies have superior physical strength as an ultimate resource to enforce a superior position, and they make

frequent use of this resource. (Allen and Straus, 1975). However, as Harris (1974:83-107; 1975:258-280) notes, the physical strength advantage is relatively slight and by itself, does not seem to be an adequate explanation since superior strength is unnecessary to make effective use of knives and male infanticide. Very likely, as Harris suggests, the institution of warfare is an important underlying factor and this in turn is related to such things as the antagonism between the sexes engendered by sex role segregation (Whiting, 1965) and the inability of women to escape from a violent husband in many societies, including most Euroamerican societies. Such societies throw the full burden of child rearing on women, deny them equal job opportunities even when they can make alternative child care arrangements, inculcate a negative self-image in roles other than that of wife and mother, and reinforce the dependency of women on their husbands by emphasizing the idea that divorce is bad for children. Finally, in most societies, there is the male oriented legal and judicial system which makes it extremely difficult for women to secure legal protection from assault by their husbands except under the most extreme circumstances.

Intrafamily aggression and group survival. Many hunting and gathering societies such as the Eskimo and the !Ko-Bushmen are noted for their peacefulness and lack of physical aggression. A distinctive trait of such societies is their openness and sharing. Yet these same societies also provide an instructive example of intrafamily aggression. First, it is clear from both cross cultural studies of the correlates of war

and aggressiveness and from detailed ethnographies, that a primary basis of their peacefulness is to be found in the cross-cutting group affiliations inherent in the kinship system and in the system of food-sharing. Or, as Eibl-Eibesfeldt puts it in relation to the !Ko, "What is striking when observing the Bushmen is not their lack of aggression, but their efficient way of coping with it." (1974:17). The second instructive feature of this type of society is to be found in their response to famine. When, as in the case of the Eskimo, the normal subsistence base of the society is precarious, the culturally evolved response calls for intrafamily aggression in the form of abandonment of the old and infanticide.¹⁹ In addition, when the subsistence base is further reduced, new forms of competitiveness and aggression may appear, as illustrated by Riches' work on the effects of "environmental stress" among the Netsilik Eskimo, and Opler's on Apache witchcraft. Probably the most dramatic example is the Ik as described by Turnbull. The food-sharing reciprocity which lies at the heart of the non-aggressiveness of such foraging societies became impossible and many social bonds disintegrated with a resulting almost unspeakable cruelty and callousness; for example, watching with amusement as a crawling child puts his hand in a fire, leaving children as young as 3 to fend for themselves, and children and young men pushing over a group of tottering old men as though they were bowling pins, and shrieking with laughter as the old men fell and struggled to stand up.⁵⁰

I disagree with Turnbull's suggestion that the destruction of the Ik economy and the resulting cruelty and inhumanity reveals the basic features of human nature. Their aggressiveness under these circumstances is no more--and no less--indicative of human nature than was their peacefulness and sharing when food was plentiful. Rather, what the Ik and the Eskimo tell us is that the level of aggression within families is governed by the complex interrelation of the constraints and resources of the particular ecological niche occupied by a society, the social organization of that society which evolved in relation to their particular ecological niche, the position of the family in that social organization and the behavioral and personality characteristics which are congruent with these life circumstances.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

If time permitted, a similar analysis to the one just presented could be developed for parent-child and sibling-sibling violence. Indeed, in pointing out the isomorphism between the level of violence in the husband-wife role and the parent-child role, a start has already been made in that direction. Similarly, just as the level of physical aggression in the conjugal relationship tends to be isomorphic with the level of physical aggression in non-family spheres of life, the same principle seems to hold for the parental relationship. (See Bellak and Antall, 1974; and the studies summarized in Otterbein, 1974; and also Lambert, Triandis and Wolf, 1959; and Otterbein and Otterbein, 1973).

A detailed analysis of parent-child and sibling-sibling violence-- and also of aggression and sexuality along the lines of the suggestive paper by Prescott ⁴⁹ (1975)--would strengthen the case for the theoretical conclusions I am about to put forth because they would add processes that are specific to violence in these relationships, yet at the same time are illustrative of the more general theory. For example, this would include analysis of the fact that, within society, the larger (1) the number of children in a household, the greater the use of physical punishment; (~~Bider and Bowerman, 1963; Light, 1973; Nuttall and Nuttall, 1971; Nye, Carlson and Corbett, 1970; Olsen, 1974~~) and (2) of the social class differences in the frequency and purposes of physical punishment. (~~Bronfenbrenner, 1958; Devereux, 1970; Devereux, Bronfenbrenner and Rodgers, 1969; Kearns, 1970; Kohn, 1969; Light, 1973; Pearlman, 1970; Mussen and Beytsh, 1969~~). But even without this additional evidence, the analysis of conjugal violence presented in this paper suggests the following theoretical conclusions:

I began the paper with the assumption that it is important to study near-universals of human social behavior because any social form which occurs that frequently must somehow be related to the most fundamental aspects of human society. One of the fundamental features which this paper illustrates is the fact that human societies are cybernetic and morphogenic systems operating as part of a larger ecological system. ^{*/} The materials presented show five aspects of this; the first three illustrating systemic linkages and the last two morphogenic processes: (1) The link between aggression and violence in the society

and the level of violence within the family. I suggest that this is in the form of a positive feedback relationship: as societal violence increases, there is a tendency for intrafamily violence to increase; and as intrafamily violence increases, there is a tendency for societal violence to increase. Harris' interpretation of the changes in Yanamamo society over the past 100 or so years (~~Harris, 1975:276-279~~) ²⁶ seems to illustrate such processes. (2) The link between violence in one family role with violence in other family roles, which is also a positive feedback relationship. There are a number of reasons for this, including the tendency to respond to violence by violence (if the situation permits), role modeling, and generalization of behavior patterns learned in one role to other roles ("transfer of training"). ^{*/} (3) The identification of the system-maintaining contributions of intrafamily violence, as illustration in the emergence of "protest masculinity" on the part of young men whose sexual identity is made problematic because of household structure or other circumstances of child rearing; and also as illustrated by the use or threat of physical force to maintain the structure of male dominance. (4) The change from a non-violent to a violent structure of interaction as an adaption to changes in the critical exogenous variable of the substance basis of the society as illustrated by the Ik and the Yanamamo. (5) Change in personality as actors adapt to the new behaviors required by the changed structure of interaction and which, in turn, brings about changes in other spheres of interaction. Since this last point has only indirectly been hinted at in the paper, I will close by discussing the morphogenic processes which are mediated through changes in the personality of members of a society.

For a variety of reasons the rate of internal or external warfare can increase sharply, or a previously peaceful society can become involved in either external war or internal feuds. If this happens, members of the society must learn to behave more aggressively, as a matter of both individual and group survival. This may be what happened in the case of the Yanomamo and the Ik. But the aggressive behavior patterns learned as a means of carrying out war or internal conflict are not easily turned off when it comes to relationships within the family. That is, such a situation brings about personality characteristics which exert a strain toward isomorphism between patterns of social interaction between and within families. Of course, one must not put the whole burden of change producing linkages on the mechanism intra-individual carryover of personality. Other social institutions are also important, as is shown by the studies of the correlation between conceptions of supernatural beings as benevolent or malevolent with indices of warfare and aggression and of punitiveness in child training, (Lambert, Triandis, & Wolf, 1959; Otterbein and Otterbein, 1973) studies which show that sports (and in literate societies fiction) are also related to warfare (Huggins and Straus, 1975; Sipes, 1973); and the integration of the religious, ecological, and warfare systems of the Tsembaga Maring. (Rappaport, 1968).

In conclusion, this paper has dealt with both the external changes faced by society and the internal conflicts and systematic linkages which are equally a part of social life. In the history of a society (sometimes even over as short a period of time as a generation or two), these external changes and internal conflicts can lead to changes in the structure of the society itself as a result of the cybernetic processes by which events

are monitored and controlled in accordance with system goals. The tragic case of the Ik provides a dramatic example of morphogenesis in the structure of interpersonal relationships (the system of reciprocity) to serve more fundamental system goals. Turnbull interprets their behavior as reversion to a primitive aggressive individualism. But the reanalysis of his report by McCall (1975) and Wilson (1975) suggests that, had individual survival been the primary goal, the course of events might have been much different: The Ik could have accepted the government's repeated offers to relocate to a "more favorable" location. Instead, the deep attachment of the Ik to their society and to its scared territory and way of life led them to the almost unimaginable cruelties against each other (particularly the old and the young), and to drastic changes in the pattern of interaction that the essential nature of their society, as they saw it, could be maintained.

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FOOTNOTES FOR PAGE 1

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**The concepts of aggression, violence, and war are the subject of considerable controversy and definitional confusion. It is beyond the scope of this paper to resolve even part of this conceptual problem (but see Gelles and Straus 1976).²³ However, I can at least make clear the sense in which I am using these terms:

AGGRESSION: An act carried out with the intent of, or which is perceived as being with the intent of, injuring another person. The injury may be of many kinds, including psychological, material deprivation, or physical injury. It can range from minor noxious acts such as a disparaging look to murder. # There are many other dimensions which must be considered and specified in addition to the dimensions of "motivation," "attribution," "type of injury," and "seriousness of injury" just mentioned. Much of the confusion and seemingly contradictory findings in aggression research probably occurs because these dimensions are not specified. Among these other dimensions are the degree of normative legitimacy, and the extent to which the aggression is "instrumental" to some other

purpose, versus "expressive" i.e. carried out as an end in itself.

VIOLENCE: An act carried out with the intent of, or which is perceived as being with the intent of, physically injuring another person. A more specific and less value laden term is "physical aggression."

WAR: Formally organized armed combat between groups of people who constitute territorial teams or political communities. (Harris, 1975: 260; Otterbein, 1974).

FOOTNOTE FOR PAGE 9

*Concepts such as "theme" and "pattern" have come into disrepute because they are associated with a kind of mystical "cultural determinism" which diverts attention from the issue of why a particular cultural pattern came into being and why it continues to exist. However, this needed reaction to such concepts has thrown the baby out with the bath water. One need not deny the existence of culture as system manifesting themes and interrelated patterns in order to deal with question of why such a cultural systems exists and how it operates. In fact, I take the view that unless one can identify cultural themes and patterns, the likelihood of understanding the more fundamental causes of the most basic aspects of a society are greatly diminished. An additional reason for not discarding the concept of a cultural pattern is that, in my belief, once in existence, such a pattern has a causal efficacy of its own, exerting influence on other aspects of the culture, personality, and social organization of a society. That assertion has also come into disrepute because it is so often associated with a static "functionalist" view of human society. But that is a particular historical accident of a certain period in the history of social science. My view of the relationships between the biological, cultural, personality.

and social organizational systems is that each is constantly changing and therefore creating discrepancies or discordancies which are resolved by still further changes. Thus, the assumption of functional integration within and between these spheres directs attention to processes of social change rather than social stasis.

FOOTNOTE FOR PAGE 11

*Prof. Ayres has also pointed out to me that the causal sequence in respect to societal change (as compared to the causal sequence for individuals at one point in history) can equally plausibly go from aggressive masculinity to sex role segregation and low father saliency. Such an interpretation, in fact, is consistent with Harris' theory of male dominance and female infanticide as adaptations to the institutions of warfare. (Harris, 1974:83-107; 1975:258-280)

FOOTNOTE FOR PAGE 13

*Some readers may question categorizing abandonment and infanticide as "aggression" because they are culturally legitimate acts, necessary for group survival. My position is that the normative approval versus disapproval of an injurious act is an important but separate dimension which must be separately analyzed. There are numerous other instances of normatively legitimate aggression, ranging from physical punishment by parents to the bombing of Hanoi, the former being legitimized because it is presumably necessary for the welfare of the child, and for the society as a whole, for parents to be able to control and train children, and the latter because it was presumably necessary for national survival in the face of a world communist threat. Obviously, I have picked these examples because they also indicate that the question of normative

legitimacy is itself extremely complex, especially when one faces up to the fact that there is seldom unanimity concerning these norms (Gelles and Straus, 1976). In addition, the fact that the overwhelming majority of Americans approve of physical punishment, and favored the bombing of North Vietnam, does not place them outside the scope of "aggression" as defined earlier in this paper. Finally, I should point out that Harris (1975+276) also considers infanticide as aggression when he defines it as "...homicide and acts of malign and benign aggression and neglect that consciously or unconsciously [affect]...survival..." of an infant.

FOOTNOTE FOR PAGE 15

*Readers of this paper who are anthropologists might find the concept "evolution" preferable (or at least more familiar) than the concept of "morphogenesis." I use the latter term because I do not want to confuse processes of cultural and social organizational change (the focus of this paper) with biological change processes, however analogous the two may seem to be. I have also chosen the concept of morphogenesis because it is consistent with a "general systems theory" (as apposed to a functionalist systems theory) framework, and I want these comments and speculations to be understood withing the former framework. There are many subtle but extremely important differences between these two seemingly similar theoretical perspectives. (Buckley, 1967; Straus, 1973) However, for the present purposes, the difference that is most crucial concerns the morphostatic focus of functionalist theory versus the emphasis on morphogenesis in general systems theory. In the former, the analyst asks how the system can adapt to internal and external influences and retain its basic goals, one of the most frequent adaptive mechanisms being a change in structure.

FOOTNOTE ON PAGE 16

*Although I have emphasized positive feedback processes, it is equally important to identify "dampening" or negative feedback processes which sooner or later must enter the picture. For an illustration of such negative feedback loops in relation to intrafamily violence in the USA see Straus, (1973) ⁶¹ Looked at cross-culturally, the issue becomes one of identifying the factors which make the upper limit of permissable violence vary from society to society, - one of which has already been mentioned: Whether the victims of intrafamily violence (more typically women than men) have an alternative to tollerating aggression by their spouse. If the structure of the society provides other marriage opportunities, or the possibility of return to the wife's natal family, it seems likely that this will impose an upper limit on the level of violence which will be tollerated. Another aspect of this is the importance of the domestic group and/or lineage itself. Sahlins, for example, acknowledges that "...considering interpersonal relations as such...the closer the social bond the greater the hostility [potential]." But paradoxically, he also notes that "The closer the relationship the greater the restraint on belligerence and violence..." (1961+331) ⁵³ because the focus of his discussion is societies with a segmentary lineage organization in which the lineage is ^a property controlling corporate group on which individual survival depends, and which therefore must be protected from internal disruption.

DISCUSSION

DR. RICHARD BRISLIN (East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii): You gave evidence, that in a society, violent sport does not have a cathartic effect and thus does not lessen, for instance, probability of war. But could you comment on the possible cathartic effect on an individual in that society (or within various societies) engaging in such activities as aggressive sport, thus possibly lessening other violent activity (e.g. abusing family members).

DR. STRAUS: The reviews of research (cited in a section of my paper which I did not have time to present orally) all conclude that the idea of aggression-catharsis is a myth. In fact, the weight of the evidence is in exactly the opposite direction: the more an individual observes or gives vent to either verbal or physical aggression, the greater probability of subsequent aggression. Research on this issue varies greatly in method and quality, but it includes several rigorously designed and executed experiments, such as those by Hokanson, ²⁸ and also the cross-cultural and time series analysis of Sipes ⁵⁶ on precisely the issue of aggressive sports. The theoretical arguments against the catharsis view are equally cogent. The instinct theory assumptions which underlie the idea of catharsis have long been discarded in social science. Modern social-psychological theories--including social learning theory, symbolic interaction theory, and labeling theory--would all predict the opposite of catharsis theory. That is, a deduction from any one of these theories predicts that the more frequently an act is performed, the greater the likelihood that it will become a standard part of the behavior repertory of the individual and of the expectations of others for the behavior of the individual.

Now this poses an interesting paradox: because, despite the negative empirical evidence and the cogent theoretical arguments against the idea of catharsis, it continues to gain in popularity among the general public and among a vocal and influential minority of therapists. In fact, a sizable industry to supply opportunities for the presumed therapeutic value of "letting it out" has arisen in recent years. The popular marketing of aggression includes a vast proliferation of encounter groups which encourage participants to shake off their inhibitions and verbally express their aggressive fantasies, and even styrofoam clubs to be used in mock fights.

The reasons for the startling hiatus between the scientific facts and the beliefs and practices of the general public and certain professionals who presume to base the professional practice on scientific evidence are very complicated. Some of them have to do with nature of contemporary American society (such as alienation and the implicit sanction the catharsis theory gives for the actual high level of aggression and violence), and some have to do with simple errors of logic and inference (such as a confusing short-term satiation with the long-term reinforcement which comes from the very fact of the short-term satiation). In a previous paper on "Leveling, Civility, and Violence in the Family," I identified and discussed twelve such factors which might account for this fascinating example of the non-application of social science to a vital area of human concern.

DR. HELEN M. HACKER (Adelphi University, New York): Aggression would appear to be a normal or predictable outcome of complex social factors (Bandura says it is learned, but the capacity must be part of the human repertory). Goldberg (the Inevitability of Patriarchy) argues that testosterone inevitably produces greater aggression in men than in women. Do you rule out this possibility as a factor in husband to wife aggression?

DR. STRAUS: I do not rule out the possibility of hormonal and neurological influences on differences in the level of aggression between men and women or between individuals of the same sex. However, if such effects exist, they exist as complex interactions with other factors, including social factors. I think the situation may be analogous to that of the effects of marihuana. Both field studies by sociologists such as Becker, and laboratory studies by psychologists such as Schacter, show that what is experienced when "high" depends on the social meanings that people have learned through interaction with other marihuana users. In any case, the extensive research on hormones and aggression to date has produced very complicated and often contradictory findings. For example, some animal experiments have shown that pre-natal injections of male hormones produces females who act more masculine as adults. But studies by John Money of girls exposed pre-natally to high levels of androgen found them to be no more aggressive than other girls. Post-natally, early injections of testosterone have been shown to accelerate the development of aggressiveness in male animals but not to make them more aggressive. Other studies show that castration reduces aggression. On the other hand, attempts to increase the aggressiveness of adult primates by injecting hormones

have not been successful. Finally, a classic study by Rose found that the dominant monkey in group had higher testosterone levels, but when the dominant monkey was removed and a new hierarchy established, the testosterone level of the now dominant (but formerly subordinate) monkey went up.

END

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