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# SOME SOCIAL STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR WITH RESPECT TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*

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# SOME SOCIAL STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR WITH RESPECT TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*


## ABSTRACT

Data on a nationally representative sample of 2,143 American couples show that rates of domestic violence are related to attitudes about violence and to social structural variables such as income, employment status, sex, and segregated family decision norms. Whether one's behavior is consistent with his or her beliefs about violence (e.g., slapping a spouse when one believes this is permissible under certain circumstances, or not slapping a spouse when one believes this is never permissible) depends on being in roles and life circumstances which bring forth behavior that is consistent with a given set of attitudes. Consistency can also occur by being in life circumstances which make it unnecessary to engage in the behavior contrary with ones beliefs. With respect both to physical punishment of one's children and to spousal violence, the findings show that a spouse's violence has much greater impact on the respondent's violence than the respondent's own attitudes about violence.


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Many investigators of family violence explain the presence or absence of domestic violence in terms of individual beliefs or personality dispositions. For example, Lourie (1977) suggests that a turbulent period in the midlife of adults, characterized by declining libidinal drives and the relative blunting of alertness and inquisitiveness, is a crucial factor in explaining the abuse of adolescents. Similarly, Walker (1977-78:532) suggests that learned helplessness "is important in understanding the psychological paralysis that maintains the victim status of battered women."*1

Although these statements may seem plausible, the few empirical studies of attitudes toward domestic violence show little consistency between attitude and behavior. Ball-Rokeach (1973) reports a weak association between attitudes which favor violence and violent behavior. And Straus (1977) found only a low positive relationship between approval of marital violence and violent behavior. These findings are consistent with some of the studies reviewed by Liska (1974, 1975) which show an inconsistency between attitude and behavior. The classic study indicating a lack of association between attitude and behavior is that by LaPiere (1934). LaPiere discovered that there was little relationship between hotel-managers' verbally expressed attitudes concerning the accomodation of a Chinese couple and their actual behavior.



## SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR CONSISTENCY

According to Ball-Rokeach, the reason for the lack of association between attitudes which favor violence and violent behavior is that violence and norms about violence are primarily interpersonal than intrapersonal. One therefore should not expect a causal connection between attitudes and behavior when the attitudes and behavior of only one interacting party are taken into account. For example, in order to study the attitude-behavior consistency of wives with respect to domestic violence, it is necessary to take the attitudes and behavior of the husband into consideration.

In the light of these arguments concerning the importance of attitudes and of social structural factors as they are related to violence, our concern with explaining why so much violence occurs in families also has broader theoretical implications. That is, the paper will provide some answers to the general question: To what extent are favorable or unfavorable attitudes about domestic violence related to actual violent behavior, and to what extent are social structural variables related to violent behavior and to the consistency or inconsistency between attitudes and behavior?

We are using the term "social structure" to refer to a system of patterned social interaction. For example, families are social structures consisting of various role relationships (e.g., husband-wife, mother-son). We will examine the ways in which variations in the social structure of the family are related to variations in the extent to which behavior and attitude are consistent.

In the family, as in any other social structure, there are strains towards maintaining the status quo as well as strains producing change (Straus and Hotaling, 1979:Chapter 1). For some, the contingencies of everyday life work toward what "should be" in terms of the normative system of the traditional family. For many, however, the contingencies of everyday life work against the realization of what "should be." For example, we may prefer a job to hitting other people. But a person may end up without a job and hitting his wife. What we actually end up doing is always influenced by a host of factors, such as what a spouse does, how much money we have, or what our friends think of us.

This paper attempts to show that consistency between the way we think and act is, for better or worse, a psychological luxury limited to those who find themselves surrounded by a congruent set of circumstances. These congruent sets of circumstances may be working in a person's favor or they may inhibit role performance.

The specific questions considered in this paper include: What are some of the patterns of interaction inside the family which effect domestic violence? How are variations in the sex

linked division of labor in a marriage related to the extent to which attitudes and behavior with respect to family violence are consistent? Are the patterns of interaction inside the family related to the family's position in the larger society (using total family income as an indicator of the family's position in the economic system)? The extent to which a person's attitudes and behavior with respect to domestic violence are consistent is related not only to patterns of interaction within the family, but also to the extent to which larger social forces enable or inhibit husbands and wives to live up to their mutual role obligations as socially defined.

## SAMPLE AND METHOD

The findings are based on a naticnal probability sample of 2,143 American adults living as members of a conjugal unit in January 1976, of whom 1,146 had at least one child living at home. The full sample is used when the data refer to spousal violence, and the smaller N when the data concern parental violence.*2

The survey contains information on the violent or non-violent behaviors of both the respondent and of the respondent's spouse. As regards attitudes with respect to violence, it contains data only on respondents. It will therefore not be possible to examine how spouse's attitude affects the consistency of respondent's attitude and behavior. However, it will be possible tc investigate whether spouse's behavior is related to respcndent's attitude and behavior. Spouse's behavior may affect respondent's behavior independently of respondent's attitude. Or spouse's behavior may affect the attitude-behavior consistency of the respondent because it affects the relationship between respondent's attitude and respondent's behavior.

The survey contains two semantic differential items (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum, 1957). One asks about parents' attitudes towards slapping or spanking a 12-year old; whether they consider this form of behavior rcrmal, necessary, and good. The other item refers to respondent's attitude towards couples slapping each other; whether respondent considers this kind of behavior necessary, normal, and good. The semantic differential scales have a range from 1 to 7, e.g., from "unnecessary" to "necessary" and were dichotomized to read 1 versus 2-7, for example, "unnecessary" versus "necessary".

The dependent variables consist of two "minor violence counts," made up of answers to items K, L, and M of the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1979).

> "No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree on major decisions, get annoyed about something the other person does, or just have spats or fights because they're in a bad mood or tired or for some other reason. They also use many different ways of trying to settle their differences. I...would like you to tell me ...how often you: K. threw something at the other one; L. pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one; M. slapped your (partner)...in the past year."



Those who reported any of the above behavior were classified as having engaged in minor violence. The others were not. In addition, a minor violence count for respondent's spouse was made up of answers to a parallel set of questions. Twelve percent of the respondents (N=2122) pushed, shoved, slapped, or threw something at their spouse during the twelve months preceding the interview.

A similar minor violence count was made up of answers to three of the items in the parent-child section of the Conflict Tactics Scales:

> "Parents and children use many different ways of trying to settle differences between them. ...would you like to tell me how often you: K. threw something at...; L. pushed, grabbed, or shoved...; M. slapped or spanked..." the child during the last year.

Those who engaged in any of the above behavior during the past year were classified as having engaged in minor violence. The others were not.

Yule's Q will be used as a measure of the attitude-behavior consistency whenever appropriate. Since this measure is symmetrical, the assumption of one-directional causality is not necessary. The impact of attitude on behavior, or of behavior on attitude, may be either generating or preserving. Or the two may be unrelated. Further, the fact that one of the dependent variables, namely, respondent's minor violence against spouse, is highly skewed, precludes the use of parametric techniques.

## ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR

The findings show, first, that slapping a 12-year old is normatively more acceptable than slapping one's spouse. Almost all parents (81.5%) expressed at least some approval of one or more of the three parental violence items (belief that slapping a 12-year old is necessary, normal, or good), and 65% indicated approval along all three dimensions (N=1098). In contrast, only 27.6% of the respondents indicated that slapping a spouse was either necessary, normal, or good; and only 5% answered positively on all three dimensions (N=2048).

Table 1. Percent of Respondents Who Were Violent by Belief That Violence is a Normal Part of Family Life by Sex of Respondent.

| A. Parent-Child Violence | | | B. Spousal Violence | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belief That Slapping a 12-Year Old Is Normal | Percent of Parents With Minor Violence Against Their Child | | Belief That Slapping A Spouse Is Normal | Percent of Respondents With Minor Violence Against Their Spouse | |
| | Fathers | Mothers | | Husbands | Wives |
| Not Normal | 32% (116) | 42% (117) | Not Normal | 8% (658) | 8% (867) |
| Normal | 65% (390) | 74% (477) | Normal | 24% (259) | 22% (264) |

Second, our data show that such attitudes do have at least some relation to actual slapping, especially in relation to parental violence. Of the parents who believe that slapping a 12-year old is necessary, normal, and good (N=714), 72% were actually violent against their children during the survey year. But of the respondents who believe that slapping one's spouse is necessary, normal, and good (N=96), only 33% reported an actual act of violence against their spouse. Thus, among those with pro-violence attitudes, the consistency is greater in the parent-child relationship than in the husband-wife relationship.

However, among those with a non-violent attitude, inconsistent behavior is also greater in the parent-child relationship than in the husband-wife relationship. Of the respondents who believe that slapping one's spouse is not necessary, not normal, and bad (N=1479), only 8% engaged in minor violence against their spouse. In contrast, of the parents who think that slapping a 12-year old is unnecessary, not normal, and bad (N=199), over one-third, 37%, engaged in violence against their children.*3

In analysing these data further, we explored several alternatives: a typology of attitudes, treating each of the three attitudes in question separately, and an index of violent attitudes.*4 It turns out, however, that the findings remain essentially unchanged, whether an index or the single attitude, normal-not normal, is used. This is the case, because there are very few respondents who believe that slapping a member of one's family is not normal, but who believe at the same time that it is necessary and/or good. Believing that slapping another member of one's family is "not normal" is therefore an adequate measure of the most anti-violent attitudes. Hence, for simplicity of presentation, we will report only those findings that deal with the normal-not normal attitude.

(Table 1 about here)

## Control for Sex

Parental Violence. The findings in the left panel of Table 1 show that both attitude and sex of parent are related to parents' minor violence, each independently of the other. Controlling for attitude, mothers are more likely to slap their children than are fathers (see also Gelles, 1978). Among those who believe that slapping a 12-year old is not normal, mothers are more inconsistent in their behavior than are fathers. Forty-two percent of the mothers with an unfavorable attitude (N=117) as against 32% of the fathers (N=116), engaged in minor violence against their children.

When we are talking about those with a violent attitude, the percentages in the tables indicate the degree of consistency between the respondent's attitude and violent behavior. When we talk about those with a non-violent attitude, the percentages in

the tables indicate the degree of inconsistency between the respondent's attitude and violent behavior.

Spousal Violence. The right panel of Table 1 shows that controlling for sex, those who believe that slapping one's spouse is normal, are more likely to have pushed, slapped, or thrown something at their spouse than those with an anti-violence attitude. In contrast to the data on fathers and mothers, there is no difference between men and women.

## STRUCTURAL FACTORS AND PARENTAL VIOLENCE

### Role Differentiation

Why do mothers tend to be more inconsistent in slapping their children, when they don't believe in it, than are fathers? This greater inconsistency among mothers is probably due to the fact that full-time mothers tend to spend more time with their children than fathers. They are more often "at risk" of behaving in a way which is inconsistent with their beliefs.

To test this explanation we need a measure of the sex-linked division of labor in the family. Although there is no direct measure in the survey of sex-linked division of labor with the family as the unit of analysis, there are six items on segregated decision norms as seen by the husband, and the same six for the wife.*5 The total number of segregated decision norm items is therefore 12. The index has a range from 0-12.

Table 2. Percent of Parents Who Were Violent to Their Child by Belief That Slapping a 12-Year Old is Normal by Number of Segregated Decision Norms by Sex of Parent

| Number of Segregated Decision Norms | Father's Belief About Slapping A 12-Year Old: Not Normal | Normal | Q | Mother's Belief About Slapping A 12-Year Old: Not Normal | Normal | Q |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-4 | 34% (32) | 63% (73) | .53 | 29% (35) | 66% (124) | .66 |
| 5-7 | 30% (33) | 72% (151) | .70 | 43% (40) | 82% (195) | .71 |
| 8-12 | 36% (42) | 64% (135) | .52 | 61% (36) | 77% (133) | .35 |

The findings in Table 2 show that the attitude-behavior inconsistency among mothers increases with increasing numbers of segregated decision norms. Among mothers who believe that child slapping is not normal, but in no other group, the greater the number of segregated decision norms, the more likely they are to have a minor violence count against their children. For mothers in families with the highest number of segregated decision norms, Yule's Q is smallest (.35), confirming the relatively high inconsistency between attitude and behavior. In contrast, for fathers in families with the highest number of segregated decision norms, Q=.52, showing a higher consistency between their attitudes and their behavior.

More detailed analysis produced further data which support the idea that the greater inconsistency of mothers is due to their being the ones responsible for the children most of the time. These mothers tend to be full-time housewives. It is among full-time housewives that number of segregated decision norms increases the inconsistency between attitude and behavior. In families with a low number of segregated decision norms (0-4), 37% of the full-time housewives slap their children when they don't believe in it (N=27). In contrast, in families with a high number of segregated decision norms (8-12), 69% of the full-time housewives slap their children when they don't believe in it (N=29). The number of segregated decision norms seems to have no such effect among mothers who have a full-time job, whether they believe in child slapping or not.

Table 3. Percent of Parents Who Were Violent To Their Child by Belief that Slapping a 12-Year Old is Normal by Partner Physically Punished Child by Sex of Parent

| Partner Physically Punished Child | Father's Belief About Slapping A 12-Year Old: Not Normal | Normal | Q | Mother's Belief About Slapping A 12-Year Old: Not Normal | Normal | Q |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No | 18% (77) | 34% (143) | .40 | 26% (81) | 53% (184) | .53 |
| Yes | 61% (36) | 83% (234) | .52 | 81% (32) | 88% (286) | .25 |

### Partner's Violence

One might assume that fathers whose wives physically punish their children, do the job for them so that they do not have to do it themselves. But this is not what the data show. On the contrary, as seen in Table 3, controlling for attitude, both fathers and mothers are much more likely to have been violent to their children when their partners have used physical punishment against their children than when they have not.

Table 3 shows that partner's use of physical punishment and the respondent's attitude towards slapping a 12-year old are related to the respondent's violence in an additive manner.

Among fathers whose wives physically punish their children, atttitude-behavior consistency is increased, while among mothers whose husbands use physical punishment, attitude makes little difference. They are uniformly high on minor violence against their children. A Q of .25 confirms the relatively high inconsistency of the behavior of those mothers with non-violent attitudes whose husbands have also physically punished their children. In contrast, among mothers whose husbands do not use physical punishment, the attitude-behavior consistency is increased (Q=.53). These findings suggest that the partner's behavior serves as legitimation or has a reinforcing influence on parent's own behavior with respect to child punishment.

This implicit legitimation by the spouse seems to be important also in families with a high number of segregated decision norms. For example, in families with a high number of segregated decision norms (8-12) in which the spouse also uses physical punishment, 100% of the mothers who do not believe in slapping (N=14), and 92% of the mothers who think slapping a 12-year old is normal (N=73) were violent. In short, parent's behavior tends to be in agreement with spouse's behavior even if it is in disagreement with respondent's own attitude.

Table 4. Percent of Parents Who Were Violent To Their Child by Belief that Slapping a 12-Year Old is Normal by Partner Physically Punished Child by Talked About Domestic Problems With Relatives, Friends.

| Talked About Domestic Problems With Relatives, Friends | Partner Punished Child: Respondent Believes Slapping 12-Year Old Is: Not Normal | Normal | Q | Partner Did Not Punish Child: Respondent Believes Slapping 12-Year Old Is: Not Normal | Normal | Q |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | 83% (23) | 88% (260) | .20 | 26% (43) | 56% (142) | .57 |
| No | 65% (43) | 85% (244) | .50 | 20% (95) | 38% (161) | .42 |

Other Social Relationships

What if a third party enters the picture in the form of relatives and friends with whom the respondent talked about domestic problems? Table 4 shows that talking to relatives and friends about a domestic problem increases the inconsistency between attitude and behavior among parents who do not believe in slapping a 12-year old, but whose spouses have used physical punishment (Q=.20). And consulting with relatives and friends increases the consistency between attitude and behavior among



parents who believe in slapping a 12-year old, but whose spouse does not do it (Q=.57). But among parents whose own attitudes with respect to child punishment are in agreement with their spouse's behavior, consulting with relatives and friends makes little difference for their minor violence count.

These findings show three of the things which are related to parents' violent behavior against their children--one's own attitudes, one's spouse's behavior, and discussions with relatives and friends. Consider two extremes: Those who do not approve of slapping and whose spouses do not hit their children. Among them, consultation with relatives and friends shows little relationship to parent's minor violence. On the other extreme are those who see slapping a 12-year old as normal and whose spouse hit their children. Among them, also, discussion with relatives and friends is not related to their minor violence. Now consider those who are in the middle. They have either a non-violent spouse or a non-violent attitude; or just the opposite. Among them, consultation with relatives and friends is related to higher rates of violence. If there is a domestic problem and disagreement over the use of violence, consultation with relatives and friends may be a last ditch attempt for those who have a violent spouse and a non-violent attitude (or the other way around) to resolve the problem. In this case, third parties may sanction the use of violence.

To recapitulate, physical punishment of children is a normatively more acceptable behavior than hitting one's spouse. The data show that the partner's behavior vis-a-vis the child lends further sanctioning to the parent's own behavior. Do these findings also apply to spousal violence? It can be argued that the partner's behavior should make an even greater difference for respondent's own behavior than in the case of physical punishment of children.*6

## STRUCTURAL FACTORS AND MARITAL VIOLENCE

Partner's Violence

The findings in Table 5 are in line with the above reasoning. The data show that for both men and women, marital partner's minor violence increases attitude-behavior consistency among respondents who believe that slapping one's spouse is normal. There might appear to be an interaction effect in Table 5, but the relationships are additive.*7 The findings also show that neither respondent's minor violence count nor marital partner's minor violence count are related to sex.

Table 5. Percent of Respondents Who Were Violent Against Their Spouse by Belief That Slapping a Spouse is Normal by Marital Partner's Violence by Sex of Respondent

| Was Marital Partner Violent? | Husband's Belief About Slapping A Spouse: Not Normal | Normal | Q | Wife's Belief About Slapping A Spouse: Not Normal | Normal | Q |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No | 5% (607) | 9% (196) | .31 | 4% (794) | 6% (202) | .23 |
| Yes | 57% (42) | 76% (58) | .40 | 52% (62) | 74% (61) | .45 |

In the case of spousal violence, being hit by one's spouse is not only an act of provocation. It also seems to provide moral sanctioning or justification of one's own behavior. Spousal violence is most frequent in those families in which the respondent's own violent attitude is accompanied by the violent behavior of the respondent's spouse. This pattern continues despite a control for talking to third parties, like relatives and friends, about a domestic problem. Whether they have consulted with relatives and friends or not, the majority of these respondents tend to have engaged in minor violence against their spouse.

Now let us consider respondents with a non-violent attitude who have been hit by their spouse. Of those who consulted relatives and friends (N=56), the violence rate is actually greater than among people who did not talk to relatives and friends (59% versus 49%, N=56 and 47).

These findings suggest that with respect domestic violence, involvement in a personal network of friends and relatives can support not only acts which are normative, but also acts which are clearly deviant as far as the "standard" norms of the society are concerned. The following section will attempt to show why this should be the case.

## Family Position in the Economic System

Data not reported here show that parent's violence against their children declines only in the highest income group ($20,000 or more). In contrast, the findings show that violence against spouses decreases as income goes up. The lower the total family income, the greater the violence (see O'Brien, 1971; Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1979). The two-variable relationships are significant, even though they are not very strong. On the other hand, belief that a husband or wife slapping the other is normal, is not related to income. These findings suggest that the family's position in the economic system affects the role relationships inside the family but not attitudes about violence.



Table 6. Percent of Respondents Who Were Violent Against Their Spouse by Belief That Slapping a Spouse is Normal by Marital Partner's Violence by Total Family Income

| Total Family Income | Non-Violent Partner: Respondent Believes Slapping a Spouse is: Not Normal | Normal | Q | Violent Partner: Respondent Believes Slapping a Spouse is: Not Normal | Normal | Q |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0-$11,999 | 5% (414) | 10% (122) | .34 | 67% (39) | 71% (63) | .11 |
| $12,000 or more | 4% (854) | 7% (254) | .24 | 49% (59) | 78% (49) | .56 |

When controlling for income and for marital partner's minor violence in Table 6, it turns out that in families in which the marital partner has not engaged in violence, there is a low rate of spousal violence, irrespective of attitude or income. However, among those who have marital partners who have hit them, being in the lower income groups increases the inconsistency of those who have the non-violent attitude (Q=.11). However, among those in the higher income group who have marital partners who have hit them, there is a substantial consistency between attitude and behavior (Q=.56).

Closer inspection of the data show that the above findings seem to hold for women. That is, lower-income women who consider slapping "not normal" but whose husbands have hit them, are highly inconsistent. Very likely these are the women who hit in self-defense or just "hit back." But among women in the higher income groups who have been hit by their husbands, being pro-violent increases the consistency between attitude and behavior.*8

Among husbands who have been hit by their wives, those who have a pro-violent attitude are more likely to have been violent than those who do not. This finding seems to be especially pronounced in the lower income groups though the Ns are too small to draw any definite conclusions. However, the data are in line with another finding. Among men, the lower the total family income, the greater the consistency of those respondents who believe that slapping one's spouse is normal. Of the husbands who have a total family income under $6,000, 52% of those who believe that slapping one's spouse is normal (N=23) engaged in minor violence against their spouse as against 13% of those who have the non-violent attitude (N=64). In contrast, among the husbands with a total family income of $20,000 or more, only 11%

of those who believe that slapping one's spouse is normal (N=74) and 7% of those with the non-violent attitude (N=185) were actually violent.

In short, lower-income spouses are more likely to be hit than spouses with higher incomes. And lower-income husbands are more likely to have hit their wives when they have a pro-violent attitude than when they do not. Lower-income husbands are less able to fulfill the provider role and are therefore less able to live up to the expectations of other family members than are husbands with higher incomes (Rodman, 1968). In contrast to the higher social classes, where husbands have more prestige, money, and power, lower-income men have no such resources to fall back on to control their wives. Physical violence can be used as a resource by lower-class men to control their wives when other resources are lacking (Allen and Straus, 1979; Steinmetz and Straus, 1974). In the higher income groups, men are able to control their wives in other than violent ways. "Money belongs to him who earns it, not her who spends it, since he who earns it may withhold it" (Hill and Becker, 1955:790). Violence is therefore used as a means to obtain a socially approved goal, namely the leadership role in the family, when society withholds legitimate means to obtain that goal (Merton, 1938).

Another role which is complementary to the "husband as provider" is the expressive role of the non-agressive wife. It is likely that middle-class women with non-violent attitudes with respect to spousal violence have internalized those values and norms to a greater degree than their lower-class counterparts, in part, because of different socialization patterns, and in part, because they are compensated in other ways, namely through the prestige and power of their husbands' positions (Goode, 1971). For all these reasons middle-class wives with non-violent attitudes are less likely to retaliate when they are hit by their spouses than their lower-class counterparts. This finding, in turn, is part of the explanation why marital violence is somewhat less frequent in higher-income families than in lower-income families.

## CONCLUSION

It is now possible to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this paper: To what extent are attitudes towards violence related to actual violent behavior? And to what extent are social structural variables, such as patterns of interaction inside the family and the family's position in the economic system, related to domestic violence and to the consistency or inconsistency between attitudes and behavior?

The findings show that attitudes and behavior are indeed related. However, they also show that with respect both to physical punishment of one's children and to spousal violence, a spouse's violent behavior has a much greater impact on the respondent's violence than the respondent's own attitudes about violence. With respect to spousal violence, the consistency between attitude and behavior is greatest among those respondents who have pro-violence attitudes and a violent partner.



More generally, the findings suggest that consistency between attitude and behavior depends not simply on a person's attitude, but also on social structural factors which reinforce or inhibit violent behavior. Whether one's behavior is consistent with his or her beliefs about violence (e.g., slapping a spouse when one believes this is permissible under certain circumstances, or not slapping a spouse when one believes this is never permissible) depends on being in roles and life circumstances which bring forth behavior that is consistent with a given set of beliefs, or which runs counter to a person's attitude. Consistency can also occur by being in life circumstances which make it unnecessary to engage in the behavior believed to be wrong.

For example, low-income husbands are less in a position to live up to their role obligations as the provider and the head of the family than are middle-class husbands. Their wives, who are forced to perform in the market, are less likely to recognize the male as the head of the house than their middle-class counterparts. When such recognition and other resources are lacking, husbands may, in turn, use force to control their wives. Thus, lack of resources increases the consistency between attitude and behavior among those husbands who have a pro-violent attitude.

In contrast, among high-income husbands, attitude about spousal violence shows little relation to behavior. They may approve of slapping a wife under certain circumstances, but they are uniformly low in actually slapping. We suggest that this is because high-income husbands have economic and prestige resources which let them control their wives without the need to use force.

Turning now to wives, the higher the total family income, the greater the consistency between their attitudes and behavior with respect to spousal violence even when they have been hit by their husband. Middle-class wives who do not perform in the market are economically more dependent on their husbands than are wives from lower-income families. They are therefore more likely than their lower-class counterparts to practice what they have been taught to believe in, namely to refrain from hitting their husbands. The risks and costs involved in doing otherwise are great.

Lower-class wives are more likely to be hit than their middle-class counterparts. Further, the data show that being hit by one's spouse has a greater impact on respondent's violent behavior than respondent's own attitude. These findings plus the lack of access to resources might account for the fact that lower-class wives who have been hit by their husbands tend to have a relatively high rate of spousal violence, irrespective of attitude.

In short, the results of this research show that it is not enough to see family violence as a pathological state in which people have either an irrational attitude or in which they cannot control themselves. Patterns of interaction in the family are at least as important in the study of domestic violence as are respondents' attitudes. These patterns of interaction, in turn, are related to the extent to which the environment facilitates or inhibits the performance of various roles in the family, such as that of parent, provider, or spouse.

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FOOTNOTES

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1. More generally, many researchers who study the relationships between attitudes and behavior emphasize the extent to which attitudes explain and determine behavior. For a review of the literature on the consistency between attitude and behavior, see Schuman and Johnson (1976).

2. A description of the sampling procedures is given in Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1979.

Eligible families consisted of a couple who identified themselves as married or being a "couple" (man and woman living together as a conjugal unit). A random procedure was used so that the respondents would be approximately half male and half female. Interviews were conducted with 960 men and 1,183 women.

3. The relationship between parental attitudes and parental behavior has a Q of .59, while the relationship between spousal attitudes and behavior has a Q of .56.

4. The index in question assigns a code of 0 to all respondents who believe that slapping a member of one's family is unnecessary, not normal, and bad; and it assigns a code of 1 to everybody else.

5. These involve normative expectations on who should have the final say on "Buying a car; Having children; What house or apartment to take; What job your (husband/partner) should take; Whether you should go to work or quit work; How much money to spend on food per week," wife only or mostly; or husband only or mostly. In about half of the cases husbands were interviewed. They also acted as informants about their wives' beliefs. In about half of the cases wives were interviewed who also acted as informants about their husbands' beliefs.

6. It will be remembered that the respondent was the wife in a random half of the sample, and the husband in the other half of the cases. The reader may wonder to what extent we can depend on the husband to accurately report the frequency of the wife's violence and vice versa. A detailed analysis of the accuracy of respondent's reports when respondent is used as an informant (Bulcroft and Straus, 1975) suggests that the latter depends on the type of information gathered. Fortunately, the data show that the incidence rates obtained for husband's violence using the husband as the respondent (12.8 per hundred) are almost identical to the incidence rates obtained when asking the wives



about the husband's violence (12.9). Similarly, the incidence of violence per hundred wives is 11.2 when the data are based on interviewing husbands, and 11.5 when they are based on interviewing wives. Of course, this similarity could come about in a number of ways, for example, the spouses might be reporting only incidents in which both were violent. That this was not the case can be seen from the fact that violence was reported for only one of the two spouses in about half the couples where there was a violent incident during the survey year.

7. In this as in most other tables, we used hierarchical models as developed by Goodman (1978) and exposited by Davis (1978) to test for interaction effects. The final hierarchical model for the data in Table 6 is additive. It consists of four two-variable relationships: (Sex, Attitude) (Attitude, Respondent's Minor Violence Count) (Attitude, Partner's Minor Violence Count) (Partner's Minor Violence Count, Respondent's Minor Violence Count). The final model has a Chi-Square Likelihood Ratio of 2.5556 with 7 D. F. The Probability of Chi Square = 0.9226.

8. Among wives whose husbands have hit them and who are in the 0-$11,999 income group, 67% of those with the non-violence attitude (N=24) and 62% of the pro-violence (N=29) were actually violent. In contrast, among women who have been hit by their spouse and who are in the $12,000 or more income group, 45% of the anti-violence (N=33) as against 86% of the pro-violence (N=28) were actually violent to their spouse.

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