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DETERMINANTS OF VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY: TOWARD A THEORETICAL INTEGRATION

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Prior to 1971 violent family members were among the missing persons of family research. No articles whose titles contained the word "violence" had appeared in *The Journal of Marriage and the Family* before the special issue on violence in November 1971 (O'Brien, 1971). The few references to violence between family members almost invariably dealt with pathological extremes. They tended to be either in the form of analyses of crime statistics such as homicide and assault (see for example Wolfgang, 1958; Pittman and Handy, 1964), discussions of particular cases of conjugal homicide or child abuse or filicide (see for example Kempe et al., 1962; Steele and Pollock, 1974; Schultz, 1960; and Snell et al., 1964), or presentations on possible intervention strategies in family violence (see for example Bard, 1969; Bard and Berkowitz, 1969; and Parnas, 1970).

Implicit in most of the previous work on intrafamily violence is the idea that physical violence is abnormal and/or grows out of some social or personal pathology. By contrast, the program of research in which we have been involved since 1970 tends to make the opposite assumption. While granting that some instances of intrafamily violence are an outgrowth of social or psychological pathology, we maintain that physical violence between family members is a normal part of family life in most societies (Straus, 1976b), and in American society in particular.

The term "normal" has at least three meanings: statistically frequent, culturally approved, and approved by the user of the adjective. Our research (some of which will be summarized later in this chapter) provides evidence for the normality of intrafamily violence in the first two of these three meanings. Furthermore, as suggested by conflict theorists, it is assumed that conflict in social relationships—whether in the family, in the streets, or between nations—is an inevitable and necessary part of social relationship, but physical violence is not. Dahrendorf (1959:231), for example, holds that "violent conflict may at times be desirable. . . . Generally speaking, however, it would seem to be the task of social policy to try to regulate the inevitable conflicts of social life by other means. . . ." If the structure of the society or family does not provide nonviolent means for individuals and groups to redress grievances and to engage in efforts to further their interests vis-à-vis other individuals or groups, physical violence may be the only way to correct injustices, to bring about needed social change, and to maintain the viability of the social unit. Thus, although our own value preferences are clearly opposed to violence, this cannot be an absolute preference (Straus and Steinmetz, 1974:322-23).

The empirical part of our family violence research program has emphasized the determinants of intrafamily violence. This work includes exploratory studies of college students' experience with violence at home (Straus,

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1971, 1974a; Steinmetz, 1974), in-depth interviews about the extent of violence in a sample of 80 families (Gelles, 1974, 1975a, 1976), an analysis of the National Violence Commission data (Owens and Straus, 1975), a content analysis of children's literature (Huggins and Straus, 1975), and a study of a nationally representative sample of 2,200 families carried out in 1976 and due to be published in 1978 (Straus et al., 1978).

The program of research has also included some theoretical work focused on the determinants of intrafamilial violence; for example, Straus's use of systems theory (1973), Gelles's structural model of conjugal violence (1974), Allen and Straus's work on the resource theory (1975), Straus's critique of the "catharsis" or ventilation approach to violence (1974a), and an analysis of structural and cultural theories of intrafamily violence (Straus, 1971; 1974b).

The work mentioned in the previous two paragraphs has involved seven different theories purporting to explain the occurrence of physical violence within the nuclear family. In addition we have identified and at least partly analyzed eight other theories, making a total of 15 different theories. The richness of the theoretical resources available to those concerned with family violence is to a considerable extent due to the long history of research on aggression and violence in nonfamily settings, much of which can be applied to the special case of the family. Finally, there are conceptual frameworks whose potential for explaining intrafamily violence is noted in this paper. But this theoretical richness can also be confusing. Therefore, in addition to presenting the different theories, one aim of the chapter is to begin the process of integrating these 15 theories into a more comprehensive explanatory theory of the determinants of violence between family members.

It may be helpful at this point to have an overview of the major sections of the chapter. Section 1 discusses why violence is an important aspect of family interaction and the question of whether anything is to be gained by attempting to construct a theory of *intrafamily* violence, given the fact that much theoretical work is being done on violence in other groups and settings. Section 2 takes up conceptual issues, including formal definitions of conflict, aggression, and violence, and discusses some of the problems with these definitions. Section 3 is devoted to the development and illustration of a taxonomy of family violence. Sections 4 and 5 summarize 15 theories of interpersonal violence and consider the applicability of each to the specific case of the family. Finally, in section 6 a start at a theoretical integration is made. This is done by diagramming the causal flow asserted by 13 of the theories reviewed and combining the 13 causal flow diagrams into an overall theoretical model showing some of the major ways in which these theories interrelate and complement each other.

1. IS A SPECIAL THEORY NECESSARY FOR *FAMILY* VIOLENCE?

An important preliminary question which arises as a focus for efforts at developing an integrated theory of family violence is, why is such a theory needed? That is, why focus empirical and theoretical attention on the specific case of interpersonal violence between family members? Would it not be more profitable to simply work toward a general theory of interpersonal violence rather than a specific theory of intrafamilial violence?

The question of whether one can or should develop a theory of violence which applies only to the family can be answered yes if the family has variables that are not found in other groups, or if the relationships between the variables are different for the family than for other groups. While the family does not contain variables which are absent in other groups, the family does contain a special relationship between variables which is not found elsewhere. The family is high on both intimacy and privacy. As will be noted later in this section, this relationship tends to distinguish the family from other social groups and may be a partial explanation for the high level of violence typically found in families as compared to other groups.

Aside from the unique character of the family which argues for a special theory of violence, such a theory is important for three additional reasons. First, some of the variables which the family shares with other groups are much more visible in the family. Second, an unusually high rate of violence seems to characterize familial relations. And third, attempting to answer the question of why the family is so high in violence opens the way to discovering important variables which might not otherwise be observed.

A. The Extent of Intrafamily Violence

No one has yet reported data which would give a precise indication of the extent of intrafamily violence in America.[1] Without this type of information one can only infer and speculate about how much intrafamily violence exists. Some of our findings together with other indicators lead us to believe that violence is a pervasive and common feature of American family relations. It may be more common to the institution of family than is love. Our reasons for suggesting this are based on the following data and indicators:

Physical Punishment

We start with this aspect of the use of physical force within the family because it is probably both the most frequent aspect and the best researched.

Various studies in the U.S.A. and England (Blumberg, 1964–65; Bronfenbrenner, 1958; Erlanger, 1974; Stark

and McEvoy, 1970) show that between 84 and 97 percent of all parents use physical punishment *at some point* in the child's life. Moreover, contrary to what might be guessed, physical punishment continues for most children well into adolescence. Bachman's study of a large sample of tenth graders (1967) found that 61 percent had been slapped. Studies by Steinmetz (1971, 1974) and Straus (1971) found that this pattern also applies to high school seniors. In each of the three samples studied, about half had been hit or threatened with being hit during their senior year.

Of course, physical punishment is not the same as other violence, primarily because it is normatively approved and because of the presumed altruistic motivation. But it is violence nonetheless because it involves the intentional use of physical force to cause pain. In certain respects, it has the same consequences as other forms of violence, despite the good intentions. For example, the studies of physical punishment show that parents who use physical punishment to control the aggressiveness of their children are probably *increasing* rather than decreasing the aggressive tendencies of their children (Bandura, 1973; Eron et al., 1971; Owens and Straus, 1975; Sears et al., 1957). In short, there are grounds for believing that violence begets violence, however peaceful and altruistic the motivation. In addition to its possible effects on training children in the use of violence, parental use of physical punishment may also lay the groundwork for carrying this use of force to the point at which it can be considered child abuse.

Child Abuse

Estimates of the incidence of child abuse range from a low of 6,000 cases per year (Gil, 1970:60) to a high of 1 million (*New York Times*, 1975). These estimates are influenced by a variety of factors which make using or interpreting these data quite difficult (Gelles, 1975b), but conservative estimates of child abuse run to a figure of between 200,000 and 500,000 cases a year in the United States (see Light, 1974).

Murder

Murder is the one aspect of intrafamily violence on which there are reasonably good data. Steinmetz and Straus (1974) suggest that this is because it is a crime which leaves physical evidence that cannot be ignored in the same way that the normative bias of the society caused both laypersons and researchers to ignore other forms of intrafamily violence in the past. A graphic indication of the extent of intrafamily murder can be gleaned from our estimate that each year about as many people are murdered by their relatives in New York City in any one year as were killed in bloody disturbances in Northern Ireland from 1969 to 1978. Between 20 and 40 percent of all homicides in the United States involve domestic relationships. The high proportion of intrafamily homicide is not confined to the United States (Curtis, 1974). For example, the African societies studied by Bohannan (1960:243) range from 22 to 63 percent intrafamily homicides, and the highest rate (67 percent) is for a Danish sample.

Assault

Turning to nonlethal physical violence between husband and wife, one source of data is police reports. Just as relatives are the largest single category of murder victim, so family fights are the largest single category of police calls. One legal researcher (Parnas, 1967:914) estimates that more police calls involve family conflict than do calls for all criminal incidents, including murders, rapes, nonfamily assaults, robberies, and muggings. Twenty-two percent of all police fatalities come from investigating problems between man and wife or parent and child (Parnas, 1967). Aggravated assault between husbands and wives made up 11 percent of all aggravated assaults in St. Louis (Pittman and Handy, 1964:467), and 52 percent in Detroit (Boudouris, 1971:668). These figures probably are an underestimate of the percentage of assaults between husbands and wives due to the fact that many police officers attempt to dissuade wives from filing assault charges and many wives do not see an attack by a husband as a case of legal assault. Therefore, one cannot tell from these data on police calls and assault charges just what proportion of all husbands and wives have had physical fights, since it takes an unusual combination of events to have the police called in.

Both Levinger (1966) and O'Brien (1971) studied applicants for divorce. O'Brien found that 17 percent of his cases spontaneously mentioned overt violent behavior, and Levinger found that 23 percent of the middle-class couples and 40 percent of the working-class couples gave "physical abuse" as a major complaint. These figures may be underestimates because there were probably violent incidents which were not mentioned or which were not listed as a main cause of the divorce. Perhaps these figures should be at least doubled. However, for nondivorcing couples physical violence may be less. Or it may be, as we suspect, that the difference is not very great.

The closest thing to data on a cross section of the population is to be found in a survey conducted for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence which deals with what violence people would approve (Stark and McEvoy, 1970). These data show that one of four men in this survey, and one out of six women, would approve of slapping a wife under certain conditions. As for a wife slapping a husband, 26 percent of the men and 19 percent of the women would approve. Of course, some people who approve of slapping will never do it, and some who disapprove *will* slap—or worse. Probably the latter group is larger. If so, we know that

husband-wife violence at this minimal level occurs in at least one-quarter of American families, but we think these are sharp underestimates.

Finally, our own pilot studies give some indication of the frequency of violence in the family. The first of these studies (Gelles, 1974) is based on informal depth interviews in 80 families. This study revealed that 56 percent of the couples had used physical force on each other at some time. For 20 percent of these 80 families husband-wife violence was a regular and patterned occurrence (six or more times per year).

In another exploratory study, students at the University of New Hampshire responded to a questionnaire about conflicts which occurred in their families during their senior year in high school, including questions on whether or not the parties to the disputes had ever hit, pushed, shoved, or threw things at each other in the course of one of the disputes.

The results show that during that one year 62 percent of these high school seniors had used physical force on a brother or sister, and 16 percent of their parents had used physical force on each other. These are figures for a single year. The percentage who had *ever* used violence is probably much greater. How much greater is difficult to estimate. One cannot simply accumulate the 16 percent for one year over a total number of years married because some couples will never have used violence and others will have done so repeatedly. Nevertheless, it seems safe to assume that it will not always be the same 16 percent. So it is probably best to fall back on the 56 percent estimate from the 80 depth interviews.

As noted at the beginning of this section, with the exception of homicide, none of the data just summarized are based on samples of adequate size or representativeness. But taken together they offer a persuasive counterargument to the widespread view that violence within families is a rare phenomenon found in scattered families. On the contrary, this evidence suggests that it is a major feature of American family life (and probably in most other societies—see Straus, 1976b).

Part of the widespread misperception is due to an unconscious commitment to the myth of the family as nonviolent (Steinmetz and Straus, 1974:6–17). This creates a perceptual blindness on the part of the public and "selective inattention" on the part of social scientists. For example, most people do not think of the almost universally present physical fights between siblings as violence. Even fewer think of physical punishment as violence. But even if these are excluded, the fact remains that one is more likely to be murdered by a family member than by anyone else. Moreover, although some want to reverse our figures and say that 80 percent of the spouses studied by Gelles did *not* have a regular pattern of hitting each other, and that 44 percent of the spouses studied by Gelles *never* hit each other, this claim is itself evidence of the extent to which a marriage license is unconsciously accepted as a hitting license. This can be seen imagining the same statistics for a factory, a church, or a university. Would it be taken as evidence of nonviolence if the studies showed that 44 percent of the workers, faculty, or members of a congregation never hit each other, and 80 percent did not do so on a regular basis?

B. The Special Case of the Family

In one sense family violence may be looked at as not essentially different than other forms of violence. From this perspective research on family violence could be conducted so as to verify or develop one or more of the general theories of interpersonal violence. On the other hand, violence in the family may be considered, for a variety of reasons, a *special* case of violence which requires its own body of theory to explain it. We suggest that violence between family members is a special enough case to require study in its own right. This is partly because of the extraordinarily high incidence of intrafamily violence, partly because all general theories need to be specified to apply to particular manifestations of the phenomenon they seek to explain, and partly because even though the family shares certain characteristics with other small groups, as a social group and as an institution of society the family has distinctive characteristics. These are likely to be important for understanding why the family is such a violent group, social setting, and institution. Therefore, this section identifies some of the aspects of the family which are important to consider in the development of an explanation of intrafamily violence.

Time at Risk

The most elementary family characteristic accounting for the high incidence of violence is the fact that so many hours of the day are spent interacting with other family members. Although this is an important factor, the ratio of intrafamily violence to violence experienced outside the family far exceeds the ratio of time spent in the family to time spent outside the family. A moment spent comparing the family with other groups in which large amounts of time are spent, such as work groups, provides a concrete way of grasping the fact that far more is involved than just "time at risk."

Range of Activities and Interests

Most nonfamily social interactions are focused on a specific purpose. But the primary-group nature of the family makes family interactions cover a vast range of activities. This means that there are more "events" over which a dispute or a failure to meet expectations can occur.

Intensity of Involvement

Not only is there a wider range of events over which a dispute or dissatisfaction can occur, but in addition the

degree of injury felt in such instances is likely to be much greater than if the same issue were to arise in relation to someone outside the family. The failure of a work colleague to spell or eat properly may be mildly annoying (or more likely just a subject for derision). But if the bad spelling or table manners are those of one's child or spouse, the pain experienced is often excruciating.

Impinging Activities

Many family activities have a "zero sum" aspect. Conflict is structured into such things as whether Bach or Mendelssohn will be played on the family stereo, whether to go to a movie or bowling, or a lineup for use of the bathroom. Less obvious but equally important is the impinging on one's personal space or self-image brought about by the life style and habits of others in the family, such as those who leave things around versus those who put everything away, or those who eat quickly versus those who like leisurely meals.

Right to Influence

Membership in a family carries with it an implicit right to influence the behavior of others. Consequently, the dissatisfactions over undesirable or impinging activities of others is further exacerbated by attempts to change the behavior of the other.

Age and Sex Discrepancies

The fact that the family is composed of people of different sexes and age (especially during the child-rearing years), coupled with the existence of generational and sex differences in culture and outlook on life, makes the family an arena of culture conflict. This is epitomized in such phrases as "battle of the sexes" and "generational conflict."

Ascribed Roles

Compounding the problem of age and sex differences is the fact that family statuses and roles are, to a very considerable extent, assigned on the basis of these biological characteristics rather than on the basis of interest and competence. An aspect of this which has traditionally been a focus of contention is socially structured sexual inequality, or, in contemporary language, the sexist organization of the family. A sexist structure has especially high conflict potential built in when such a structure exists in the context of a society with equalitarian ideology. But even without such an ideological inconsistency, the conflict potential is high because it is inevitable that not all husbands have the competence needed to fulfill the culturally prescribed leadership role (Kolb and Straus, 1974; Allen and Straus, 1975).

Family Privacy

In many societies the normative, kinship, and household structure insulates the family from both social controls and assistance in coping with intrafamily conflict. This characteristic is most typical of the conjugal family system of urban-industrial societies (Laslett, 1973).

Involuntary Membership

Birth relationships are obviously involuntary, and underage children cannot themselves terminate such relationships. In addition, Sprey (1969) shows that the conjugal relationship also has nonvoluntary aspects. There is first the social expectation of marriage as a long-term commitment, as expressed in the phrase "until death do us part." In addition, there are emotional, material, and legal rewards and constraints which frequently make membership in the family group inescapable, socially, physically, or legally. So when conflicts and dissatisfactions arise, the alternative of resolving them by leaving often does not, in practice, exist—at least in the perception of what is practical or possible.

High Level of Stress

Paradoxically, in the light of the previous paragraph, nuclear family relationships are unstable. This comes about because of a number of circumstances, starting with the general tendency for all dyadic relationships to be unstable (Simmel, 1950:118–44). In addition, the nuclear family continuously undergoes major changes in structure as a result of processes inherent in the family life cycle: events such as the birth of children, maturation of children, aging, and retirement. The crisis-like nature of these changes has long been recognized (LeMasters, 1957). All of this, combined with the huge emotional investment which is typical of family relationships, means that the family is likely to be the locus of more, and more serious, stresses than other groups.[2]

Normative Approval

Another aspect of the family which is important for understanding why so much violence occurs within that setting is the simple but important fact of *de jure* and *de facto* cultural norms legitimizing the use of violence between family members in situations which would make the use of physical force a serious moral or legal violation if it occurred between nonfamily members. This is most obvious in the rights of parents to use physical force. But there is also considerable evidence of deeply rooted, though largely unverbalized, norms which make the marriage license also a hitting license (Straus, 1976a).

Socialization into Violence and Its Generalization

An important part of the explanation for the high level of intrafamily violence is the fact that violence is first experienced in the family and is experienced in relations with those who profess love for one another. The basis for this starts with the fact that physical punishment is nearly universal. When physical punishment is used, several things can be expected to occur. First, and most obvious,

is learning to do or not do whatever the punishment is intended to teach one to do or not do. Less obvious but equally or more important are two other lessons which are so deeply learned that they become an integral part of the personality and world view.

The first of these unintended consequences is the association of love with violence. The child learns that those who love him or her the most are also those who hit and have the right to hit. The second unintended consequence is the lesson that when something is really important, it justifies the use of physical force. Finally, we suggest that these indirect lessons are not confined to providing a model for later treatment of one's own children. Rather, they become such a fundamental part of the individual's personality and world view that they are generalized to other social relationships, and especially to the relationship which is closest to that of parent and child: that of husband and wife. Therefore, it is suggested that early experiences with physical punishment lay the groundwork for the normative legitimacy of all types of violence but especially intrafamily violence. Experience with physical punishment provides a role model—indeed a specific "script" (Gagnon and Simon, 1973; Huggins and Straus, 1975)—for such actions. In addition, for many children, there is not even the need to generalize this socially scripted pattern of behavior from the parent-child nexus in which it was learned to other family relationships because, if our estimates are correct, millions of children can directly observe and use as a role model physical violence between husbands and wives (see also Gelles and Straus, 1975; Owens and Straus, 1975).

2. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

A. *Definitions of Violence and Aggression*

For purposes of this chapter, *violence* is defined as "an act carried out with the intention of, or perceived as having the intention of, physically hurting another person." The "physical hurt" can range from slight pain, as in a slap, to murder. The basis for the "intent to hurt" may range from a concern for a child's safety (as when a child is spanked for going into the street) to hostility so intense that the death of the other is desired.

Inclusion of the requirement of "intent" has long been a source of confusion and controversy in definitions of aggression and violence. In part this is because intent and motive are meanings which are attached to acts (by the actor or by those with whom the actor interacts) at the time or after the act occurs (Bandura, 1973:4). To deal with this problem, we added the phrase "or perceived as having the intention of" to the definition. In a later section on attribution theory, this will be analyzed in more detail.

In addition to problems of intent and attribution, there are a host of problems connected with the "physical hurt" (i.e., outcome) part of the definition, some of which are also discussed in later sections. For the present, however, it should be noted that many hurt-intending acts are not successful, and some acts which were not intended to cause harm do result in hurt; and that this definition does *not* require any physical hurt to actually result—only that the act be intended to hurt, or be perceived as having that intention.

Aggression is a more general concept than violence. It refers to any malevolent act, i.e., an act carried out with the intention of, or which is perceived as having the intention of, hurting another. The injury can be psychological, material deprivation, or physical pain or damage. When the injury is pain or damage, it can be called "physical aggression" and is then synonymous with "violence" as used in this chapter. This definition of aggression is consistent with the way aggression has usually been defined in the social psychological literature (Johnson, 1972; Rule, 1974), with the exception of addition of a phrase to make it consistent with the recent work on attribution processes in aggression (Tedeschi et al., 1974).

Theoretical and Ideological Confounding

One of the major sources of confusion surrounding the concepts of aggression and violence is that both are entangled with various theoretical and ideological concerns which have no necessary linkage to either concept. In relation to "aggression," for example, psychoanalytic and much ordinary language uses "aggression" to refer to deliberately noxious acts *and also* to such things as drive level, assertiveness, and exploratory behavior. These often have noxious consequences even though they are not the "goal response" of the act.

A problem of this type with the concept of violence is that it is a "label" or a political term as well as a scientific concept. It is used by members of the political left to describe almost any aspect of society of which they disapprove. Thus some critics of the Federal Aid to Dependent Children program label it as "violent" because of its negative impact on the family. Other groups refer to entire social systems—such as capitalism—as "violent." However, the most immediate source of confusion is with the use of "violence" by Laing and Cooper (1964): the molding of the behavior or personality of an individual by others—especially other family members. We recognize the phenomenon to which they refer, but it is nonetheless a separate phenomenon, as can be seen from the fact that they rarely refer to instances in which either physical or verbal aggression is used. In fact, the "violence" which Laing has in mind can be achieved more effectively without violence as that term is used here.

In contrast to these ideological uses of "violence" the definition used in this chapter is purely behavioral: it is a physical act. Of course, one cannot separate an act from

its social meaning. But clarity demands that we separate the behavior from its social meanings in a way which allows for the variety of meanings which exist in a society or across societies, and which also specifies what those meanings are. It is for this reason that the variable of "legitimacy" is used as one of the dimensions to form the taxonomy presented in section 3. That is, the labeling, political, or ideological aspect of the concept of violence is treated as a *variable*, rather than assumed to always be negative as in the usage illustrated in the previous paragraphs. This reflects the fact that the same act of physical hurting is negatively valued by some or in some circumstances, and positively valued by others or in other circumstances. Furthermore, it follows from the above that any theory of violence in the family (or in any other situation, or for that matter a theory of any kind of social behavior) must consider social definitions and norms concerning the behavior in question.

A related question concerns the reason for including "moderate corporal punishment" of children within the definition of violence. There are two main reasons for this, despite the fact that it violates ordinary usage. First, as noted above, and in more detail in section 3, the main difference between "moderate corporal punishment" and what would be considered a chargeable assault if the actors were unrelated adults—for example, two workers or a foreman and a worker—is whether the act of physical force is normatively approved or disapproved. A second reason is based on the evidence summarized in the last part of section 1B, which indicates that physical punishment provides the fundamental learning situation for the normative legitimacy of other types of intrafamily violence, including husband-wife violence.

Is Violence a Separate Phenomenon?

In one sense violence is simply one mode of carrying out an aggressive act. Could we therefore eliminate the problem of political connotations by eliminating the term and just calling it "physical aggression"? One reason for singling out physical aggression by the use of the term "violence" is parallel to Etzioni's insistence on the importance of differentiating coercion in general and forceful coercion (1971): the use of physical force to carry out an aggressive act is qualitatively different from other modes of being injured. Thus, although violence shares with other types of aggressive acts the central characteristic of malevolence or harm-doing intent, the nature of the intended harm (physical injury) is unique. This is exemplified in the ancient children's taunt: "Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me." In short, the consequences are different.

A final reason for considering physical violence separately from other aggressive acts is that grouping all aggressive acts together prevents explaining why the aggressor chooses this particular modality. Since there are many ways of being aggressive, we need to find out the particular causal sequence which underlies the use of physical violence compared to other modes of hurting another. In short, the antecedents of physical aggression may be different from the antecedents of other modes of aggression. A general theory of aggression may be necessary, but it is not sufficient to explain physical aggression. For example, physical aggression may occur because there is an audience to a dispute that considers it "unmanly" to use insults and other forms of verbal aggression.

Force

William Goode (1971) restricts the use of the term "violence" to the illegitimate use of physical force. On the other hand, if the act is socially legitimate—such as spanking a child or tear-gassing demonstrators who will not disperse—Goode labels it "force" rather than "violence." This is roughly equivalent to ordinary English usage—which is both an advantage and disadvantage. The disadvantage comes about because of the ambiguity in identifying what is legitimate and what is not. For example, shall we use the parent's conception of when it is legitimate to spank a child? The child's conception? The middle-class conception? The working-class conception? Or the legal conception? In the case of the demonstration, the actions of the police in using tear gas are seen as illegitimate by the demonstrators and hence as "violence." But the police define such actions as necessary and as legitimate and hence as "force." Thus the problem of "whose definition?" makes an unambiguous distinction between force and violence virtually impossible. Nevertheless, the idea of legitimacy is extremely important, as will be shown in the next section, and in the section on attribution theory.

B. Conflict and Violence

The conceptual complexity and confusion associated with the idea of "conflict" rivals that surrounding "aggression" and "violence." Moreover, since there is a certain overlap between "conflict" and "violence," some of the confusion associated with conflict also overlaps and serves to further muddy the waters for those trying to get a clear picture of violence. Therefore, even though this chapter is not concerned with conflict per se, some space must be devoted to specifying and differentiating conflict from aggression and violence. For purposes of this paper, the discussion will be restricted to three central concepts used by conflict theorists (even though many more are involved): "conflict of interest," "conflict," and "hostility."

Conflict of Interest

When conflict theorists talk about the ubiquity of conflict, they are referring to what is here called "conflict of interest," that is, to the fact that members of a social group, no matter how small and intimate, are all seeking to live out their lives in accordance with personal agendas

which inevitably differ. These differences range in importance. Whose TV show will be watched at eight? Should money be saved or spent on a vacation? Which is more important to control, inflation or unemployment? There is no way to avoid such conflicts without running the risks of group rigidification and ultimate disintegration, to which conflict theorists have alerted us.[3]

Conflict

The second phenomenon which must be distinguished if we are to have any hope of doing sound theoretical or empirical research on intrafamily conflict is the method used to advance one's interest, that is, the means or the behavior used to resolve conflicts. Two families can have the same level of conflict over the types of interests mentioned in the previous section. But even though the conflicts in that sense are identical, the two families may differ vastly—and with profound consequences—in respect to how they deal with these conflicts. One family might resolve the issue of which TV program by rotation, another by a "first there" strategy, and another by who is physically strongest or most willing to threaten force.

Some conflict theorists have attempted to deal with the conceptual confusion by using the term "conflict" to refer to conflict of interest, and a different term to refer to conflict in the sense of the means of advancing one's interest. Thus Dahrendorf (1959) refers to the means of engaging in conflict as "conflict management." However, the situation remains confused because other theorists follow the opposite strategy. Coser (1956:8) uses "conflict" to refer to the behavior used to pursue one's interest. So when Coser and Dahrendorf use the term "conflict," they are often referring to quite different phenomena, the one to the conflict of interest and the other to the means of pursuing that interest. There is no resolution in sight for this confusing state of affairs. The best that can be done is to make clear what usage one is following. Therefore, in the context of the present chapter Coser's usage will be followed; i.e., "conflict" will be used to refer to the overt acts which people carry out in response to a conflict of interest. These can range from attempts to advance one's interest by showing the moral, logical, or factual superiority of the desired outcome, to acts of verbal and physical aggression.

Hostility

When, for whatever reason, members of a group have a feeling or dislike or antipathy for each other, this fact is also often referred to as conflict. But paradoxically, as conflict theorists have pointed out, hostility is likely to be extremely high when conflict in the sense of conflict of interest is repressed. This is because such a situation—namely, the existence of conflicts of interest and the repression of conflict in the sense of attempts to do something about those conflicts of interest—means that the actors are prevented from achieving ends which are important for them. Hostility develops out of this frustration. Of course, hostility can arise from other sources as well. But that only highlights the need to keep distinct the phenomena of conflict of interest, conflict, and hostility. Therefore, in this chapter, "hostility" will be restricted to refer to the level of negative cathexis between members of the family group. Finally, and most directly relevant to the purposes of this chapter, there can be hostility without violence or violence without hostility.

It follows from the previous discussion that further theoretical work on conflict in the family requires as a minimum first step that we avoid the all too common confusion of "conflict of interest," "conflict," "hostility," and "violence." Similarly, clear empirical work on intrafamily conflict also depends on having separate measures of these variables. One approach to developing some of the needed measures is the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, 1978).

C. Other Conceptual Distinctions

There are a great many conceptual distinctions which are relevant for precise theoretical or empirical work on violence within families, some of which will be briefly delineated in this section.

Aggression and Aggressiveness

As implied by the definitions previously given for verbal and physical aggression, the concept of aggression as used in this chapter refers exclusively to *acts* of interpersonal behavior. On the other hand, the concept of aggressiveness refers to a dispositional state of an actor, which may or may not result in aggression. A dispositional state or personality variable such as aggressiveness is only one of many "instigators" or factors which can bring about a violent act. Acts of extreme violence may be committed by people with a low level of aggressiveness; conversely, highly aggressive persons may constrain or sublimate such tendencies and rarely or never carry out an act of verbal or physical aggression.

Aggression and Assertion

One of the most thorny confusions in the thicket of conceptual confusion which surrounds research on conflict, aggression, and violence is that between aggression and assertion. Assertion or assertiveness is very close to conflict. It means pursuing one's interests. And like conflict, it leaves open the question of how these interests are to be pursued. One can be assertive in the sense of standing up for one's rights and interests without being aggressive in the sense of doing so by an act intended to harm another. Nevertheless, there is a pervasive tendency to equate the two. This is most clearly manifested by psychoanalytic theory, in which aggression is almost identical with assertiveness, drive level, or the instinct for

survival. It is also ingrained in the folk concepts from which Freud's theory sprang. Thus we speak of "an aggressive manager" when we mean one who strives hard.

There are a number of reasons for this conceptual confusion, including the following: (1) Assertiveness can lead to the injury of others, even though the intent to injure was not present. Thus our hard-working manager may not want to drive another company out of business but may do so because the efficiency of his firm lets it offer goods at a price which is impossible for some other firm. That is, an assertive act and an aggressive act can lead to the same outcome and therefore tend to be confused. (2) There is envy and jealousy of assertive people because of the power and material goods which tend to flow to such people. This can lead others to impute aggression as a means of explaining or disavowing the difference between their own accomplishments and those of the assertive person. (3) Despite the genuine negative feeling in our society about aggression and violence, there is often a large payoff for such acts (Buss, 1971; Feshbach, 1971). Aggression *is* one mode of being assertive and often a very successful mode. So it is easy to confuse the assertiveness with one particular way of being assertive.

The confusion between aggression and assertiveness is particularly important for the study of violence in the family because it is reflected in strategies urged by one group of marriage counselors and advice books: those in what can be called the "constructive aggression" school, as represented, for example, in Bach and Wyden's *The Intimate Enemy* (1968). Some of these authors do make a distinction between aggression and assertiveness by distinguishing between fighting and "fighting fairly." But even when that is the case, the distinction tends to be overshadowed by the general tone which lumps aggression and assertiveness together and often imbeds the description of assertive acts in a context which strongly implies the positive nature of aggression and the positive contribution to mental health and social relations of the cathartic effects of ventilating (in the sense of acting out) one's aggressive feelings. A review of the research literature and some new evidence reported by Straus (1974a) suggests exactly the opposite: that the emphasis should be on *non*-aggressive assertiveness. This is based on the repeated finding that aggressive acts tend to evoke counteraggression and an escalation of the aggressive content of the conflict (often to the point of physical violence) rather than lead to a constructive solution to the objective issue.

3. TYPES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

There are a number of dimensions which can be used to construct a taxonomy of family violence—for example, (1) who the initiating and recipient actors are, (2) the extent to which the violence is victim-precipitated, (3) the severity of the violence or injury, (4) whether the long-range consequences of the violence are intended to be or turn out to be beneficial to the recipient, as in the case of physical punishment, (5) the extent to which the aggressor perceives his actions as being required by social norms and obligations (as in the case of a judge sentencing a murderer) versus perception of the act as personally motivated (Rule, 1974).

Some of these dimensions overlap, and all will be important for certain purposes. However, we suggest that there are two dimensions of violence which are likely to be important in any consideration of family violence. These are the degree to which the use of violence in a given situation is legitimized by social norms and the degree to which the use of violence is for instrumental purposes. Although each of these two dimensions are continuous, for clarity of exposition we will dichotomize them.

Legitimacy

In respect to the legitimacy dimension we will call one end of the continuum "legitimate violence." This refers to the use of physical force in situations where it is approved or required by the norms of the society, such as spanking a child in most societies or flogging a prisoner in some societies, or shooting an enemy soldier in time of war. The "illegitimate violence" side of the dichotomy refers to such acts as spanking a disobedient wife in contemporary American society or shooting a soldier of a country with which there is not an official or unofficial war underway.[4]

Instrumentality

For the instrumentality dimension we distinguish "expressive violence" and "instrumental violence." By expressive violence we mean the use of physical force to cause pain or injury as an end in itself—for example, hitting someone who is the source of anger, insult, or rage. By instrumental violence we mean the use of pain or injury as a punishment to induce another person to carry out some act or refrain from an act.

A difficulty with this dichotomy as a single dimension is that expressiveness and instrumentality are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, there will be many situations where an instrumentally focused violent act also contains strong expressive components. In addition, it seems likely that there can be causal linkage between expressivity and instrumentality in the use of violence. That is, a family member who is aggressive and who obtains satisfactions from the infliction of pain on others may, as a result, tend to choose the use of physical force as a frequent modality for exercising social control. Despite these problems, we feel that most violent acts can be classified as *primarily* instrumental or primarily ex-

pressive with reasonable reliability and that such a classification will be a useful analytic tool, even though, like all other analytic tools, it does not encompass the full reality of the phenomenon under consideration.

A Four-Cell Taxonomy

By dichotomizing these two dimensions and combining them in a two-dimensional property space, four types of violence are distinguished which may have wide theoretical and practical utility. These are shown in Figure 21.1.[5]

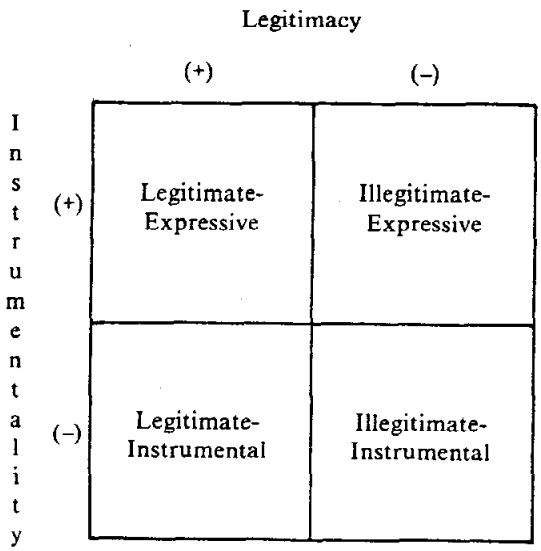
Legitimate-Expressive Violence

At first glance it may seem doubtful that this cell has an empirical reference. Is it ever legitimate in the normative sense to injure someone else just to get relief from one's own feelings or needs? The answer seems to be "yes." Support for this type of violence in the family includes the widespread beliefs that it is better to spank a child than to "hold in" one's anger and better to let siblings "fight it out" than to interfere (provided things do not get out of hand). The following is typical advice to parents:

> It seems to me we have to assume that, being human, almost every parent who ever lived hit his kid sometime or other. Being human, we get mad and lose our patience, and the swift swat is the result. Let's accept that as a basic premise of our discussion [LeShan, 1970:34].

At a more theoretical level, the idea of "catharsis" is an example of legitimate-expressive violence. This is the belief that the expression of "normal" aggression between family members should not be bottled up. The idea that allowing so-called "normal aggression" to be expressed serves as a tension-releasing mechanism, thus reducing the likelihood of severe violence, is widespread in both popular thinking and among certain social scientists. Bettelheim (1967), for example, holds that excessive training in self-control is typical of American middle-class families. He argues that this denies children outlets for the instinct of human violence and thereby fails to teach them how to deal with violent feelings. We have elsewhere presented a detailed critique of the validity of these ideas, labeling them as "the catharsis myth" (Steinmetz and Straus, 1974; Straus, 1974a). But irrespective of the presumed cathartic consequences, it is clear that this is a widespread type of violence in the American family. It is possible that almost all brothers and sisters have carried out acts of expressive violence which would be regarded as legitimate in the sense of being provoked—"he deserved it." Just how many parents hit their child after reaching "the breaking point" (as opposed to hitting as punishment or as deterrent) we cannot even guess, and the same applies to blows between husbands and wives.

Figure 21.1. Four Types of Violence



Illegitimate-Expressive

This is the most widely recognized type of violence in the family because it includes the most spectacular and extreme forms of violence: child abuse and murder. But the rates for child abuse and murder do not really tell us much about the frequency of illegitimate-expressive violence because there is an enormous number of such acts that do not reach the point of bringing a child to the attention of the authorities or producing a corpse. Included in this category are acts of angry violence between siblings which are "undeserved" or which cause "excessive" pain or injury, "excessive" physical punishment (but not so excessive as to require medical attention and hence be categorized as "child abuse" under current social norms), and the innumerable fights between husband and wife which cannot be justified under the rubric of catharsis or as something which he or she "had coming." A typical example of such violence between husband and wife is illustrated by the following excerpt from one of the families interviewed by Gelles (1974):

> He just got violently mad at me. . . . It was during a big snow storm. . . he didn't want to get up and shovel the car out. He said my son and I could do it. And my son can't even shovel. . . so I came in and asked him if he wouldn't please help. Well, he was too busy reading his papers and didn't want to be bothered and he was tired. And I guess I pushed him to the point where I bitched at him for not helping me. . . he was driven to the point where he got up, threw his papers down, and came at me. He called me very bad names and sent me from here to there with an open hand. And my right eye hemorrhaged completely.

Legitimate-Instrumental

Although we previously indicated that illegitimate-expressive violence is the most widely *recognized* type of violence between family members, this does not mean

that it is the most widely *occurring* type. In fact, we suggest that the most frequent type is instrumental violence which is permitted or required by the norms of the society, i.e., legitimate-instrumental violence. Such use of physical force as a means of inducing some desired act or as a means of preventing an undesired behavior occurs in all of the role relationships of the nuclear family with greater or lesser frequency. The greatest frequency is in the parent-child relationship in the form of physical punishment.

The survey conducted for the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, for example, found that 93 percent of those interviewed reported having experienced physical punishment as a child (Stark and McEvoy, 1970). Other studies report similar figures (for example, Blumberg, 1964–65) and two studies reveal that even among adolescents in their last year of high school, half had been hit or threatened with being hit by their parents (Straus, 1971; Steinmetz, 1974). In every state in the union it is legal for parents to strike children, that is, to use physical punishment. Indeed, most Americans see a moral obligation for parents to use physical punishment as a means of controlling children if other means fail (Stark and McEvoy, 1970), and a goodly proportion see it as the most desirable means of controlling children. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is not a dead way of life in contemporary America even though it is no longer the dominant ideology.

Legitimate-instrumental violence is by no means confined to physical punishment by parents. Parents frequently delegate such authority to older children in relation to their siblings, and children are quick to follow the role model of their parents. Although the *legal* right of a husband to physically punish a wife (Calvert, 1974) no longer exists, the informal norms of certain social groups (and specific families in all segments of society) still legitimize the use of physical force to control an errant spouse (Straus, 1976a). For example, Parnas (1967) reports that the police come to know the customs of different groups in their areas and respond to complaints of "family disturbances" according to these presumed norms. He illustrates this with the case of a Puerto Rican woman who, when asked by the judge "should I give him 30 days" for beating her, replied "No, he is my husband, he is supposed to beat me." For black slum families, with their matricentric pattern of organization, Parnas reports that the police in some instances have come to accept (and therefore treat lightly or ignore) women "cutting" their husbands or lovers.

While it may be true that norms legitimizing husband-wife violence are to be found in certain ethnic, racial, or social class groupings of American society, such norms seem to occur also within individual families throughout the society. Gelles (1974) found repeated evidence of this in a study of eighty families in two cities in New Hampshire. Consider the following example:

> I have slapped her in the face or arms to shut her up . . . it's usually when the kids get hurt. She just goes completely spastic. . . . She just goes wild so you have to hit her or something to calm her down so she'll come to her senses. . . . It's not because I'm trying to hurt her because of something she's done. I'm trying to knock her to her senses more or less. . . . I had to slap her in the face and hit her arm to calm her down.

We do not know the specific frequency of legitimate-instrumental violence of the type illustrated by this case since Gelles's study was designed to explore the internal family process which produces violence rather than to obtain statistical estimates of frequency. Clearly, such figures are an elementary but important part of our knowledge of violence in the family which needs to be supplied by future research.

Illegitimate-Instrumental

The line between legitimate and illegitimate instrumental violence is indefinite because, as noted earlier, this is really a continuum which we have dichotomized for convenience of exposition. Just as normatively approved "cathartic" slapping by a parent can reach the point of injury and thus be classified as child abuse, so can normatively approved physical punishment easily be carried to the point where, despite the benevolent intentions of the parent in punishing the child "for his own good," society will regard it as abusive rather than educative. Similarly, a wife who accepts a certain level of violence from her husband in response to her transgressions will reach the point of defining it as illegitimate if it exceeds a certain level of severity or if it occurs too often with little provocation.

Which Norms?

The preceding paragraph seems to suggest that a family group or a society accepts a certain level of instrumental use of force as legitimate and that it is only when this level is exceeded that the violence falls into the illegitimate-instrumental category. But this is misleading because it fails to take into account the fact that there exists a small proportion of families for whom *any* use of force, including any physical punishment, is abhorrent. Moreover, even for the much larger proportion of families who accept a certain level of violence, the degree and type of violence which is legitimate depends on the circumstances.

But the situation is more complicated than that. There seems to be a dual set of norms, the first consisting of the overtly recognized and accepted norms prohibiting husband-wife violence, and the second consisting of the unverbalized but operating norms of everyday life (Straus, 1976a). The actors may, in fact, deny that they could control the course of their behavior. But this does not alter the fact that such decisions follow lawful patterns in relation to cultural norms and the goals of the system.

As Garfinkel (1967) and others have shown, some of the most important decision rules for social interaction are so internalized and taken for granted that the actors automatically invoke them in appropriate situations. In relation to violence between family members this can be illustrated by an example from a marriage-counseling case (told by Carlfred Broderick). One of the problems was that the husband frequently hit the wife. The husband agreed that this was wrong but said that there was nothing he could do because he hit his wife when he "lost control." The marriage counselor asked, "Why don't you stab her?" The implication here was that if the husband really had lost control he would have stabbed or shot his wife or otherwise have injured her. That he did not stab her was proof that he had not "lost control." The implicit, unrecognized, but nonetheless operating norms for this husband enabled him to hit his wife but not stab her (and then account for the act by saying he lost control).

The dual norms just described, however, are only one of the complications and ambiguities inherent in the legitimacy dimension of this taxonomy. Leaving aside inconsistent norms within the individual, there is also the question of inconsistency or conflict in the norms as perceived by different individuals and groups. Gelles (1974:86–90), for example, examined five different normative perspectives which often disagree. These are the "offender"; the "victim"; a "joint perspective" such as intrafamily consensus on what is permissable; agents of control such as psychiatrists, social workers, and police; and the normative perspective of the investigator.[6]

It is obvious that the typing of violence will, for the most part, depend on which of the five different perspectives are used. Furthermore, it should not be surprising that each perspective is quite likely to be different from the others—what the offender sees as legitimate the victim may not; what the researcher finds appalling the family may find normal and stable. In supplying illustrative examples for each of the four types in the taxonomy, judgments of what appeared to constitute the prevailing standards of the society were used. However, illustrations of how the categorization would be different using the perspective of a given subculture or of a given family were also given. Whose definition of legitimacy to use in any specific investigation or analysis depends on the purposes of the analysis. Thus a crucial decision which must be made at the outset in any study of family violence is which perspective, or combination of perspectives, to utilize in categorizing legitimacy.

4. THEORIES OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE APPLIED TO THE FAMILY

Up to this point in the chapter the concern has been largely with definitional, conceptual, and taxonomic issues. These are issues which must be clarified if there is to be any hope of making progress on the task of analyzing explanatory theories, and even more the case if one wishes to integrate theories. Adherents of each of the theories discussed below may not necessarily agree with our definitions of aggression and violence. It would be desirable if there were such a consensus. But whether they agree or not, the objective of integrating the theories requires that there be standardization within this chapter of at least some of the key concepts.

A. Conceptual Frameworks and Theories

It is also essential to indicate the way in which the terms "theory" and "conceptual framework" are used in this chapter. By theory we mean a set of interrelated concepts, and propositions relating concepts and variables, which are intended to explain the existence of or variation in a phenomenon—in this case violence. By conceptual framework we mean a set of concepts and relational propositions which are believed to be useful for the *development of* an explanatory theory.

The line between conceptual framework and theory is blurred because often what is termed a theory is really a conceptual framework, in that it is not intended to explain why some *specific* phenomenon is the way it is (e.g., functionalism), and because a conceptual framework is typically a part of an explanatory theory. When the set of concepts and propositions is sufficiently integrated and focused on a specific phenomenon so that it can be appropriately classified as a theory is also a matter of judgment.

For purposes of this chapter we will operationalize the distinction by classifying as a theory any set of concepts and propositions which has been offered *as an explanation of aggression and/or violence*. The term "conceptual framework" will be used for those sets of concepts and propositions which are reviewed here because they seem to be important tools for developing such a theory, but which, to our knowledge, have not yet been specifically applied to the explanation of aggression and violence.

B. Theories and Interpersonal Violence

Although research on *family* violence has been sparse and exploratory, there has been a great deal of research on the causes of interpersonal violence. For the purposes of this chapter we inventoried 15 theories and conceptual frameworks which seem to have some relevance for understanding violence between family members.[7] These are:

Intraindividual Theories
1. Psychopathology
2. Alcohol and drugs

Social Psychological Theories
3. Frustration-aggression
4. Social learning
5. Self-attitude

6. "Clockwork Orange"
7. Symbolic interaction
8. Exchange theory
9. Attribution theory

Sociocultural Theories

10. Functional
11. Culture of violence
12. Structural
13. General systems
14. Conflict
15. Resource

As a preliminary attempt to organize these theories it is convenient to group them into three basic levels of analysis based on the type of causal factor which is fundamental to the theory: intraindividual, social-psychological, or sociocultural. The fundamental point of each theory will be briefly stated together with brief comments on the problems of particular theories. The "fundamental point of each theory" really expresses our judgment concerning the aspect of the theory which appears to be most crucial for understanding intrafamily violence and most different from other theories.

C. Intraindividual Theories

Intraindividual theories explain violence in terms of some quality of the individual actor. Both biologically based qualities, such as genes or chromosomes, and acquired characteristics, such as aggressive personality or personal defects or aberrations, are the foci of intraindividual-level explanations. We have omitted most of the major intraindividual theories of violence from consideration here—those based on genetic, instinctual, or biological factors—because of their limited relevance for explaining violence in the family (see note 7). However, the psychopathology and alcohol and drugs theories will be discussed because the former is the most widely used explanation of child abuse and the latter represents a widely held view concerning the causes of husband-wife violence.

Psychopathology

The psychopathology approach to violence postulates that violence is caused by an abnormality which occurs within some individuals. According to the psychopathological theory, individuals are violent because of some internal aberration, abnormality, or defective characteristic. These characteristics include inadequate self-control, sadism, psychopathic personality types, and undifferentiated types of mental illness.

The psychopathological model has been used to explain many highly publicized occurrences of mass violence (Manson killings, Richard Speck slayings, etc.) but its major application to the family has been as an explanation of child abuse (Wasserman, 1967; Steele and Pollock, 1974; Kempe et al., 1962). The problems with this approach have been documented elsewhere (Spinetta and Rigler, 1972; Gelles, 1973). The drawbacks of this theoretical explanation can be summarized as a combination of inadequate scientific evidence to support the theory and the confusion which arises as a result of the inability of the theory to adequately explain which abnormal personality traits are associated with violence, as well as the circularity of using acts of violence as indicators of mental illness.

Alcohol and Drugs

More a "conventional wisdom" (MacAndrew and Edgerton, 1969) than a full-fledged theory, the alcohol and drugs explanation is that these substances act as disinhibitors which release the violent tendencies that exist in humans. The theory rests on the assumption that alcohol and drugs act to break down inhibitions in the superego and thus release man's inherited or acquired potential to be violent.

The alcohol and drugs approach has been a favorite "folk theory" of intrafamilial violence, since many people (victims, offenders, agents of social control, mass media) point to the fact that participants in domestic violence are often drinking or drunk prior to the attack. The Snell et al. (1964) analysis of wifebeating, for example, states that wifebeating is extremely common among alcoholic men.

There is little rigorous scientific support for the "alcohol and drugs as causes of violence" theory. MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969) devote an impressive monograph to disputing the conventional wisdom about alcohol, and one of our studies (Gelles, 1974) proposed that the association between alcohol and violence is probably *not* a function of the disinhibiting properties of alcohol. Rather, being drunk may provide individuals with a convenient excuse for their untoward behavior. Drinking becomes a means of "deviance disavowal" or a "time out" from the normal rules of behavior and being drunk is used to neutralize the deviance of violence toward family members. Thus, some men get drunk to give them an excuse to hit their spouses and children.

D. Social-Psychological Theories

Social-psychological theories examine the interaction of the individual with his social environment, i.e., with other individuals, groups, and organizations. Such theories locate the source of violence in these relationships, for example, in certain interpersonal frustrations, learning processes, or self-attitudes which reflect attitudes of others. Among the best-known theories of aggression, frustration-aggression theory, and social learning theory explain violence at the social-psychological level of analysis. In addition to these two theories, there are five other social-psychological approaches which will be evaluated in this section: self-attitude theory, what we shall call "Clockwork Orange"

theory, symbolic interaction theory, exchange theory, and attribution theory.

Frustration-Aggression

This theory was first specified by Dollard et al. (1939) and modified by Miller (1941; see also Berkowitz, 1962). Frustration-aggression theory postulates that aggressive behavior results when some purposeful activity is blocked. Organisms tend to aggress toward objects which block important goals, or displace the aggression to a "safer" object. Although cultural forces can accentuate or inhibit aggression, this theory proposes that the tendency to respond aggressively is built into the human organism.

Our view of the frustration-aggression relationship accepts the ubiquity and importance of the phenomenon but differs from the usual formulation in two ways. First, following Farrington (1975), we restrict the use of this theory to the tendency to express aggression as a response to the emotion which the individual feels when some goal is blocked. Second, we regard the tendency to aggress in response to frustration as the product of learning, rather than as an innate drive.[8]

The frustration-aggression theory is particularly relevant to the family. The family is a likely setting for aggression because it is the location of many frustrating events. In fact, the family, by virtue of its structure and function, can be viewed as inherently frustrating for its members. Among some of the inherent frustrations are the burdens and uncertainty of child rearing, the confining of sexuality to a single marital partner, the difficulty of solving problems simply by leaving, the assigning of roles and responsibility on criteria other than interest or competency, and the spatial and temporal overlap and conflict of many family activities (see also section 1B).

Although the frustration-aggression theory is credible and seems intuitively valid, there are some major problems with the theory as currently stated. First, it does not explain under what conditions frustration leads to aggression (Etzioni, 1971:717). Second, in some societies frustration is followed by passive withdrawal (Mead and MacGregor, 1951:176). Lastly, the theory does not differentiate physical aggression from verbal abuse and aggression (Etzioni, 1971:717).

Social Learning Theory

Learning theory assumes a *tabula rasa,* or clean slate, conception of the individual, and accounts for violent behavior as a learned phenomenon. Violence here is viewed as a product of a successful learning situation which provides the individual with knowledge about the response (violence) and what stimuli are to be followed by the response (when is violence appropriate).

There are a number of aspects of learning theory (Bandura, 1973). One examines the process of learning violence through exposure to violence and imitation (Bandura et al, 1961). Another looks at how exposure to violence and experience with violence lead to learning norms which approve of violence (Owens and Straus, 1975). Lastly there is the role model approach, which proposes that violence can be learned through viewing violence in an appropriate role model (Singer, 1971).

The learning theory approach to violence when applied to the family would postulate that the family serves as a training ground for violence. The family provides examples for imitation and role models which can be adopted in later life as the individual draws from his childhood experiences to develop the appropriate parent or conjugal role (see "Socialization into Violence and Its Generalization" in section 1B). It also provides rewards and punishments which (often unintentionally) encourage and reinforce violence (Patterson et al., 1973).

Evidence from child abuse research (Steele and Pollock, 1974; Kempe et al., 1962; Gil, 1971; and Gelles, 1973), together with research on homicidal offenders which finds that they were the recipients of a high level of violence as children (Palmer, 1962; Guttmacher, 1960), makes this theory quite relevant to explaining violence in the family.

Self-Attitude Theory

Kaplan's self-attitude theory (1972) is a modification of social learning theory. It proposes that violence occurs when the individual struggles to cope with negative self-attitudes which arise out of devaluating psychosocial experiences. Individuals who lack self-esteem are seen as prone to adopt deviant patterns of behavior as a means of receiving attention from others and achieving a positive self-attitude. Aggression provides such a vehicle because of the individual's experience in cultural or subcultural settings which covertly or overtly permit or encourage aggression. Thus young males are seen likely to choose the path of violence in order to establish a positive identity (Kaplan, 1972:608).

Self-attitude theory seems to be a well-organized theory that in some ways is similar to the resource theory of violence presented in the next section. Its drawback, like the drawbacks of other theories, is that its propositions are not sufficient to explain the high level of violence in the family and why family members are likely victims of individuals who have experienced self-devaluing experiences.

"A Clockwork Orange" Theory

The name for this theory of violence is derived from Burgess's (1962) book of the same title.[9] "A Clockwork Orange" serves as a broad label for the variety of explanations of violent acts which locate the cause of violence in boredom, the urge to seek thrills, or excessive reciprocity (Palmer, 1972). A number of authors have suggested that some violence arises out of boredom or "thrill seeking"—for example, Cohen's discussion of delinquents (1955) and Klausner (1968) on stress seeking.

Palmer's work is most directly relevant because he

posits an optimum stress or tension level. The degree of reciprocity or fit between social roles affects the tension level. He argues that in many situations "the glove fits too smoothly" and that an excessive reciprocity in roles produces such an absence of tension that it leads to frustration because the assumed optimal stress or tension level is not being met. Thus individuals in this situation commit violent acts as an attempt to stir things up (Palmer, 1972:51).

Farrington (1975) utilized the notion of an optimum stress level to develop a theory specifically related to intrafamily violence. He defined stress as an imbalance between the demands with which an individual or family is faced and the response capabilities which are available to use in dealing with these demands. He argues that all individuals and family units come to develop personal and unique optimum stress levels at which they function most comfortably. To the extent that the discrepancy between demands and response capabilities changes significantly, either by exceeding or falling short of this customary level, the changes of intrafamily violence are increased.

Although the book used to title this theory illustrates violence toward strangers, we can visualize family situations where the glove fits too smoothly and family members try to "stir things up" just to make things interesting. Gelles (1974), in fact, did find that some women use force and violence to stir up their sexually passive husbands or to provoke their "dull" husbands.

One problem with this theory is the assumption that low tension is frustrating. If it is, this theory seems to be defining frustration differently from the definition used in frustration-aggression theory. However, one could replace the phrase "low tension leads to frustration" with "lack of stimulation increases tension and tension can lead to violence under certain conditions." One could also measure "lack of stimulation" and thus reduce the problems encountered in operationalizing "frustration" (Hunt, 1971; Wilkinson, 1974). In addition, measuring "lack of stimulation" would deal with the criticism of "Clockwork Orange" theory that it is largely a retrospective "accounting process" (e.g., "I was violent, therefore I must have been bored") by which the stigma of being violent is managed or disavowed (Scott and Lyman, 1968).

Symbolic Interaction

Although a symbolic interaction approach has not yet been used to formulate a theory of violence, it is included in this review because of the fundamental nature of the social processes on which this approach focuses. We have drawn from Plummer's symbolic interaction theory of sex (1974) as a basis for suggesting some of the elements which are likely to be central in any symbolic interaction.

A symbolic interactionist view of violence would reject a biological drive approach and concentrate instead on the subjective, symbolic side of social life. Its focus would be on the nature of meanings of violence, how these meanings are built up, how they persist, how they are modified, and the consequences of these meanings in situations. A symbolic interaction theorist studying violence would be concerned with how the responses of others constrain action. Thus this perspective would concern itself with the process involved in the "construction of violence"—the dynamics of the situation, careers and life cycles of violent episodes, and the encounters between actors in violent situations.

Applied to family relations, this approach might concern itself with the evolving social meanings of violence among family members. Violence between family members might reflect the shared meanings and role expectations of the individual family members. However, as noted above, researchers committed to the symbolic interaction approach have not yet focused this approach on violence. Therefore, at this stage, the symbolic interaction theory is more a conceptual framework than a formal theory. It guides how violence may be viewed in the family, and provides concepts which are important for ultimately arriving at an integrated theory.

Exchange Theory

In the context of this chapter, exchange theory, like symbolic interaction theory, is classified as a conceptual framework because to our knowledge it has not been used as an analytic tool to investigate interpersonal violence. Nor do the general presentations of exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961, 1967; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) focus on the substantive area of family. Nevertheless, some students of the family have attempted to use exchange theory (see Edwards and Brauburger, 1973; Foss, 1974; Richer, 1968; Scanzoni, 1972; Scanzoni and Scanzoni, 1976). Some indication of the potential of exchange theory for explaining intrafamilial violence is given in Goode's Burgess Award essay (1971). The major assumption of exchange theory is that interaction is guided by the pursuit of rewards and the avoidance of punishments (costs) and that an individual who supplies reward services to another obliges him to fulfill an obligation and thus the second individual must furnish benefits to the first (Blau, 1964:89). If reciprocal exchange of rewards occurs, the interaction will continue, but if reciprocity is not achieved, exchange theorists argue that the interaction will be broken off.

Intrafamilial relations are more complex than those in simply dyadic relations or in less permanent and less normatively structured groups. Thus, for at least two reasons, the lack of reciprocity does not automatically mean that family relations will be broken off. The first is highlighted by Thibaut and Kelley's work on comparison levels and suggests that satisfaction-dissatisfaction with relationships is also influenced by the alternatives which are available to the individuals. Thus although a husband or wife may receive fewer rewards than they would like, they remain in the interaction because they have few other alternatives to gain rewards from. The second reason for

continued interaction in the face of a seeming imbalance of costs and rewards is highlighted by Homans's concept of "distributive justice." According to Homans, it is not maximizing rewards minus costs in the absolute which the individual seeks, but "justice" in the distribution of outcomes. This is essentially a social comparison process. It comes about when, relative to others, a person perceives that he receives rewards proportional to his individual investment. Justice prevails if those who invest more in terms of effort, skill, status, etc., receive more, and those investing less receive less. In the family there can therefore be great differences in the rewards received by different actors based on a perception of correspondingly great differences in inputs. However, when the principle of distributive justice is violated, "When a person's activity does not receive the reward he expected or receives punishment he did not expect, he will be angry, and in anger, the results of aggressive behavior are rewarding" (Homans, 1967:35).

The notions of reciprocity, alternatives, and distributive justice can be seen in the occurrence of child abuse. Certain children make excessive demands on their parents due to personal or social circumstances. In addition, a parent, due to lack of reciprocity from a spouse, may seek certain social-emotional gratifications from a child. When these rewards are not received, the costs of child rearing may be greater than the rewards. Furthermore, the alternatives available to the parent are minimal (the role relationship between parent and child is almost impossible to break, with the exception of death). Thus with few or no alternatives and high dissatisfaction with the relationship, the parent may resort to violence. However, as in the case of several other theories, the reason for adoption of a violent response (as opposed to some other action) is not explained by exchange theory. We will later suggest that the missing elements are to be found primarily in the processes dealt with by symbolic interaction, social learning, and cultural theories of violence.

A similar combination of lack of alternatives and violation of the principle of distributive justice is helpful in understanding conjugal violence. It should be noted that it is easier to explain why a spouse would remain with a violent partner (lack of alternatives) than it is to explain why the one partner adopted violence (see Gelles, 1976, for a discussion of why wives stay with battering husbands). Another facet of conjugal violence which can be seen through the exchange perspective is the use of violence to inflict "costs" on one's partner. Exchange theorists (Homans, 1967) note that to inflict costs on someone who has injured you is rewarding. The idea of "revenge being sweet" can be used to examine why wives resort to extreme forms of violence in response to being punched or hit by their husbands and why husbands resort to violence to silence a nagging wife.

As with the case of child abuse, it must again be pointed out that exchange theory only deals with the antecedent conditions of violence, not how and why violence was chosen to redress a lack of reciprocity. Consequently, it is necessary to link exchange theory with one or more other theories in order to explain why violence is chosen to redress the injustice and lack of reciprocity. We will suggest at least some of these necessary linkages in the final section of the chapter where we address the question of integrating all of the theories reviewed in the present section.

Attribution Theory

As represented in the work of Bem (1967, 1970) and Kelley (1971), "Attribution refers to the process of inferring or perceiving the dispositional properties of entities. . . . Attribution theory describes the process by which the individual seeks and attains conceptions of the stable dispositions or attributes" (Kelley and Thibaut, 1969:7). Attribution theory is included in this review as a conceptual framework, because, as with other perspectives which have not yet been applied to violence, it seems likely to be important for understanding violence in general, for understanding the high frequency of violence in the family, and for understanding the part played by the family in learning violent roles and self-images. Hotaling (1975) has already made a start in this direction by specifying the particular combination of family rules and family structural characteristics which produces a high probability that a family member will attribute malevolent intent to the acts of another family member.

More generally, Tedeschi et al. (1974) note there are countless difficulties with including the notion of "intent" in any definition of aggression and violence—especially the fact that intent must be imputed rather than observed. According to Tedeschi et al. it is the imputation of intent to do harm that is important, and since this is dependent on the perceptions, cognitions, and values of the observer, it is the process of imputation rather than intention which needs to be made central in research on aggression.

Although their discarding of intent seems unwise, we do agree with the importance of understanding the process by which a malevolent intent is imputed and which provides the basis for labeling an act or person as aggressive. We suggest that the concept and methodology of attribution theory will prove valuable in any such effort. Moreover, both symbolic interaction theory and social learning theory can be helpful in understanding the linkage between these two critical cognitive aspects of aggression (intent and attribution). When a child carries out an act which results in harm, a harmful intent can be attributed by others even though this was not part of the child's purpose. If this attribution is communicated to the child (as will often be the case), it provides one of the bases for the child to form an identity and self-image as "aggressive," and as the child comes to know the wider social meaning of being aggressive, he/she can act in

terms of this more general meaning of being aggressive. Or to put this in the language of social learning theory, when the attribution of malevolent intent is communicated to the child, this characteristic of the response produced by the child's act becomes paired with, and conditioned to, the other responses to his or her act.

E. Sociocultural Theories

Sociocultural theories of violence examine social structures or arrangements such as norms, values, institutional organization, or systems operations to explain individual violence. Although they focus on macrolevel variables such as social structures, functions, subcultures, or social systems, the theories at this level, of necessity, also include concepts and processes which exist at the intraindividual and socialpsychological level as well. There are six theories of violence which are reviewed at this level of analysis: (1) functional, (2) culture of violence, (3) structural, (4) general systems theory, (5) conflict theory, and (6) resource theory. Theories (4) and (6) have been specifically adapted to explain violence between family members.

Functional Theory of Violence

It has been proposed that violence, although it causes injury and sometimes death, can fulfill certain social functions—if not in the short run, at least over time (Coser, 1967:74). Coser argues that violence can serve three basic functions (1967). He proposes that violence may function for the individual as an area of achievement, for the community as a danger signal, and for nonparticipants or observers as a catalyst for action.

Applying these social functions of violence to the family we can see that violence can be used in the small system of the family to compensate for inadequate rewards in the occupational world at large (Coser, 1967:80). "Machismo," or the ideology of the sexually aggressive male in the Latin American family, and violence in the urban slums may also be seen as a means of achieving social status when other avenues of achievement are blocked (Brown, 1965:263–71; Toby, 1966).

Violence can also serve as a danger signal and as a catalyst for action:

> Within the family, . . . violence can serve as a means of communication and as a catalyst bringing about needed changes when all else fails. Take the situation of a family in which there is a serious problem between a husband and wife, but the husband just doesn't listen, or get the message, or ignores the message and the problem. Finally, in desperation, the wife throws something at him or hits him. At least in middle class families, that is such a shocking event that the husband can no longer ignore the seriousness of the problem. It is like the hoisting of a danger signal which cannot be ignored (or is very difficult to ignore).
>
> But perhaps even then the unignorable is ignored or merely superficially patched over. Months later, another and more violent episode occurs—one which is so violent that there is an injury or the neighbors call the police. As a result of this violent episode, the family is referred to a marriage counselor or other mediating agent, with the result that a viable solution is worked out. In this sequence of events, violence has served as a catalyst to bring into action forces which would not otherwise have been present.
>
> In principle, there should never be a situation when all else fails. In practice, such situations do exist because alternative modes of resolving conflicts and inequalities are either unknown to the persons involved, unavailable to them, or unavailable until some violent act serves as a catalyst to bring nonviolent methods of change into the picture. Therefore, unless we are prepared to live with inequity and injustice, it is almost inevitable that violence will remain a part of the human condition because there will probably always be situations in which only violent acts can trigger needed changes [Straus and Steinmetz, 1974:323].

Other variants of functionalist theory of intrafamilial violence are illustrated by (1) Bakan's assertion (1971) that the widespread use of violence toward children may be seen as a case of population control through filicide, and (2) the view that "moderate violence" is necessary to release pent-up frustrations. This proposition holds that the release of "normal aggression" can reduce the likelihood of severe violence. This view has been challenged by Bandura and Walters (1963) in relation to child rearing and by Straus (1974a) in relation to husband-wife interaction.

There is a major difficulty with applying the central idea of the functional theory of violence to the family (i.e., that violence is a mechanism which—when all else fails—enables the social unit to overcome institutionalized rigidities and therefore to be flexible and adaptive enough to survive). In principle the underdogs of the family (wives and children) could use this mechanism, and sometimes they do (Straus and Steinmetz, 1974:323). But this is infrequent because of their less developed physical strength and because of the greater normative disapproval of a child or wife striking a husband than of a husband striking a child or wife. More often, it is the husband who uses violence in marital conflict, and this is most typically to maintain his superior position vis-à-vis the wife and the wife who uses force on a child (Steinmetz, 1975).[10]

Culture-of-Violence Theory

This theory takes as its starting proposition the fact that violence is unevenly distributed in the social structure, most notably in the higher rates of violence in the lower socioeconomic sectors of society (Coser, 1967:55; Palmer, 1962; Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967). This theory proposes that the differential distribution of violence is a function of differential cultural norms and values concerning violence (Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967). That is, culture-of-violence theory views violence as a learned response. The learning comes about as a

result of membership in a cultural or subcultural group and reflects effective socialization into that subculture's value system and norms. Thus the aggressive dispositions of violent persons are the result of participation in and learning from a subculture (Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967).

In applying culture-of-violence theory to the family we can again view the family as a training ground for violence, since it is a major unit in transmitting the subculture (Steinmetz and Straus, 1974, part IV). Thus, through associations, family members may learn that violence toward spouses and children is acceptable, and that to be an affiliated member of the subculture, a husband is expected to use force and violence on his family or at least condone the use.

Culture-of-violence theory is an extension of the propositions of learning theory. As postulated by Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) culture-of-violence theory does not seek to explain how the subcultural values originate, nor does it explain how these values can be modified or changed over time.

The failure to deal with the question of the genesis of the subculture is the most important limitation of culture-of-violence theory. Why do those at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder (or other groups with a culture valuing violence) come to have this culture? Our view is that the subculture of violence, like any culture, reflects the structural realities faced by the group. It is essentially a codification of the forms of behavior which have become typical within that group. Over time, these typical modes of behavior become expressed and symbolized as cultural norms and values. This codification of typical behavior makes it easier for members of the group to learn and to carry out the actions which, on the average, they will find themselves engaged in. Consequently, an answer to the question of the genesis of a subculture must be sought in the physical and social environment of a group and its own social organization. In short, we see a culture of violence as emerging in response to more fundamental forces which affect members of a group (Steinmetz and Straus, 1974:8-10; Straus, 1976b). Some of these factors have already been alluded to in the discussion of functional theory, and others will be considered in our discussions of the structural and resource theories of violence.

This does not mean to deny causal efficacy to culture. Quite the contrary, once having come into existence, a culture is a structural entity with its own dynamics and influence on behavior (Straus, 1974b). This view of culture as a dynamic entity in its own right is the basis for what can be called a "cultural consistency" theory of violence. This theory asserts that norms which deal with the extent to which violence may be used reflect the operation of the culture *as a system*. Within this system cultural norms concerning violence can be deduced from the basic norms and values characteristic of a group. Thus family norms having no manifest reference to violence act to increase or hold down the actual level of family violence in a certain subculture. This is illustrated in a paper by Carroll (1975) applying cultural consistency theory to the Mexican-American and Jewish ethnic groups. Carroll concluded that such basic norms as severe male dominance and submission to the father are systematically linked to the high level of Mexican-American family violence. In Jewish culture, the emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge and the use of the mind is linked to the low levels of family violence believed to characterize this group.

Structural Theory of Violence

The structural approach to violence also begins with the assumption that deviance is unevenly distributed in the social structure (Durkheim, 1951; Merton, 1938), with violence being more common among those occupying lower socioeconomic positions. Second, it is postulated that people in certain structural positions (for example, low socioeconomic status) suffer greater frustrations. Third, a frequent response to these frustrations and deprivations is to react with violence (Coser, 1967:59). Finally, this reaction is institutionalized through differential socialization which leads those reared in different segments of society to use different modes of dealing with stress and frustration (Coser, 1967:623; Steinmetz and Straus, 1974:233). In summary, the structural theory of violence explains violence as a result of differential distribution of some of the main causes of violence (stress and frustrations) and the differential learning experiences which provide models, norms, and values that legitimize the use of violence.

This structural approach to violence has been applied to the family by Gelles (1974, ch. 7) in the form of five propositions which are used to explain the occurrence of intrafamilial violence. Since these propositions were arrived at inductively through exploratory research, they still remain to be tested with a more representative sample and using more rigorous measures and tests.

An advantage of the structural approach to violence is that it already integrates much of the current thinking about interpersonal violence. It includes in it references to frustrations, learning experience, and subcultural modes of adapting to stress. In most respects, this theory of violence is as close to an integrated theory of violence as we have. However, in its present form it does not include some of the major aspects of family and family relations which would refine our explanation and predictions about intrafamilial violence. These facets of the family will be discussed in the following section.

General Systems Theory

The crux of general systems theory goes beyond the

specification and analysis of what has been called a "causal loop" by Maruyama (1963) or a "quantitative reflexive" process by Black and Broderick (1972). A causal loop is a feedback process only in the sense of variables mutually influencing each other, as when a fat person becomes anxious over his appearance and then eats as a mode of dealing with his anxiety, gaining even more weight. Causal loops of this type are extremely important. But restricting the analysis to such loops omits consideration of the cybernetic process which is at the heart of general systems theory (Buckley, 1967). A feedback loop in the cybernetic sense involves a monitoring or information process in relation to the goals or purposes of the system. Thus a cybernetic feedback process includes gathering and interpreting information about the state of the system, comparing this information with criterion goals or states, and then taking corrective action (in this case violence) to maintain the state or goal. Here the analogy is to a thermostat, with the goal being the temperature at which it is set. As Wilkinson (1975) puts it: "The cybernetic model assumes that systems attempt to keep key variables relatively invariant. . . . The focus is on how this is done and what other variables have to change in order to do this."

Following this model, Straus's application of general systems theory (1973) seeks to account for violence between family members by viewing the family as a goal-seeking, purposive, adaptive system. Violence is treated as a system product or output rather than as a product of an individual pathology. The theory specifies some of the "positive feedback" processes which can produce an upward spiral of violence and some of the "negative feedback" processes which serve to maintain or dampen the present level of violence (or nonviolence). The theory also examines the morphogenic processes which alter the role structure of the family in the service of criterion goals.

Straus's use of general systems theory has been primarily to identify the cybernetic and morphogenic processes which account for the *continuing* presence of a given level of family violence. However, the question of the reasons for any violence at all has not been systematically analyzed by means of this theory, even though it is posed implicitly in section 1B of this chapter and in Straus's critique and empirical study of the catharsis or ventilation approach to family conflict and violence (1974).

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory may be regarded as a special case of functional theory (as in the work of Coser, 1967) or as an entirely separate theory (as in the work of Dahrendorf, 1968). We choose the latter approach because our focus here is not on the positive and negative consequences of violence, but on the basic assumption that conflict is an inevitable part of all human association.

A conflict approach to violence views individual actors, groups, and organizations as seeking to further their own "interests" rather than as a consensus-equilibrium-seeking system. Thus the conceptual framework implied is one that looks at conflict as natural, consensus as problematic, and focuses on conflict management rather than system maintenance. Dahrendorf (1968) outlines three basic stages in his conflict model: conflict, confrontation, change. Violence is a mode of carrying out conflict which is likely to occur when other modes of pursuing individual or group interests break down due to faulty conflict management at the confrontation stage.

Sprey's work has substituted a conflict model of the family for the traditional consensus-equilibrium approach (1969). The family is viewed as an arena of confrontation and conflicting interests (Sprey, 1969:702). This perspective is also present in the analysis of Steinmetz and Straus (1974:5-6). Violence is likely to occur in the family as an outcome of these conflicts because violence is a powerful mode of advancing one's interests when other modes fail (Straus and Steinmetz, 1974:302) or, in some families, a means of first choice. Whether or not the use of violence as a mode of resolving conflicts is functional or dysfunctional is an important but different issue.

Intrafamily Resource Theory

The final theory we shall review is one of the two we encountered which has been explicitly applied to violence between family members. The application to the family articulated by Goode (1971) begins with the assumption that all social systems "rest to some degree on force or its threat." Violence and threats of violence are fundamental to the organization of social systems, and thus should be found in the family. Goode argues that the greater the resources a person can command, the more force he can muster. However, the more resources a person can command, the less he will actually deploy the force in an overt manner (1971:628). Violence is used as a resource when other resources are insufficient or lacking. Thus a husband who wants to be the dominant person in his family but has little education and a job which is low in prestige and income and lacks interpersonal skills may have to resort to violence to maintain a dominant position. In addition, as noted in the discussion of functional theory, underdog family members resort to violence to redress grievances when they have few alternative resources at their disposal; for example, a wife faced with a husband who persistently ignores or devalues something of critical value to her may force his attention to the issue by throwing something.

Empirical data from O'Brien's research (1971) support the propositions offered by Goode. For example, in families where the husband's achieved status was lower than his wife's, O'Brien found a greater tendency to use force and violence on family members than when the

husband had the "resource" of a higher-prestige occupation.

5. THE DISTINCTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SELECTED THEORIES

Having identified general features of each of the 15 theories and aspects of these theories which seem to be salient for understanding intrafamily violence, there are several ways in which the analysis might proceed. One direction can be called an *elaborating and specifying strategy*, and another can be called an *integrating strategy*.

The *elaborating and specifying* strategy calls for steps such as (1) providing precise definitions of the key concepts of each theory, much as was done in the introductory sections of the chapter, where aggression and violence were defined and explicated; (2) providing operational definitions of these concepts by specifying the methods by which they have been or could be measured (see Straus, 1976c, for an example); (3) further identifying the variables by giving some indication or estimate of their range of variation and central tendency; (4) explanations and specifications which make clear how each of these variables is different from other variables with which it might be confused; (5) consideration of the form of association between variables in the theory, and especially the identification of non-linear relationships.

The *integrating* strategy calls for steps which will enable the identification of the complementary and interacting nature of the causal process pointed to by each theory. For this to be within the realm of comprehension of the authors and most readers, it is necessary to shift focus from the wealth of detail described under the elaborating and specifying strategy to a concern with only the most salient features of each theory.

Both the elaborating and the integrating strategies are necessary parts of the larger agenda for arriving at an integrated theory of family violence. However, each is such a major task that doing both in one chapter proved impossible. We therefore chose to concentrate on the integrating strategy, leaving to others the critical tasks outlined under the elaborating and specifying strategy.

The first step in pursuing the integrating strategy was to construct Exhibit 21.1. This is a tabular summary of each theory, designed to aid us and the reader in the task of bringing into focus the most distinctive contributions of each theory, and the part each can play in explaining family violence.

When the term "explains" is used in Exhibit 21.1, it is not meant to imply "*fully* explains." On the contrary, we view the cause of violence as being located in the complex *interrelation or interaction* of all these types of explanatory factors. In fact, the entries in this table are stated in a way which emphasizes the complementary nature of the factors. As indicated by our use of "interrelation" between factors, a comprehensive theory of violence must do more than simply identify the psychological, social psychological, and sociological causes of violence if it hopes to do better than the minimal predictive power inherent in the correlations of .20 to .30 typically found in studies of aggression and violence. Rather, the effect of each of these types of factors is contingent on each of the others.

An example of the need to consider the interactions of the causal factors specified in different theories is provided by the resource theory of intrafamily power. Empirical tests of the idea that the greater an individual's resources (i.e., occupational prestige, income, education, etc.), the greater his or her power in the family (Goode, 1971) show a number of inconsistent findings. However, Rodman (1972) has grouped these studies according to the normative prescriptions of the society or group sampled by each study. He shows that resources make a difference in societies which have cultural norms concerning family power (such as the United States) that are sufficiently flexible to permit the issue to be decided

Exhibit 21.1. Summary of the Distinctive Contributions of Selected Theories of Violence

THEORY	CONTRIBUTION
Psychopathology*	The fact that only a very small proportion of mentally ill persons are violent forces a search for the social factors which lead this minority to be violent.
Alcohol and Drugs*	Has the same theoretical status as psychopathology, i.e., little evidence of any direct link to violence. What one does under the influence of alcohol and other drugs must be explained by reference to social psychological and sociocultural factors. However, alcohol use is of great practical importance because of the frequency with which it is associated with violence in our society.
Frustration-Aggression	Also occupies a theoretical position similar to that of psychopathology because the theory, as generally conceived, does not explain the process by which frustration is linked to aggression, except by positing an innate aggressive drive in response to frustration. However, when viewed as a special case of social learning theory, it explains why the tendency to respond to frustration by aggression is so common (see note 8). It helps explain family violence because the family is the focus of high personal involvement and of high frustration.

Social Learning	Asserts that human aggression and violence are learned conduct and specifies the learning process, especially direct experience and observing the behavior of others. Explains both the variation between persons and the variation between situations in the tendency to respond aggressively by reference to prior experience, reinforcement patterns, and cognitive processes.
Self-Attitude	Asserts that in a society, culture, or group which values violence, persons of low self-esteem may seek to bolster their image in the eyes of others and themselves by carrying out violent acts. Explains the propensity to violence of those for whom society makes it difficult to achieve an adequate level of self-esteem.
"Clockwork Orange"	Asserts that there is an optimum level of stress or tension and that if the life circumstances do not provide this level, aggression and violence will occur as a means of moving toward the optimum level. Explains the "senseless" aggression and violence which can occur in highly integrated, smoothly functioning groups, such as an apparently model family.
Symbolic Interaction	Specifies the process by which a self-image and identity of a person as "violent" are formed, and the process by which violent acts acquire individual and socially shared meaning. Explains the origin and maintenance of the structure of meaning which is necessary for all human social behavior, including violence.
Exchange	Asserts that interaction in marriage is governed by partners seeking to maximize rewards and minimize costs in their exchange relations; that actors expect rewards to be proportional to investments ("distributive justice"); and that costs and rewards are judged in the light of alternatives. Explains the growth of resentment, anger, and hostility when the principle of distributive justice is violated.
Attribution	Specifies the process used by actors to impute the dispositional state (motivations) of others. Explains how the structure of family relations is such that there is high probability of malevolent intent being attributed to the actions of other family members, thereby setting in motion an escalating cycle of resentment and aggression.
Functional	Asserts that violence can be important for maintaining the adaptability of the family to changing circumstances and hence important to its survival. Explains why violence persists in human association, including the family.
Culture of Violence	Asserts that social values and norms provide meaning and direction to violent acts and thus facilitate or bring about violence in situations specified by these norms and values. Explains why some sectors of society or different societies are more violent than others; essentially that they have cultural rules which legitimize or require violence.
Structural	Asserts that social groups differ in respect to their typical level of stress, deprivation, and frustration and in the resources at their disposal to deal with these stresses. Explains why different sectors of society or different families are more violent than others: because that they combine high stress with low resources.**
General Systems	Describes the cybernetic and morphogenic processes which characterize the use of violence in family interaction. Explains the way in which violence is managed and stabilized.
Conflict	Asserts that fundamental causal factors which lead to violence are the different "interests" of family members. Explains why there is conflict and violence is one of the most integrated and solidary of human groups.
Resource	Asserts that violence is one of the resources which individuals or collectivities can use to maintain or advance their interests. By pointing to the range of other resources available to a person or group, it explains the circumstances under which violence is used: essentially when these other resources are not effective.

*The statements in this table about psychopathology and alcohol as causes of violence need further explication. In this space the best we can do is to illustrate our reasoning. In respect to alcohol use as a cause of violence, we hold that the behavior of intoxicated persons reflects social definitions of what one does when drunk or high. In American society actions of drunk or high individuals are typically viewed as behavior which the individual cannot control; thus drunk or high individuals are given a "time out" from normal social norms, and their behavior is viewed accordingly (Lang et al., 1975; Schachter and Singer, 1962; Washburn, 1961). Moreover, these definitions and normative statements vary from society to society, from sector to sector, as do also the rates of alcohol and drug use. One must therefore have resource to sociocultural factors to understand both the frequency and the nature of alcohol and drug use and the behavior associated with such use, and to social-psychological theories (especially social learning and symbolic interaction theories) to understand the aggressive and violent behavior of individuals under the influence of such drugs.

Our view of psychopathology as a cause of violence is directly parallel. Specifically, there is nothing known to be inherent in mental illness which leads the afflicted person to behave in an aggressive or violent way, except insofar as a person who is violent is labeled as mentally ill. Rather, the behavior of mentally ill persons varies from society to society, from sector of society to sector, and according to the particular life circumstances of the afflicted person (Scheff, 1963).

**Also explains the emergence and maintenance of a culture of violence: when the structural conditions lead to violence as a characteristic mode of coping with the circumstances of a group, violence becomes codified in the form of values which justify and norms which simplify carrying out the violent acts. See Owens and Straus (1975).

on an individual-characteristics basis. Under other normative circumstances analyzed by Rodman, the relationship may be absent or reversed. Rodman therefore reformulated the resource theory as a theory of "resources in cultural context."

The same principle is also illustrated in Straus's discussion of his finding that the more dissatisfied the wife with the husband's income, the greater the probability of the husband's having hit his wife in the previous 12 months (Straus, 1974b:65–67). In order to account for this relationship, it was necessary to include in the analysis such factors as (1) the fact that income and occupation are the

key determinants of prestige in an industrial society, whereas in a society basing prestige on some other basis, such as kinship affiliation, the observed relationship probably would not be found, and (2) the cultural norms which favor male leadership in the family. Straus (1974b) argues that if the culture did not impose the expectation of male leadership, and if the society did not accord prestige and power on the basis of income and occupation, low income and consequent low power of a husband would not tend to be compensated for by the use of violence to exercise power.

6. TOWARD AN INTEGRATED THEORY OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

In presenting the 15 theories, we could have emphasized the way in which each of these theories offers *competing* explanations for the same phenomenon, as, for example, was done in Owens and Straus's comparison of "cultural" versus "structural" explanations of the origins of proviolence attitudes (1975). Instead, and particularly in Exhibit 21.1, we deliberately focused on those parts of the theories which represent each theory's most distinctive contribution as compared to the other theories being considered. The emphasis is on presenting the theories so that each is complementary rather than competitive with the other.

One can gain a preliminary idea of the extent to which these theories complement rather than compete with each other through the use of the distinction made earlier in this chapter between "instrumental" and "expressive" types of violence. Certain of the theories are primarily explanations of instrumental violence and others of expressive violence. The theories focused on explaining instrumental violence are the (1) intrafamily resource, (2) self-attitude, (3) exchange, (4) functional, and (5) conflict theories. The theories which seek to explain expressive violence are the (1) psychopathology, (2) alcohol and drugs, (3) "Clockwork Orange," and (4) frustration-aggression[11] theories.

Six of the 15 theories in the summary table are not included in the above listing because they seem to be explanations of processes which apply to both instrumental and expressive violence. The structural theory explains the nature of variations in the organization of society which are associated with high levels of stress and the "differential association" which produces subgroup variation in the frequency of violence. The cultural theory refers to the norms and values concerning violence that are characteristic of different societies and subgroups within societies. Social learning, symbolic interaction, and attribution theory each explain a different aspect of the social psychological processes by which the experience of participation in a violent society or sector of society is translated into individual self-images, meanings, and roles which produce specific acts of violence. Finally, general systems theory identifies the goal-seeking cybernetic principles by which all of these parts are integrated into an ongoing but constantly changing social system.

Although the above grouping of theories helps to specify the aspect of the causal sequence leading to violence on which each theory focuses, there remains considerable unclarified overlap between the theories. It is the combination of this overlap with the complementary nature of the theories which offers the possibility of arriving at some degree of overall integration of the separate theories. We have made a step in this direction by means of Figure 21.2, which includes 13 of the 15 theories reviewed in this chapter.

There are two key areas in which the 13 theories included in Figure 21.2 (which from here on will sometimes be called "partial theories" to distinguish them from the integrated theory) draw on common explanatory principles, and which therefore provide part of the basis for the integration of the partial theories. The first of these is the set of relationships and processes embodied in the social learning and symbolic interaction theories. Although these are discussed separately and they appear separately diagrammed in Figure 21.2, to a certain extent social learning theory represents the label and language for these processes developed by psychologists, and symbolic interaction theory represents the label and language developed by sociologists to refer to many of the same processes. We decided, for purposes of this chapter, to refer to both theories under the title social learning–symbolic interaction theory. Both the theories deal with processes without which the other theories we have reviewed cannot be applied to the specific question of intrafamily violence.

The second element which occurs at many points in this integration of the theories is the frustration-aggression relationship, i.e., the tendency to respond to frustration and/or stress by aggression. In our view the relationship between frustration or stress and aggression is a learned response pattern which, in turn, can be explained by social learning–symbolic interaction theory. However, readers who are not comfortable with this interpretation need only be willing to assume the existence of a causal relation between frustration or stress and aggression, irrespective of whether the underlying process is social learning, a biologically evolved response tendency, or some combination of these.

By themselves, these two areas of overlap or common elements in the partial theories would not permit the integration shown in Figure 21.2. Two additional elements seem to be necessary: some provision for the ubiquity of change in social relationships and, most important of all, some specification of the process by which new cultural norms and values are established and old cultural elements retained as characteristics of a society or group.

Implicit in Figure 21.2 is the idea that cultural norms

and values arise out of enduring patterns of social interaction and in the long run tend to remain as part of the culture only if these cultural elements continue to reflect the actual interactional structure of the society. The process by which actual experience with violence (i.e., observation of it, or participation in it as a victim or initiator) is transformed into the behavioral repertory of the actors as specified by social learning and symbolic interaction theory. When a sufficiently large or a sufficiently influential portion of a population has acquired these behavioral patterns, then there is a tendency to standardize and crystallize them in the form of cultural norms and values. Consequently, the intraindividual, social psychological, and sociocultural theories are inherently integrated by virtue of being mutually interdependent aspects of the same social processes (see the analysis of cultural and social organizational theories of violence in Straus, 1974b) and at the same time provide the basis for integrating the other partial theories with each other.

Interpreting Figure 21.2

Having specified what seem to be the underlying bases for the integration of the partial theories shown in Figure 21.2, we can turn to a more specific examination of that chart. Although the chart may appear to have a left-to-right causal flow, such a directional orientation is not part of the theory. The unintended appearance of directionality comes about because each of the component or partial theories was originally diagrammed with a left-to-right causal flow, thus lending an overall left-to-right impression when the 13 partial theories are combined in the one diagram.

Instead of attempting to move from left to right, Figure 21.2 is best approached by starting with any one of the 13 partial theories. The distinctive features of that theory can be examined within the section of the chart devoted to that theory. Then, by following the lines to and from the theory chosen, one can get some idea of key linkages to other theories. For example, if one is interested in examining exchange theory as an explanation for intrafamily violence, one starts with the block representing that theory located in the upper right corner of Figure 21.2. Tracing out the relational propositions indicated by the arrows within that block, one can obtain an understanding of the parts of exchange theory which we selected for purposes of explaining intrafamily violence. However, as noted in the verbal summary of this theory, the principles of exchange theory do not, by themselves, explain why violence is chosen to redress the lack of reciprocity.

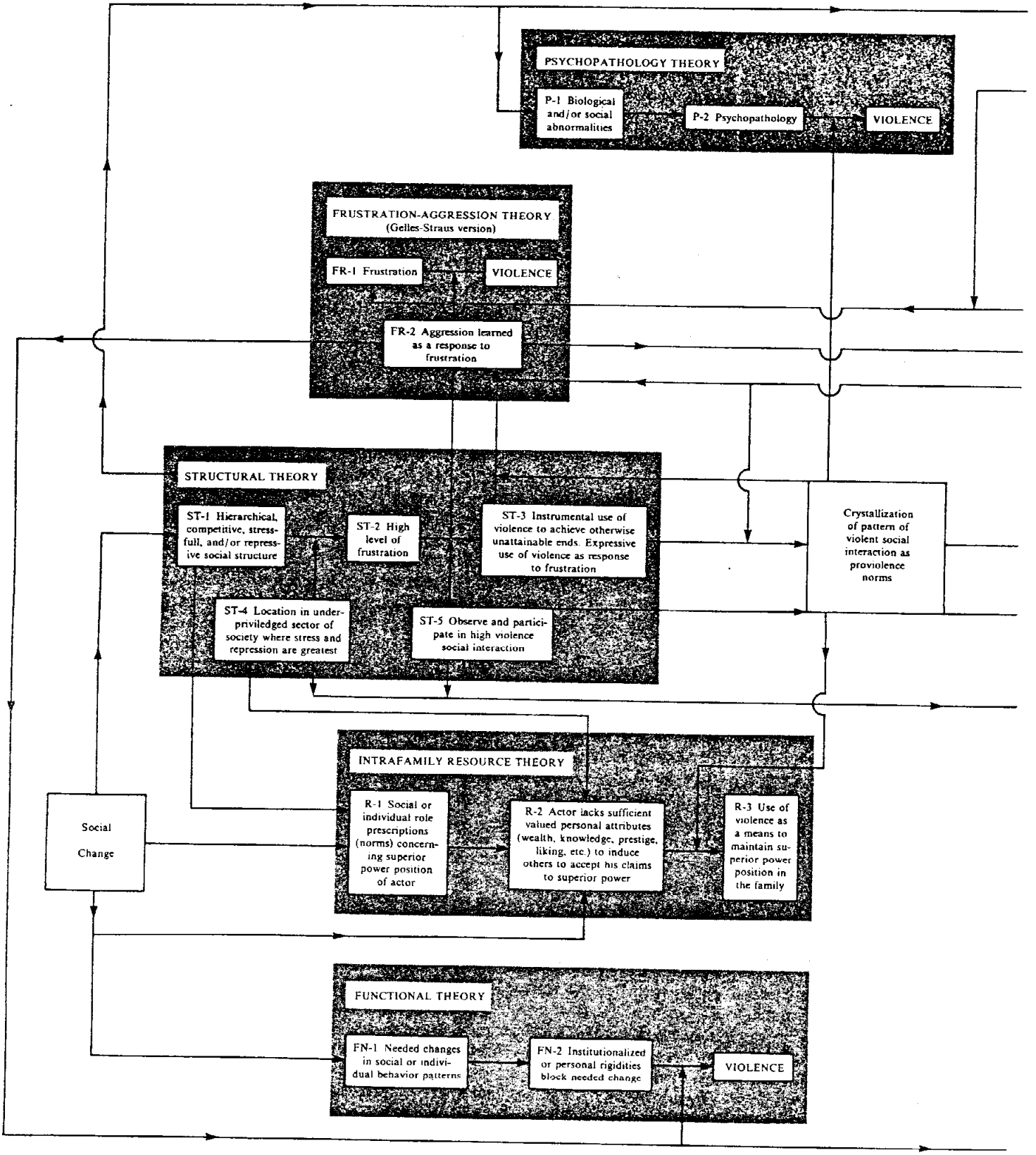
The missing processes are those highlighted by social learning and symbolic interaction theory: specifically the role models for dealing with conflict and frustration by means of physical force; and the self-image, meanings, and role expectations concerning violence learned as a result of interaction with others. These contingencies are indicated in Figure 21.2 by the vertical arrow intersecting the line between box E-5 and the Violence box to its right. Similarly at the other end of the causal sequence, exchange theory does not indicate why problems of reciprocity and distributive justice are so frequent in the family. At this point some of the special characteristics of the family, such as roles being ascribed on the basis of age and sex rather than interest and/or competence, should come into the chart. But these were omitted because the diagrammatic complexity needed to include that level of variable as well as each of the 13 theories would render the chart unreadable. However, part of the answer to the question of why problems of reciprocity and distributive justice are particularly common in the family is to be found in certain of the other theories. In particular, as Sprey (1969, 1971) and others have noted, the family, like other social groups, is characterized by both conflict and consensus as the normal state of the system. Since, as was noted in discussing the special characteristics of the family which require a special theory of intrafamily violence, the intensity of commitment and interest in the family is particularly great, conflict over furthering these interests is likely to be correspondingly intense (Coser, 1963); hence the arrow from conflict theory box C-1 to exchange theory box E-1. At the same time, this same level of commitment and mutual interdependence of the members makes it particularly likely that one member will constrain, infringe on, or injure the other, even though without malevolent intent. Irrespective of intent, these infringements and constraints increase the probability that the terms of exchange between family members will be perceived as inequitable and therefore set in motion the processes diagrammed in the exchange theory block. This linkage is indicated by the arrow from attribution theory box AT-2 to exchange theory box E-1.

General Systems Theory

Another related departure of Figure 21.2 from our conception of the processes producing intrafamily violence is that no systematic attempt was made to diagram either positive or negative feedback loops. In particular, there are 13 places in the diagram where violence is shown as an output variable. Causal feedback loops are needed at each of these 13 points because it is inherent in the nature of the theory, with its emphasis on social learning and on aggression as a learned response to frustration, that each violent occurrence is likely to enhance one or more of the causal elements, such as the level of stress and frustration and opportunities to observe and imitate violent behavior. Finally, Figure 21.2 departs from a true systems model in that it contains no provision for a cybernetic process by which behavior is monitored and controlled in relation to the goals of the actor or system.

Paradoxically, then, Figure 21.2 omits the one theory which we feel has the greatest promise for providing a true integration of all these partial theories: general systems theory, particularly as expounded by Buckley (1967). There are two reasons for this omission. First, as of this

Figure 21.2. Key Elements of Thirteen Theories of Violence and Some of Their Relationships



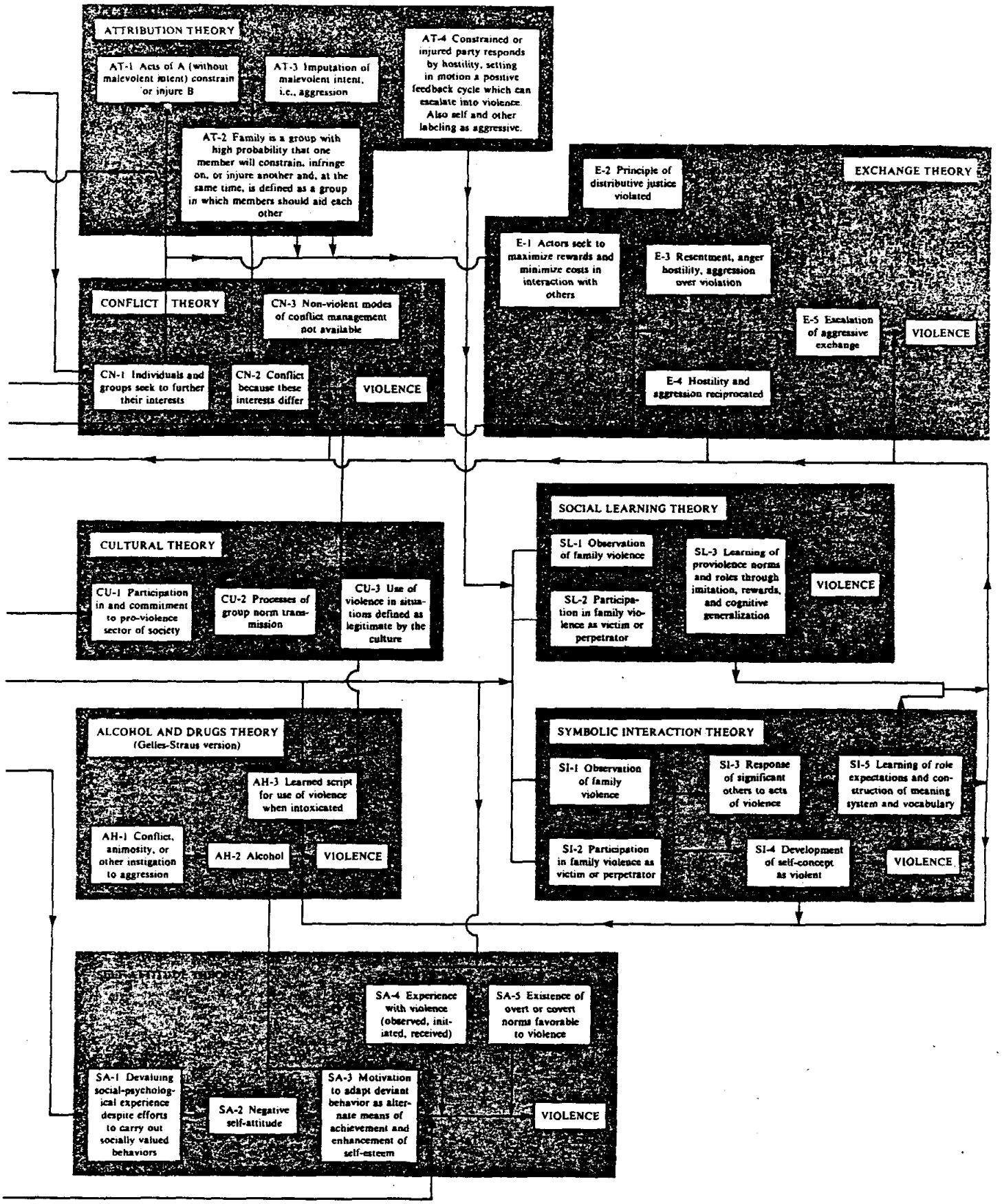
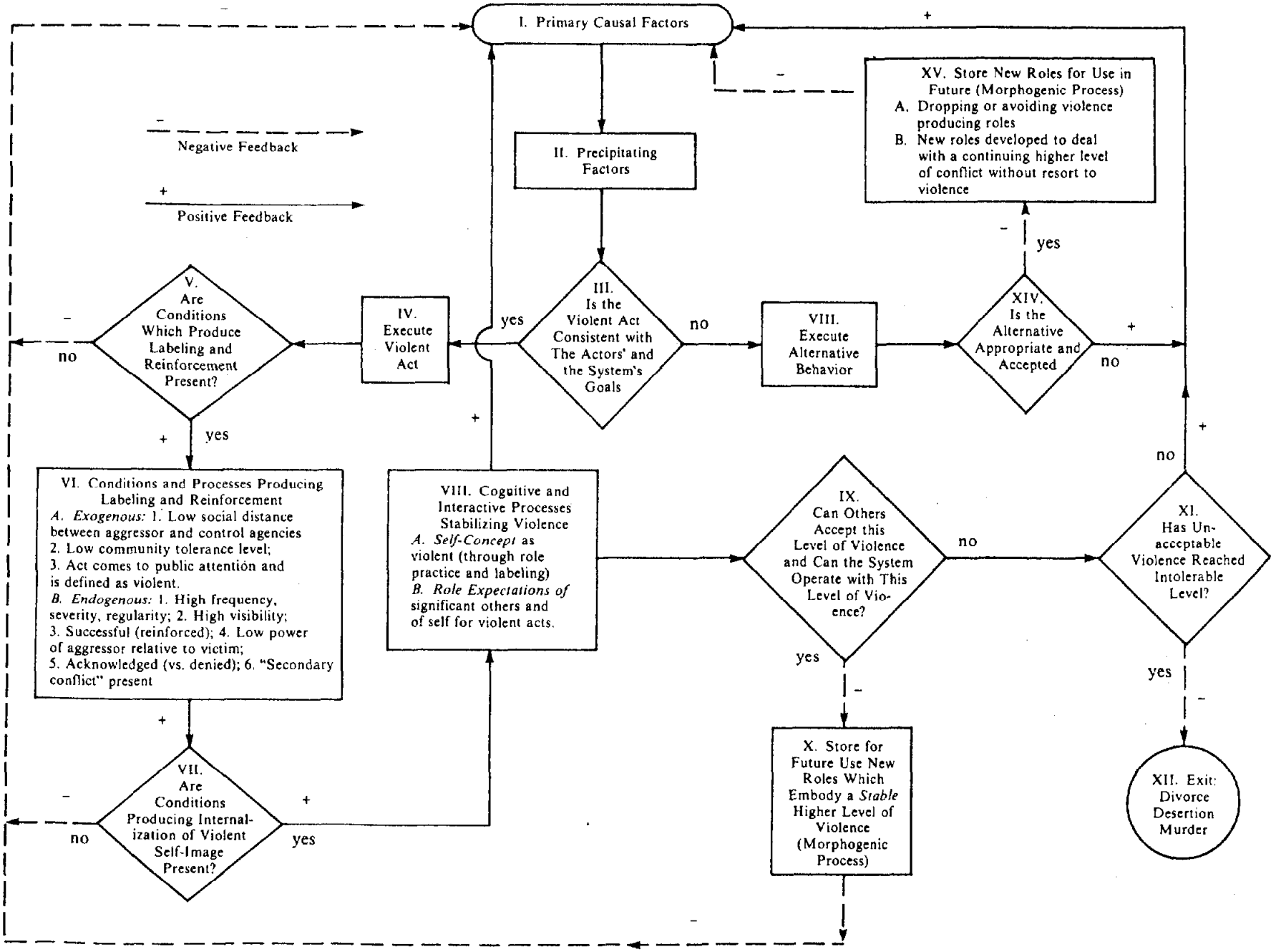

ATTRIBUTION THEORY
AT-1 Acts of A (without malevolent intent) constrain or injure B
AT-3 Imputation of malevolent intent, i.e., aggression
AT-4 Constrained or injured party responds by hostility, setting in motion a positive feedback cycle which can escalate into violence. Also self and other labeling as aggressive.
AT-2 Family is a group with high probability that one member will constrain, infringe on, or injure another and, at the same time, is defined as a group in which members should aid each other
EXCHANGE THEORY
E-2 Principle of distributive justice violated
E-1 Actors seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs in interaction with others
E-3 Resentment, anger hostility, aggression over violation
E-5 Escalation of aggressive exchange
VIOLENCE
E-4 Hostility and aggression reciprocated
CONFLICT THEORY
CN-3 Non-violent modes of conflict management not available
CN-1 Individuals and groups seek to further their interests
CN-2 Conflict because these interests differ
VIOLENCE
SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY
SL-1 Observation of family violence
SL-3 Learning of proviolence norms and roles through imitation, rewards, and cognitive generalization
VIOLENCE
SL-2 Participation in family violence as victim or perpetrator
CULTURAL THEORY
CU-1 Participation in and commitment to pro-violence sector of society
CU-2 Processes of group norm transmission
CU-3 Use of violence in situations defined as legitimate by the culture
ALCOHOL AND DRUGS THEORY
(Gelles-Straus version)
AH-3 Learned script for use of violence when intoxicated
AH-1 Conflict, animosity, or other instigation to aggression
AH-2 Alcohol
VIOLENCE
SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY
SI-1 Observation of family violence
SI-3 Response of significant others to acts of violence
SI-5 Learning of role expectations and construction of meaning system and vocabulary
SI-2 Participation in family violence as victim or perpetrator
SI-4 Development of self-concept as violent
VIOLENCE
SA-4 Experience with violence (observed, initiated, received)
SA-5 Existence of overt or covert norms favorable to violence
SA-1 Devaluing social-psychological experience despite efforts to carry out socially valued behaviors
SA-2 Negative self-attitude
SA-3 Motivation to adopt deviant behavior as alternate means of achievement and enhancement of self-esteem
VIOLENCE

Figure 21.3. Flow Chart Illustrating Cybernetic System Aspects of Labeling, Attribution, and Learning Theories of Violence



writing, we have not made sufficient progress toward expressing each of the partial theories in the form of a cybernetic system. Second, even if we were close enough to this goal to make such a diagram possible in principle, in practice the diagram would become so complex as to be utterly useless. Some indication of the level of complexity which would be required can be gained from examining Figure 21.3. This diagram is a cybernetic representation of certain aspects of social learning and attribution theory. A detailed explanation of the diagram is given in the article by Straus (1973) from which this diagram is taken. Yet even though it is restricted to only *parts* of two *partial* theories, it already taxes one's ability to digest the contents. Moreover, the cybernetic flow charts (similar to Figure 21.3) representing each of the 13 partial theories would also have to be related to each other with at least an equal level of density of causal arrows.

One should not conclude from the above that a general systems theory integration of the partial theories is not possible. We remain convinced of the feasibility and desirability of a general systems approach. However, it is obvious that much work lies ahead before this possibilty is realized. In addition the interrelations of all the elements necessary to encompass the 13 theories diagrammed in Figure 21.2 probably cannot be presented in a single meaningful flow chart. Rather, presentation is likely to take the form of charts within charts, that is, an overall summary chart, then a series of charts (such as Figure 21.3) "unpacking" the internal processes within each of the 13 theories, and then a third series of charts unpacking the boxes within the second set of charts.

In our opinion, the only adequate unified representation of such a general systems theory integration of these partial theories is likely to be in the form of a computer simulation, because the complexity of a verbal or diagrammatic representation would be beyond human ability to comprehend. In addition, as simulation models of the economy have shown, computer simulations have a self-correcting aspect similar to that of empirical research: when the model is run, the typical first results tend to be meaningless or ridiculous. This sets in motion an iterative process whereby the model is progressively refined. Finally, computer assimilations can be used as an experimental tool. Different parameters, assumptions, and relationships are introduced, withdrawn, or modified, and the simulation is then run to examine the effects of these changes.

Micro- and Macrolevel Theories

It is useful to distinguish two types of theories of intrafamily violence. On the one hand, there are what can be called "macrolevel" theories. They attempt to explain the overall level of intrafamily violence within a given society or sector of society as compared to other societies or sectors, and especially the seeming paradox that it is more frequent within the family than within any other group. The second type of theory can be called a "microlevel" theory. This type focuses on the fact that even though violence occurs more often in the family than in other groups, it is not typical of the family or of any other group in the sense of being the modal pattern of interaction. In all groups—even the most violent, such as the family—the typical pattern of interaction does not use physical force, even though the threat of force may underly typical interactions (Goode, 1971). Thus microlevel theories are needed to explain why violence occurs more in some families than in others, and also to explain why violence occurs when it does within the history of specific families.

The variables making up *macro* theories refer to the characteristics of the family as an institution and social group compared to other institutions and groups, and also the characteristics of the society. The variables in a *micro* theory are those which differentiate families from each other. However, the distinction is by no means as sharp as the preceding two sentences suggest. First, no society is uniform even in its most central characteristics. Thus the variables defining the family as an institution and a group will also be variables on which there is family-to-family variation. Second, the meaning and consequences of the family-to-family-difference variables depends on the nature of the societally structured variables. This is illustrated by Rodman's "resources in cultural context" theory of power (1972) and its application to the specific issue of the relation between power and violence by Allen and Straus (1975). Our attempt to suggest an integrated theory of family violence in Figure 21.2, therefore, includes both societal-level and familial-level variables, as well as individual-level variables, but with the emphasis on the former two.

Limitations and Accomplishments of Figure 21.2

The previous section detailing the absence from our integrative efforts of cybernetic control processes presents what is probably the major limitation of what has been accomplished by Figure 21.2. But there are also other limitations. One of these is that the figure does not specifically include the special characteristics of the family which, as we argued early in the chapter, are at the root of a need for a distinctive theory of *family* violence. As in the case of the omission of cybernetic control processes, this omission was necessary to prevent an already complex chart from becoming completely uninterpretable. A third limitation is that Figure 21.2 by no means traces out all the likely interrelations of the partial theories making up the integrated theory. We have drawn arrows indicating those interrelations which seemed necessary and simply stopped the process when it became apparent that any further connecting arrows would pose still another threat to the readability of the chart.

Still another limitation concerns the degree of empirical support for each of the relational propositions indi-

cated by the causal arrows in Figure 21.2. Within each of the partial theories there is generally empirical support for the relationship, but only rarely is this for the specific case of the family. However, the between-theories arrows largely reflect our deductive reasoning, and for the most part have not been empirically tested. Thus one needs to regard each of the causal arrows as representing a hypothesis to be tested.

Finally, although some of the boxes in Figure 21.2 are presented as constants in the original theories from which they are drawn, the safer assumption seems to be that all are variables, even though some may have a nonzero value as their minimum. In addition the shapes of the relationships are largely unknown. However, it should not be assumed that the relationships are linear. In fact, if one has to make an *a priori* guess, the best guess is that more will be nonlinear than linear. Both of these issues are questions for empirical investigation.

Given these and other limitations of the integration, what has been accomplished which makes the effort worthwhile? First, aside from the integration effort itself, the preparatory steps have a value of their own. The identification of the special characteristics which make the family a violence-prone group is one such contribution. Another is the conceptual clarification and specification which have been achieved by the definitions and comparisons of the concept of violence with related concepts such as aggression and force. Closely related is the potential analytic utility of the taxonomy of violence based on the conceptual specification work. Finally, the effort to identify and summarize the salient aspects of as many explanatory theories as possible is, by itself, a contribution to understanding the processes which influence family behavior. Furthermore, we have included among the 15 theories summarized in this chapter three which, prior to our work, have not previously been applied to the issue of interpersonal violence generally or to intrafamily violence specifically (exchange theory, symbolic interaction theory, and general systems theory). Although our application of these three theories to the explanation of intrafamily violence is brief and only suggestive, these may turn out to be fruitful suggestions.

Turning to the integration itself, several things seem to have been accomplished: (1) We think that our mode of relating these theories to each other shifts the emphasis from the less productive question of which theory is correct to a more accurate and more productive focus on what aspect of the total process each theory explains. (2) In addition to revealing the unique contributions of each theory, our integrative efforts suggest the underlying dependence of all the theories on the process of social learning and on the role played by stressful structural arrangements. (3) Although we did not attempt to trace out all the interrelations between the theories (and may indeed have missed some of the key relationships), a number of important relationships have been identified. Since these relationships between theories were arrived at deductively, their empirical validity is not known. But the process has at least pointed to a series of important relationships which, without the formal effort at integration, probably would not have become a focus of attention and inquiry. (4) The integrative effort represented by Figure 21.2 is an aid to further theoretical development and refinement. It makes available a convenient means of examining any of its 13 explanatory theories and their interrelations. A family researcher or theorist interested in any one of the 13 theories included in that chart is likely to find it highly rewarding to attempt to set forth a more detailed set of linkages than was practical for purposes of this chapter.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter attempts to deal with both the conceptual clarification and causal relationship aspects of constructing a theory to explain the determinants of physical violence within the family. It started with an analysis of the unique characteristics of families which call for a special theory of intrafamily violence, as compared to simply assuming that more general theories automatically apply to the family. Among the factors which require a special theory are: 1. high level of physical violence in the family; 2. the consequent need for a theory to explain why it is that family members physically attack each other more than any others; and 3. such special characteristics of the family as the intensity and commitment of family members to that group, the privacy of the family and its internal operations, and the explicit norms giving parents the right to strike children and the implicit norms making the marriage license a hitting license.

The conceptual definition and specification part of the chapter was devoted to presenting and clarifying the definition of violence as the intentional use of physical force on another person. This definition of violence was related to and distinguished from such related concepts as aggression, force, and coercion. In addition, a taxonomy of violence was constructed by crossing the variables of "instrumental versus expressive" violence with "legitimate versus illegitimate" violence. Each of the resulting four types of violence were explained and illustrated by examples from a recent study of intrafamily violence.

The second half of the chapter presents 15 theories of violence and applies these to the specific case of intrafamily violence. The presentation of these 15 theories is highly selective in the sense that only those aspects of the theory which seemed most relevant for the case of intrafamily violence are described; and even then, to lay the groundwork for the later integration of these theories, we deliberately selected the distinctive, nonoverlapping, or complementary aspects of each theory. Finally, it was possible to move toward the integration of 13 of these 15

partial theories because of the social learning and social structural elements which underly so many of the theories. The social structural elements identify the organizational conditions which produce violence, and the social learning elements provide the social psychological mechanism by which these structural conditions are transformed into individual behavior and crystallized into cultural norms and values.

The tangible manifestation of our integration of the 13 theories is in the form of an overall theoretical diagram containing a subsection for each theory. Causal arrows are used to link elements from each of these 13 partial theories with elements of one or more of the other theories.

A major limitation of the resulting theoretical integration is that for the most part it does not show the feedback loops which are likely to be present and does not contain any provision for cybernetic control of the system. In short, despite our commitment in principle to a general systems theory formulation, various practical considerations prevented acting on that commitment at this time. The resulting theoretical integration has other limitations, such as not explicitly taking into account the unique features of the family which require a theory of violence specific to the case of the family. We believe, however, that the present integration has at least brought a certain level of clarity to an aspect of family which has suffered from the confusion of what seemed like an overabundance of theories. The integration is based on the premise that these are not 13 competing theories (even though they do have overlapping and competing elements), but rather that each of these theories points to a part of the explanatory process which tends to be neglected (or secondary) in the other theories. To the extent that our integration has been successful, it serves to confirm this initial assumption and to pave the way for a more specific and detailed integration. We believe that this is most likely to occur through the application of principles of general systems theory, and that it is most likely to be given concrete embodiment in the form of a computer simulation program. The technology for such simulations is already available. What has been missing is the formulation of the theories in terms amenable to computer simulation and enough of the key parameters to at least partly base such a simulation on empirically derived data. The recent growth of theoretical and empirical research on intrafamily violence, on which this chapter is based, offers the possibility that such a compute based integration will be achieved within perhaps a decade.

NOTES

1. A national sample survey of American families addressed to this and other related issues is now being analyzed (Straus et al., 1978).

2. Another of the many paradoxes about the family is highlighted by historical and cross-cultural studies. From this perspective, which focuses on the family as an institutional or organizational structure, the family is one of the most stable and adaptable organizations known. The fact that it also has a high level of stress is not incompatible with either the role instability or the viability of the family as an organizational form. This point was clarified for us in a memo by Melvin Wilkinson, who notes:

> I believe that some propositions from systems theory can help explain this. Systems that have a lot of variety or heterogeneity have a greater capacity for variety or flexibility in their responses (Buckley, 1967). In other words, the greater the variety within a system, the greater its adaptability. The family has tremendous variety by its very nature. It usually includes spouses of different sexes of different ages from different families and children of various ages and sexes. However, the great variety leads to different interests and goals and therefore to problems of cohesion. So one could say that the amount of variety in a system is positively related to difficulty in maintaining cohesion. In this sense one might argue that the family is inherently unstable. But in most societies the forces that hold the family together are very strong, i.e., approved sexual outlet, social pressures, bloodties, laws, companionship, need for security, stability and so on. Consequently, the high variety does not necessarily lead to disintegration. But the high variety does lead to conflict and tension, both of which in moderate amounts are beneficial to the system and facilitate learning and adaptability. So one could say that as long as there are strong forces that promote family cohesion, that the family will be a very flexible and adaptable unit. In the U.S. the forces that promote family cohesion are weakening and at the same time the family is losing variety. There are fewer children, converging sex roles, and more single parent families. Systems theory would then predict that the family would become less adaptable.

3. However, there is a tendency among those writing from a conflict theory perspective to imply that the more conflict the better, or at least to not discuss the question of how much conflict is necessary or desirable.

The question of how much conflict is desirable is also beyond the scope of this chapter. But we would like to suggest that it is an important question for empirical research, and to further suggest the hypothesis that there is a curvilinear relation between the amount of conflict and group well-being. That is, the absence of conflict in the sense of conflict of interest is theoretically impossible and, even if it could be brought about, would be fatal for group well-being. But at the same time, very high levels of conflict can create such a high level of stress and/or such rapid change that group welfare is adversely affected.

4. While spanking a wife is generally regarded as illegitimate, it is necessary to point to the simultaneous presence of contrary norms which, as we said, make the marriage license a hitting license. See section 1 of this chapter and note 6 for references on the ubiquity of conflicting norms.

5. Jerome Frank (1972) has developed a similar taxonomy combining the instrumental-expressive dimension with the dimension of individual versus collective violence. He introduces the legitimacy dimension in the text accompanying the taxonomic table but, unfortunately, does so in a way which confounds collective violence with legitimacy. See also Rule (1974).

6. We are using the concept of "norm" as a property of a collective or group, such as a family, an ethnic group, or a nation. However, the neatness of this is undercut by the fact that typically there are multiple and often contradictory norms referring to the same phenomenon (Embree, 1950; Ryan and Straus, 1954; Evers, 1969). Thus different individuals can perceive and internalize different norms.

7. We have omitted from our inventory those theories which base their explanation on genetic, instinctual, or biological factors. Although these explanations do have some importance for a comprehensive consideration of violence in the family, in the interest of brevity we have omitted the more intraindividually oriented theories. A major problem with all of the theories is that they do not explain why the object of the violence is a family member. Even if we assume the correctness of the claim that aggression and violence are basic human instincts, such theories do not explain why such instinct leads to the object of violence being a family member rather than someone else. The 15 theories which are included are all in some way amenable to answering this question.

8. Bandura (1973) classifies frustration-aggression theory along with other biologically based intraindividual theories as a "drive theory." This reflects the original formulation of Dollard et al. (1939). However, our view of frustration-aggression theory is that it is a special case of social learning theory, but one which (because of historical priority and popular usage) requires separate treatment. We do not accept the idea that humans or other animals have built into their neural systems a drive toward aggression or an inherent tendency to respond to frustration with aggression. Rather, the link between frustration and aggression occurs only if the organism has been rewarded for an "aggressive" response to frustration. This is likely to occur because (1) the inherent effect of frustration is discomfort, tension, and increased motor activity; (2) even gross bodily movement by a young organism is likely to be successful in removing or overcoming many frustration conditions; (3) there is, therefore, a high probability of early reward for physical activity in response to frustration, which of course reinforces and makes more probable the use of physical force as a response to frustration; and (4) in the case of humans, harm-doing or aggressive *intent* can be imputed by others and this definition of the act can be learned by the child. See page 564 for further explication of the process by which attributions of intent can become part of the identity and response repertoire of the child.

9. Although the main theme of *A Clockwork Orange* was behavior modification, the title for our theory is drawn from the episodes in the book where Alex and the Drooges commit violent acts when there is nothing to do.

10. Of course, it can also be contended that the use of force by the husband to maintain a superior position in relation to the wife, and by the wife to maintain control of the children, is functional for the continuance of the family. This is illustrative of the type of thinking which has brought functionalist theory into bad repute.

11. Frustration-aggression theory can be used to explain expressive violence in that aggression can be viewed as a response to the affective state aroused by frustration (see Farrington, 1975).

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