

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 329 885

CG 023 257

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 TITLE Violence as a Strategy of the Weak against the Strong: The Case of Siblings.  
 INSTITUTION New Hampshire Univ., Durham. Family Research Lab.  
 SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Mental Health (DHHS), Bethesda, Md.  
 PUB DATE 88  
 CONTRACT MH15161-11  
 NOTE 34p.  
 PUE TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Family Relationship; Power Structure; \*Predictor Variables; \*Sibling Relationship; Siblings; \*Violence

ABSTRACT

This paper considers the case of violence between siblings in the family, and describes findings based on a U.S. national sample that show the relatively frequent use of violence by weaker siblings against more powerful siblings. Analysis and theoretical discussion shows that even though strong actors have greater means for using violence, and weak actors are more likely to suffer from the use of violence than strong actors, the motive and opportunity structure of relatively powerless social actors may encourage their use of violence toward the strong. Weak actors are especially likely to use violence when they have reason to expect that observers will interpret a conflict in their favor. The use of violence by terrorists, social movements, corporations, governments and particular disempowered categories of individuals may be partially understood by the application of these theoretical principles. The empirical evidence presented in this study demonstrates the relative frequency of violence by the weak, but it is insufficient to demonstrate the theoretical principles presented. Further research must measure characteristics of the specific contexts (including attitudes and behaviors of observers) and expectations of the actors to determine the importance of these particular mechanisms. (LLL)

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ED329885

CG023257

Violence as a Strategy of the Weak Against the Strong:

The Case of Siblings

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I gratefully acknowledge the support of an NIMH postdoctoral fellowship in family violence at the Family Research Laboratory of the University of New Hampshire (MH15161-11). I appreciate the comments of J. Jill Suitor and the members of the Family Violence Research Seminar for comments on earlier drafts.

Abstract

Powerful social actors are often able to retaliate for any violence used toward them (e.g. "super-powers" acting toward other nations, governments toward citizens, or parents toward children). Nevertheless, violence may be an effective strategy and therefore be used by weaker actors toward stronger actors when the weaker actors believe that all of the following conditions are met: 1) alternative methods of achieving their ends are not available, 2) their use of violence is likely to activate support for their goals by observers, and 3) social norms permit or at least tolerate their use of violence in this context.

Although we are unable to predict the frequency with which these conditions will be met, we suggest that it is often enough to make violence by the weak toward the strong a fairly common phenomenon. Specifically, we consider the case of violence between siblings in the family, and describe new findings based upon a U.S. national sample that show the relatively frequent use of violence by weaker siblings against more powerful siblings. Finally, we consider the need for further research to more directly investigate the conditions that promote the use of violence against the strong.

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Violence as a Strategy of the Weak Against the Strong:  
The Case of Siblings

Access to the means of violence<sup>1</sup> is often considered the defining characteristic of power. In any situation, there are generally many actors who are able to use violence; e.g. nations use their armies, and political groups can explode bombs; parents can spank children, and children can attack parents; muggers can attack citizens, and private security guards may shoot at intruders, etc. While it is rare for any actor to have an effective monopoly on the ability to use violence, it is common that some actors have much greater access than others, and so are considered more powerful. Sociological theory and common sense converge on the expectation that violence is used by powerful social actors against weaker actors; e.g. "super-powers" invade smaller nations, governments use police to arrest citizens, parents use force to control their children, and children who are physically larger and stronger use force against their weaker peers. However, there has been relatively little consideration of the use of violence against these powerful social actors by weaker actors.

A simple theory of violence might lead one to expect that powerful actors rarely would be the recipients of violence. Less powerful actors have less ability to use violence, and one might expect that such actors would be deterred from even limited use of violence by the likelihood of punitive responses from their "victims." However, we suggest that actors with little power use

violence against stronger actors more than might be expected by such a theory.

Although the weak have relatively little capability for violence, they may be motivated to use whatever means of violence they have available under certain types of conditions. Specifically, we suggest that weak actors are most likely to use violence against the strong when those weak actors perceive that 1) alternative methods of achieving their ends are not available, 2) their use of violence is likely to activate support for their goals by observers, and 3) social norms permit or at least tolerate their use of violence in this context.

In this paper, we elaborate these conditions. Then we consider the case of violence between siblings in the family, and examine some empirical findings that show the relatively frequent use of violence against the more powerful sibling. Finally, we consider some general implications of the use of violence against the strong.

#### Means, Motive, and Opportunity for the Use of Violence

The use of violence requires means, motive and opportunity. We interpret these terms in particular ways for the present purposes and discuss them in the following sections.

#### Means

The means of violence refers to the ability to cause harm to another actor; that ability may be based upon

various types of control (e.g. physical, financial, or authoritative control of resources) that may be used to cause harm. As mentioned above, practically all actors have some access to the means of violence. By definition, powerful actors have greater access to the means of violence than relatively powerless actors, but even the most powerful actors cannot appropriate all of the means for violence. For example, heads of state, who are usually in the position to direct the greatest means for violence in a society, are often still vulnerable to assassination by sufficiently determined opponents. Nevertheless, attacks on powerful actors run great risk of interdiction and retaliation that may deter most attempts that might be contemplated. All other things being equal, one would expect relatively little use of violence toward powerful actors. However, all other things are not equal, and we suggest that there are often motives and opportunities to use violence against powerful actors that are sufficient to lead relatively weak actors to use whatever violence they can against strong actors.

#### Motive to Use Violence

The motive for violence depends upon the effectiveness of using violence in comparison with other available means for achieving the goals of a particular actor.

It is ironic that the actors who have the greatest capability to use violence may sometimes be least likely to actually use it. Powerful actors often have a variety of ways to obtain desired

outcomes; they can use resources (e.g. money and authority) directly to obtain their desired outcomes, and they may obtain the cooperation of others by using their control of rewards (e.g. jobs) and punishments (e.g. control of trade, defamation of character, etc.). In addition, the threat of their use of violence that is implicit in their access to the means of violence (and may be made explicit) may result in the compliance of others without any resort to the use of violence\*2. Finally, even when powerful actors do use violence, they often need to use only minimal violence to make it clear enough that they are willing and able to do so in this context. Weaker actors are often incapable of either defending themselves or responding with any significant retributive violence; consequently, they are often willing to submit to the demands of the powerful in order to avoid further violence toward them.

Relatively powerless actors often have few if any ways to achieve their goals. They may believe that the only way to reach their goals is to use violence to induce a powerful actor to give them what they want (c.f. Gamson, 1968:169; Blumenthal, et. al., 1972:10).

It is difficult for a relatively powerless actor to make an effective threat of violence against a powerful actor, because powerful actors are often able to prevent attack and/or respond with a much greater violent response. Nevertheless, prevention and retaliation do not disarm less powerful actors but rather circumscribe the conditions under which they are able to use

violence effectively.

A credible threat of retaliation is often very effective for deterring violence by weak actors, but that threat can be undermined to the extent that the weak actors can use violence without being identified and thereby targeted for retaliation. Consequently, weak actors have disproportionate motivation to use "anonymous" violence in such forms as apparently random bombings and vandalism. If the violence cannot be anticipated and its perpetrators cannot be identified, then powerful actors can neither prevent nor retaliate. Such violence and threats of subsequent violence can sometimes impose sufficient costs on the powerful actors that they are willing to make concessions to the weaker actors to avoid further violence\*3.

Nevertheless, we suggest that the possibility that violence will succeed in this way is often insufficient to make violence a viable strategy for weak actors. We suggest that violence is more likely to be effective and therefore more likely to be used against strong actors when the weak actors have reason to expect that the violence will activate support from outside observers who might be in a position to exert pressure on the powerful actors. It might seem paradoxical that observers would come to the support of the perpetrators of violence, because the use of violence is generally proscribed by norms, and the violators of norms are more likely to be condemned than supported. However, norms against violence are not the only norms that are relevant in such a context; once the violence draws attention of

observers, those observers may decide that the powerful actor is committing the most serious norm violations, and so come to the aid of the challengers. This possibility requires some elaboration.

Drawing the attention of observers is much more likely to lead to support of the weak if there are reasons to expect that the observers will make interpretations that are sympathetic to the challengers. The sympathies of observers depend upon: a) their preconceptions regarding the particular actors involved, b) their general philosophical orientations towards power in society, and c) their interpretations of the immediate situation.

a) Preconceptions Regarding the Actors. Blumenthal et. al. (1972) show that identification with particular actors affects the acceptability of violence by the participants. If an observer has prejudices either for or against particular actors involved in a conflict, then such prejudices are likely to determine the observer's support in such a conflict. For example, white racists are likely to support the white participant in a black/white conflict, and feminists are likely support the woman's interest in a male/female conflict.

b) Philosophical Orientations Toward Power in Society. In the absence of clear biases on behalf of particular actors, there may be general biases specifically regarding the relative power of the actors. There are philosophical traditions that support each side.

Specifically, there is a long Christian tradition stressing that it is the weak who will inherit the earth because of their moral ways, and that the powerful are inherently corrupt\*4. Consequently, many observers will be inclined to give the benefit of the doubt to the weaker actors in such confrontations.

On the other hand, there is a countervailing tradition based upon the Protestant Ethic that suggests that worldly success and power are signs of moral worth and chosenness. A related perspective suggests that individuals are responsible for their own worldly position; therefore, again, success indicates worthiness, and failure indicates depravity. Observers with these philosophical orientations will tend to support the powerful actors in confrontations.

c) Interpretations of the Immediate Situation. Observers make interpretations of the particular confrontation that they observe; depending upon the situation, they may interpret situations favorably to either actor.

Various aspects of the immediate situation of a violent conflict can lead to interpretations that favor the weaker participant. Observers may conclude that: a) the willingness of the weaker actors to draw such punishment indicates that they are very strongly aggrieved, and/or b) the violent response of the stronger actors indicates their general tendency to oppress the weak actors. In either case, observers would be inclined to support the weaker actors against the strong.

On the other hand, certain aspects of the situation might lead observers to make interpretations that favor the stronger participant. Observers may infer that the weak actors initiate the violence because they are either mean or crazy. If they are mean, they may be engaging in violence only to cause harm; and if they are crazy, then they may engage in violence for no reason at all. Under these conditions, the observers may believe that the use of violence by the strong is the only means possible for stopping the unjustified violence by the weak.

In summary, we are suggesting that the use of violence against the strong may be a form of protest directed toward the imposition of other norms that would support the grievances of the weak from oppression by the strong. The use of violence by the weak in this way is only effective if it does draw the sympathy and support of observers. Thus, we suggest that weak actors are likely to use this strategy under specific conditions when they believe that observers are most likely to make sympathetic interpretations\*5.

#### Opportunity

The opportunity for violence refers to the absence of constraints (e.g. physical, moral, or normative constraints) from the use of violence. The present focus is on normative constraints. We suggest that powerful actors acting against weaker actors are often (but not always) subject to greater normative constraints than weaker actors acting against the strong.

All social systems have norms that restrict the legitimate use of force. We suggest that one of the most common norms restricts the use of force by more powerful actors against less powerful actors. Americans seem to believe in a "fair fight," "sporting behavior" etc. From their youth, boys are often taught that fighting with girls, boys with glasses, or smaller boys is inappropriate. They are told to "pick on someone their own size. These norms seem to reflect the underlying belief that it is a collective responsibility to protect those who cannot otherwise protect themselves; if uneven fights were not proscribed, it is reasonably assumed that the disproportionately strong would hurt their relatively defenseless opponents.

On the other hand, the norms are less explicit for constraining the use of force by weaker actors toward stronger actors\*6. Presumably, the relative absence of normative constraint norms arises from the assumption that the weaker actors cannot cause as much harm or damage to the stronger actors; and that if harm is threatened, stronger actors are generally capable of defending themselves. Thus, the deterrence provided by the stronger actors themselves precludes the need for outside support of norms to protect them.

It is ironic that the social norms that are intended to support the weak (those that tolerate violence by the weak) go hand in hand with norms that expect "defensive" violence (albeit limited) by the strong, and those norms may be used to justify victimization of the weak. Powerful nations and strong

individuals may claim that their attacks are "self-defense" (even when they are preemptive).

The claim of "self-defense" is part of an even larger loophole in the norms. Even as norms prohibit the use of violence by a strong actor in the self-interest of that actor, they often allow and even require a strong actor to use violence to promote the interests of others. For example, strong nations may be expected to use violence against a country that has aggressed against another country; parents may be expected to spank a child who misbehaves; police may be expected to arrest perpetrators of crimes. Strong actors can claim that any violence they perpetrate is somehow justified. For example, a country can claim that it is taking reprisals against a country that has violated some international agreement; a parent can find some misbehavior that can be used as justification for physical punishment; and the police can often find some reason to believe that a crime has been committed. Such claims are not necessarily uncritically accepted by others, but they may make the relevant norm violations sufficiently ambiguous to immobilize outsiders.

Because of the loophole, and because powerful actors are sometimes sufficiently powerful to flaunt norms with impunity, one cannot expect that norms against violence by the strong will be fully effective. Nevertheless, the presence of such norms make it more difficult for the strong to use violence, and may encourage weak actors to believe that they may use violence against the strong with the risk of only limited response.

## Violence Within Families

The family provides a context in which there are often clear differentials of power. Recent attention to violence within families has shown horrors of abuse of power by powerful members of families. Research has consistently shown that it is the weaker members of couples, i.e. wives, who are injured more often and more severely. The use of violence by the powerful members of families against the weaker members has justly received a great deal of recent attention from researchers, clinicians and policy makers.

Although violence against the strong does not constitute as important a social problem as violence against the weak, it is a social problem, and it may lead to the increased social justification of defensive/retaliatory violence against the weak. In addition, violence against the powerful is a social phenomenon worthy of scientific study that may provide insights into the processes of violence in general.

The nature of the sociological processes can be be illustrated by the analysis of violence between siblings. There has been very little systematic research on violence between siblings. Straus et al. (1980) provided important basic descriptions of the phenomena, and Felson and Russo (1988) provided additional findings and tests of relevant hypotheses. We reanalyze the data from the National Survey of Family Violence (Straus et. al., 1980) and review findings of Felson and Russo to examine the extent of violence against the powerful.

Our theory does not allow us to make general predictions of whether strong or weak actors will use violence more often. We have suggested that in certain contexts, strong actors may have effective alternative ways to obtain their desired outcomes, they may be normatively constrained from using violence, and may not expect the support of outsiders-- therefore, they are unlikely to use violence. On the other hand, there may be other contexts where the strong are not constrained from using violence, where outsiders are not expected to intervene on behalf of the weak (they may not be present, can be expected not to interfere, or may even support the stronger actors), and where the strong actors do not have more effective ways to reach their goals-- therefore they are likely to use violence. We have no theoretical basis upon which to base predictions of the relative frequencies of conditions supporting violence by the strong or the weak. Our present purpose is to show that there are conditions that do lead to violence against the strong sufficiently often to make it an important object of study. If violence is used against the strong even nearly as often as by the strong, it is both surprising and sociologically important.

For this purpose, we reanalyze the Straus data to show several contexts in which violence is used against strong social actors as frequently as against weak social actors. While these data do not contain measures of the characteristics of the particular social context, we review some of the findings of Felson and Russo that do support our (and their own) theory

concerning the factors that encourage violence against the strong. We begin by considering, means, motive, and opportunity in the case of conflicts between siblings.

Means--Among siblings, younger children and female children are generally "weaker" in terms of access to the use of violence. Age is obviously a cause of increasing size and physical strength, which are the major factors in violence between siblings. By the time children reach school age (or even before), it is apparent that boys are generally better trained and more experienced in the use of physical aggression (especially toward peers), and therefore better able to use violence to cause harm\*7.

Motive-- In terms of the motives for the use of violence, we expect that weaker siblings often have little access to alternative means to achieve their goals, and so may have a motive for violence. Specifically, younger siblings lack verbal skills, strength, freedom of movement, etc. Girls in American society have traditionally had relatively limited access to achieving their goals outside of the family through interaction with peers and so are more dependent on the family context itself; also, the gender bias of parents may lead girls to be treated with less favor, and so be more frustrated in achieving their goals.

As we have said, an important part of the motive to use violence against strong actors is the expectations that support will be forthcoming from observers. In the situation of siblings

within the family, parents are the relevant observers, and we expect that parents tend to see their role as disproportionately protecting the weaker children. If so, this provides the type of context where the weaker actors can expect the support of the observers against the stronger actors. Consequently, we expect that the use of violence against stronger siblings especially motivated by "protest," i.e. achieving the sympathy of outsiders (especially parents) should be common.

Opportunity--Since children cannot be effectively monitored and restrained at all times and places, there is always some opportunity for violence. However we suggest that the greater physical strength of older siblings and boys is accompanied by norms that specifically constrain their use of violence against the weaker members. In contrast, the supposedly inconsequential use of violence by younger siblings and girls may be tolerated\*8.

Thus, we expect that younger siblings will use violence against older siblings, and girls will use violence against boys.

#### Reanalysis of the Straus, et. al. Data

Straus and his colleagues collected their data in interviews with a representative sample of American adults. Those with two or more children living with them were asked about the way<sup>s</sup> that the children interact. The Conflict Tactics Scale was used to measure violence among siblings. Specifically, for one target child, selected at random, the respondent was asked how frequently the child used each of

several "tactics" when s/he had a problem with a sibling in the past year. The four items that involved violence were used to compose an interpersonal violence scale:

- 1) Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other
- 2) Slapped or spanked the other
- 3) Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist
- 4) Hit with something

Three more severe items were omitted from the present analysis for lack of variation. For each item, the responses were in categories: 0) Never, 1) Once, 2) Twice, 3) 3-5 times, 4) 6-10 times, 5) 11-20 times, 6) Over 20 times. The values were recoded to the midpoints of the categories (with the exception of "15" and "25" for the last two categories), and were summed for all four items.

For the purposes of separating out the participants in each incident, only families with exactly two children between 3 and 17 were included in the present analysis. For each pair of siblings, there is only information on one side (i.e. about the "target" child physically aggressing toward his/her sibling); but we can assume that the representative population sample is representative of both sides. We can examine each of the present hypotheses.

Before we present the analyses, it is important to reiterate our purpose. Our purpose is to show that violence against the strong occurs often enough to be an important phenomenon. A finding that violence is used against the strong as often as

against the weak is sufficient for that purpose.

#### Age

We begin by considering age, by comparing the mean number of "hits" given by younger to older siblings, 23.9 with the mean number given by older to younger siblings, 19.5. It is apparent that the younger siblings hit their older siblings more than vice versa.

However, it is well known that younger children use physical aggression more than older children. These data show this association. Once the age of the child is taken into account (in a regression analysis), the age of the sibling is unrelated to use of violence\*9.

Thus, children are as likely to use violence toward older siblings as toward younger siblings. One might expect that children would use violence more toward younger siblings than toward older siblings both because the young ones cannot defend themselves, and because the young ones use more violence toward them--but this is not the case. Apparently, children are as likely to use violence against stronger as weaker siblings.

#### Gender

Next we consider gender, by comparing the number of "hits" given by sisters to brothers to the number of "hits" given by brothers to sisters. The reports indicate that the girls hit the boys more often than the boys hit the girls--a mean of 23.4

sister to brother, compared with 20.7 brother to sister.

Before allowing any overinterpretation of this finding, we should note that this difference is not statistically significant, and is very small when compared with the amount of variation within groups-- the important point is that there is little to no difference. Violence is used toward the stronger actor about as much as violence is used toward the weaker actor.

In fact, it is the characteristics of the recipient that more consistently predicts the use of violence. Both girls and boys use more violence against brothers than against sisters. Girls use more violence against boys (23.4) than against girls (21.9); and boys use more violence against boys (26.5) than they do against girls (20.7). Boys are consistently more likely to be the recipients of violence\*10.

Again, we must reiterate that although we are indicating the directions of the differences under these different conditions, these differences are uniformly small and statistically insignificant. The central point of the analyses is to emphasize the small sizes of the differences-- actors use violence towards the strong as much as they use violence towards the weak, and the directions of these small differences suggest that they may even do it more.

Finally, we consider that the circumstances might be different depending upon whether the parent is a mother or a father. One might speculate that fathers would be even more protective of the girls than the mothers, because fathers would

be more likely to believe and act on the traditional stereotypes of the defenseless females. Fathers reports indicate that sisters use violence more toward brothers (24.8) than brothers toward sisters (19.3). These data also indicate that fathers report that brothers are much more likely to be recipients of violence from both sisters and brothers. Girls use more violence against boys (24.8) than against girls (15.1); and boys use more violence against boys (32.5) than they do against girls (19.2). These findings are consistent with the theory if fathers are especially likely to be more protective of the girls than of the boys. Unfortunately, we have no direct information on the attitudes or behaviors of the parents\*11.

In contrast, mothers report pretty much the same rates of violence irrespective of the genders of the siblings\*12. Again, for the present purpose, a finding of no difference is sufficient to show that violence against the strong is important.

In contrast to previous considerations of mothers and fathers reports where discrepancies between mothers and fathers have been attributed to fathers' misperceptions (e.g. Felson and Russo, 1988), we consider the discrepant findings as likely to be substantively significant. We suggest that the discrepancies in reports are more likely to reflect differences between the objective experiences of mothers and fathers than distorted perceptions by fathers\*13.

## Review of Felson and Russo

The findings of Felson and Russo generally replicate the present findings, and go further to provide some evidence for the mechanism. Felson and Russo collected data from junior high school students and their parents on the use of verbal and physical aggression between siblings. The respondents were asked to report on the sibling closest in age to the respondent. Their theoretical approach is very similar to that described in the present paper. They suggest that the presence of a "mediator" (e.g. a parent) encourages violence by the weaker participant, because mediators tend to support the weaker participant. Although the emphasis in their analyses is on the frequency of fights, rather than on the separate participation of weaker and stronger siblings, they report several findings that are relevant here.

Felson and Russo found that the conditions in the family were often conducive to aggression by the weaker members; parents frequently punished the older sibling, punished a male child, and punished a child with a female sibling; they were especially likely to punish the male in a brother-sister fight.

Furthermore, their findings showed both that when the older child was punished, there were more fights between siblings, and a higher proportion of those fights were initiated by younger siblings.

Although data were collected on whether boys were punished in

male-female conflicts, no findings pertaining to the effect of punishing boys on the initiation of aggression toward boys, or by girls, were reported.

In summary, the Felson and Russo study showed that parents tended to support the weaker actors (younger siblings and girls) in sibling conflicts, and that the support of weaker actors (at least in terms of punishment of older siblings) was accompanied by greater initiation of violence by the weaker actors (younger siblings).

## Discussion

This paper has presented findings concerning patterns of sibling violence based upon a representative sample of the United States. The findings are very similar to and complementary to those derived in an independent study conducted by Felson and Russo (1988), using reports from junior high school students and their parents. The combined findings are consistent with our predictions of use of violence by the weak in the context of sibling violence. Further research should replicate our findings and collect more information about the circumstances surrounding the use of violence.

Our purpose has been to present a theory that applies to a wide range of situations as well as sibling violence. The theoretical discussion shows that even though strong actors have greater means for using violence and weak actors are more likely to suffer from the use of violence than strong

actors, the motive and opportunity structure of relatively powerless social actors may encourage their use of violence toward the strong. Specifically, we suggest that the lack of available non-violent methods for meeting their goals combined with the possibility that violence may bring them sympathy and support from outsiders can lead weak actors to use violence as a strategy.

We have suggested that weak actors are especially likely to use violence when they have reason to expect that observers will interpret a conflict in their favor. Felson and Russo have found this connection with regard to sibling violence; when parents punish older siblings, younger siblings are more likely to use physical aggression. They also show that parents disproportionately punish the strong (older siblings and brothers) in favor of the weak (younger siblings and sisters). Therefore, relatively frequent use of violence by weaker siblings was expected and found.

In general, we have suggested that weak social actors are more likely to engage in violence toward the strong when they have reason to expect observers to interpret the conflict in their favor and come to their support. We suggest that the use of violence by terrorists, social movements, corporations, governments and particular disempowered categories of individuals may be partially understood by the application of these simple theoretical principles.

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The empirical evidence that we present demonstrates the relatively frequency of violence by the weak, but it is insufficient to demonstrate the theoretical principles that we have presented. Further research must measure characteristics of the specific contexts (including the attitudes and behaviors of observers) and expectations of the actors to determine the importance of these particular mechanisms.

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## Footnotes

1. Gelles and Straus (1979) define violence as "an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of causing physical pain or injury to another person" (see Gelles and Straus, 1979 for an explication of this definition and an analysis of alternative definitions). This definition appears to be consistent with the primary dictionary definitions; e.g. the first definition of "violence" in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1977) is the "exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse." (See also Blumenthal, et. al., 1972:7.) Our usage of "violence" in this paper is intended to be consistent with these definitions. In our discussion of interpersonal conflict, violence is confined to "physical" harm. In our larger discussion, we focus on physical harm, but we also include destruction of property as violence when its main purpose seems to be to cause harm to others.

2. There have been many historic incidents where powerful nations have taken over less powerful nations with minimal or no armed conflict, largely because the weaker nations were aware of the severe consequences of any armed opposition. Much of the use of power in labor management disputes involves threats and intimidation rather than the actual use of force. Threats of violence are often sufficient to gain compliance from victims in cases of kidnapping, rape, and robbery. Once relative power is

recognized by the weaker actors, the use of violence may be unnecessary.

3. Powerful actors generally resist making concessions in response to violence and threats of violence, because they are concerned that any concessions will encourage further violence and threats of violence by other opportunistic individuals and groups; but if they are able to offer secretive and/or face-saving concessions to avoid an immediate threat, they may do so.

4. This point of view is expressed by the biblical statement that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to heaven.

5. In addition to the instrumental motivations for violence, researchers often recognize emotional motivation (e.g. see Blumenthal, et. al, 1972; Gelles and Straus, 1979; the distinction is to indicate that violence may either be a means to an end (instrumental), or an end in itself (expressive). This distinction might seem inapplicable to corporate actors (e.g. governments, businesses, unions, etc.), because "expressive" motivation implies the existence of emotion, which is presumably limited to human beings. However, "corporate actors" must act through human agents who interpret the motivation of the corporate actor. It should not be surprising to find that these individual interpreters attribute expressive motivation to the corporate actors and act accordingly; nations may act as if

they were insulted; unions may become "angry" with management; corporations may become "hostile" to one another.

While conceptually clear, the distinction between expressive and instrumental is often very difficult to make in actual situations. Actors may use violence to express anger and hostility when they feel that they are being treated wrongly or unfairly; in such a case, this "expressive" violence may be indistinguishable from violence used for the instrumental purpose of attempting to deter future wrong or unfair treatment. Also, actors may effect emotions for the purpose of indicating their lack of conscious control over their violent behaviors; in this way, the violence is a more credible and thereby effective deterrent (see Schelling, 1960) against actors who would otherwise respond by making their violence "not pay."

Much "expressive" violence can be at least partially understood by understanding its associated instrumentality. However, emotions have a reality of their own that may result in behaviors that are not reasonable means to ends, "Purely emotional" violence must be approached from a different theoretical perspective, and is beyond consideration in this paper.

6. In a preliminary analysis of the data from the Third Wave of the Second National Family Violence Survey, Kirk Williams (personal communication) has found that in response to hypothetical scenarios where the level of physical damage is the same, Americans tend to say that there should be less serious consequences for wives who hit husbands than for husbands who hit wives. Respondents may be directly responding to norms that make violence toward men a lesser offense than toward women, and/or they may share normative beliefs that there is a lesser threat of future serious harm to a male victim than to a female, even when the damage in the present situation is the same.

7. We believe that size differences associated with gender are less crucial.

8. Even though norms generally proscribe the use of violence, that proscription is less clear as applied to violence use by boys toward other boys. Boys are taught to believe that they must be able to fight to protect their interests, and parents may tolerate or sometimes even encourage physical fights as a means to resolve disputes between boys, even when the boys are of somewhat different sizes and ages. When not constrained by norms, the greater power of older boys may allow them to use violence toward younger boys a lot.

9. A regression analysis was carried out with violence as the dependent variable and age of child, and relative age of sibling (older/younger) as independent variables. The beta for age of

child was .28 and highly significant, while the beta for relative age of sibling was .03 and insignificant ( $p=.62$ ).

10. The findings that girls use violence toward boys as much or more than vice versa might seem to suggest that girls use violence more than boys, but these more detailed findings suggest that the interaction between the genders of the participants is more important than the gender of the perpetrator alone. When we examine violence toward girls, girls use more violence (a mean of 21.9) than boys do (a mean of 20.7). However, when we examine violence toward boys, boys use more violence (mean=26.5) than girls do (23.4). The fact that girls use even slightly more violence toward boys than vice versa is especially significant in light of the fact that boys tend to use more violence toward siblings in general.

11. We should note that once sex of child, sex of sibling, and sex of parent, are taken into account among families with exactly two children in the home, the means are based upon small numbers of cases (about 35 for each mean). In this context, mean differences of 6 to 8 are required for statistical significance. Some of these differences are statistically significant, but we suggest that with the relatively large number of findings reported, replication is necessary to have any real confidence in the directions of the differences.

12. According to mothers, the means are: girls against boys (22.6) girls against girls (26.4); boys against boys (21.0); and boys against girls (22.1). With these small samples, the standard errors of the mean are each about 4.0, and the largest difference is only about 1.5 standard errors. Considering that these findings are small, statistically insignificant, and inconsistent with the other findings, we believe that the most appropriate description is that there are no important differences among these means.

13. The fact that there is a strong pattern in our findings based upon fathers' reports suggests that these are unlikely to arise from "random" errors. Furthermore, the particular pattern does not seem likely to have arisen from preconceived "distortions." If fathers were distorting their reports based upon their preconceptions and expectations, we would not be surprised to find fathers reporting more violence between brothers than between sisters-- however, we would not expect to find them reporting more violence of sisters toward brothers than vice versa. We suggest that previous discounting of fathers reports might be based upon a misinterpretation of the evidence. Felson and Russo (1988) interpret the fact that children's reports (and measures of some other variables) are much more highly correlated with mothers' than with fathers' reports as indicating that the fathers are misreporting. In contrast, we suggest that the fathers may be accurately reporting about their relatively lesser time spent with the same children. Since

mothers spend more time with children, it is not surprising that the mothers reports would be more consistent with the children's summaries of their own experience. If one is interested in a "summary" of experiences, then the fathers may be inaccurate; but for theoretical purposes, one might be interested in the fathers reports of their own experiences.