HANA 'INO: CHILD MALTREATMENT IN A HAWAIIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

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Polynesia as a culture area is a valuable context in which to consider issues of child maltreatment. The ethnographic literature on Polynesia would lead one to postulate a very low rate of child maltreatment. Ethnographic descriptions of childrearing present a picture of indulgent parenting and love of infants and small children. Based on current understandings of child maltreatment in Western nations, factors in the Polynesian childrearing environment should act as a deterrent to maltreatment (Korbin 1987a): infants and young children are highly valued; multiple caretakers are available to assist with child care tasks; children can be temporarily or permanently redistributed through formal and informal adoption practices; and a wide network of kin is involved in childrearing to provide support to parents and to intervene if necessary. Yet, instances of "bad" parents are present in the ethnographic literature (see, for example, Firth 1957:147), and with migration to urban areas Polynesians have been overrepresented in official child abuse and neglect reports in New Zealand (Ritchie and Ritchie 1981) and in Hawai'i (Dubanoski 1981). It is not clear how much of this overrepresentation is due to conflict in definitions of maltreatment with the dominant society, how much is due to increased scrutiny of families receiving public services, and how much is due to actual incidence.

This article considers child maltreatment in a Hawaiian-American community, Ko'u Hoaloha,[1] in the mid-1970s. Fieldwork was not addressed specifically to family violence, but child maltreatment was

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an area of interest and was discussed with community members in connection with research on child socialization patterns (Korbin 1978).

Ethnographic Background

Ko‘u Hoaloha is a community of approximately 150 individuals situated on the ocean in a rural area of the state of Hawai‘i. The community is regarded by both community members and outsiders as one of the last refuges of “Hawaiian life.” In the 1970s there was no electricity or running water and these “improvements” were being resisted because of community concern about flushing waste into the ocean where they fish and the children swim. There is regular contact with the dominant culture. Television is available in most households and is run off car batteries. Most adults drive approximately twenty miles several times each week to shop at the grocery store, pick up mail, or run other errands. The children attend elementary and high school outside of the community, which requires approximately an hour’s bus ride each way. Unemployment is high, with many families relying on some form of government financial assistance. Employment opportunities are limited to local agriculture, government projects (for example, road building), the tourist industry, and part-time work in the public schools. Subsistence traditionally was based on farming and fishing. The men still fish, but most do not do so regularly and fishing cannot be counted on as a reliable source of income. Fish are most often sold but sometimes are consumed in the household. Ethnic affiliation is clearly Hawaiian, with community members identifying the “Hawaiian way” as their way of doing things. In Hawai‘i, substantial intermarriage with other groups and a history of culture contact have resulted in Hawaiian ethnic identity relying primarily on self-identification and adherence to Hawaiian culture (Gallimore and Howard 1968). The Hawaiian family, particularly the extended family *(‘ohana),* remains important and has been cited throughout Polynesia as the mechanism by which Polynesians retain their cultural identity (Beaglehole 1939; Beaglehole and Beaglehole 1946; Beaglehole and Ritchie 1958; Gallimore and Howard 1968; Gallimore, Boggs, and Jordan 1974; Keesing 1936; Levy 1969, 1973; Ritchie and Ritchie 1970).

Values on Children

The importance of children and the value attached to them in Ko‘u Hoaloha is evident. Ko‘u Hoalohans express open enjoyment of infants

and young children. In the tradition of *lima lau* (many hands), babies and young children are passed from person to person to be held and cared for. In addition to adults, children play a significant role in the care of younger ones. In a systematic study of caretaking patterns, children reported themselves engaged in sibling caretaking more often than did a community adult observing the same situation (Korbin 1978).

Children formalize and solidify the tic between a young man and woman and signal their transition to adulthood, In Koʻu Hoaloha couples tended to marry after the woman was pregnant or had given birth, There is considerable pressure for couples that have a child to form a stable union. Many women reported that their mates displayed psychological couvade symptoms (Browner 1983) such as food cravings during their pregnancies and that this was the first sign that they were expecting. Some men also "took," or assumed, labor pains and their women were spared this discomfort. Women regarded these behaviors as signs that the men would be devoted and good fathers.

The importance of children to a couple was indicated by beliefs about sterilization. When the potential tie of a child was purposively *ʻoki* (cut) by sterilization, the tie between the couple was thought to be in jeopardy. Both men and women who had been sterilized were thought to be unfaithful to their spouses. Women were hesitant to be sterilized even when they wanted no more children, not fearing infidelity by their husbands but because they believed they themselves would become unfaithful.

While the primary responsibility for children and child care belongs to the biological parents, the larger *ʻohana* is extremely important. Children move freely among their relatives, having a meal wherever they happen to be when hungry and spending nights away from home when they or a relative wish.

The value of children also is expressed in their redistribution, Polynesia as a culture area has a high frequency of adoption (Carroll 1970; Silk 1980). Hawaiians believe that a "house without children is a house without life" (Young 1980:12). ***ānai,*** or informal adoption, literally means "to feed" and implies a high level of nurturance and love. Among Hawaiians informal adoption is common and Koʻu Hoaloha was not an exception. All households in the community had either received or given a ***hānai*** child, and many had done both.

The importance of children is underlined in their therapeutic value, A grandmother had been extremely depressed after the death of one of her daughters and the return of this daughter's child (who had been ***hānai*** to the grandmother) to the biological father. Another daughter

then gave her a newborn baby as a *hānai.* The explicit rationale was to make the grandmother feel better and the act was widely thought to have accomplished that end.

Child Maltreatment across Cultural Boundaries

Hawaiians have strongly held ideas about proper treatment of children and child maltreatment in other cultures, Their definitions were evident in their relations with and perceptions of *haoles. Haole* literally means "outsider" but is generally used to refer to whites.

A *haole* couple had "dropped out" of mainland society and set up housekeeping approximately a mile outside of the community. In keeping with their counterculture life-style and ideals, the couple decided not to send their children to school. They assumed that this would cause little notice among their outwardly easygoing Hawaiian neighbors. However, Ko'u Hoalohan adults were upset because they felt that the well-being of the children was being compromised. In keeping with the "Hawaiian way" of avoiding outward conflict (see, for example, Howard 1974), the neighbors privately complained to a trusted teacher and hoped that she would intervene without causing a disruption in their relations with the couple.

Ko'u Hoalohan women also believed that the *haoles* were maltreating their infant. Hawaiians believe that infants and small children are extremely susceptible to a condition termed *'ōpū huli,* a "turned stomach." This condition occurs if infants and young children are bounced or jiggled. The symptoms of *'ōpū huli* resemble colic and include fussiness, excessive crying, seeming intestinal discomfort, and gas. The condition is diagnosed by stretching out the child's legs. If one leg pulls up, the stomach *('ōpū)* is turned *(huli)* in that direction and must be massaged back into place by someone experienced in doing so. The *haole* parents repeatedly took their newborn riding in a truck over the bumpy road leading to the community. Not unexpectedly to the Hawaiian women, one night the child exhibited the symptoms of *'ōpū huli,* crying inconsolably and seeming to have an upset stomach. Again, in the "Hawaiian way," the women did not openly accuse the *haole* parents of causing this condition in their child. Instead, a few women took the child into "protective custody" with the pretense of diapering it. They then treated the *'ōpū huli* by massaging the child's stomach and torso until the baby seemed more comfortable and the legs were aligned properly. The women felt that the parents' behavior clearly violated standards of good child care, especially since they had repeatedly offered to care for the infant when the parents left the community.

Subjecting an infant or young child to the dangers and discomfort of *ʻōpū huli* is not taken lightly in Koʻu Hoaloha. Young sibling caretakers are sternly admonished and sometimes hit for bouncing small children because of the risk of an *ʻōpū huli.* White Americans from the U.S. mainland clearly do not share this concern and routinely bounce and jiggle infants and toddlers to evoke a smile or to quiet a fussy child. Indeed, because of this difference in child care patterns, if Koʻu Hoalohan women were in charge of child protective services, any parent with a colicky baby might be suspected of maltreatment.

Adoption is another domain in which Koʻu Hoalohans believed *haole* patterns detrimental to children. Informal Hawaiian adoption maintains close ties with the biological parents. A child who had been *hānai* was thought to have an advantage because he or she had two sets of parents who were concerned about and involved in insuring his or her welfare. Anonymous adoption, then, would constitute a significant deprivation for the child. In mainland U.S. wisdom and practice, a child is to have one, and only one, set of parents and legal adoption practices reflect this belief. Hawaiian adults, however, who value multiple parenting, regarded such a practice as unthinkable. Formal adoption, using the court process and involving a legal severing of ties between biological parents and children, was approached with hesitancy, was generally among close kin, and was justified on the basis of the child's accruing some economic advantage such as a land inheritance, insurance benefits, or a pension from the adoptive parents, who were often the child's grandparents, Even in cases of legal adoption, close contact was maintained with biological parents.

Sleeping patterns also are grounds for cultural conflict. Hawaiians considered placing small children in a separate bed, let alone a separate room, for the entire night to be bad for development and dangerous for the child. They firmly believed that social relations were enhanced by co-sleeping, during which time children developed close ties with parents, grandparents, or siblings as sleeping partners. Children freely moved between beds, and sometimes between houses, often several times a night. In addition to the interpersonal benefits of co-sleeping, parents believed that there were tangible dangers to infants or young children sleeping alone. If the child awoke in the night choking, not breathing, or with another problem, the parents feared that nobody would hear and come to the child's aid. The child might become very ill or die. Further, co-sleeping protected children from dangerous spirits that wander in the night. In contrast to Western beliefs about overlaying, when asked, Koʻu Hoalohan women considered it ludicrous that any sleeper could roll over and suffocate a child unintentionally.

Ko‘u Hoalohan women accepted behaviors such as putting children in separate rooms for the night, anonymous adoption, and bouncing infants and toddlers as the “*haole* way,” even though they did their best to instruct me otherwise for future child care responsibilities. They frequently complained about *haoles* who hitchhiked without protecting their babies from the hot sun. Worse, the *haole* parents were seen jiggling their babies on their hips as they waited for a ride. Hawaiian women shook their heads in disbelief and expressed pity for the babies who were being subjected to discomfort and illness due to poor parental care.

Maltreatment within Ko‘u Hoaloha

Ko‘u Hoalohans also had conceptions of child maltreatment within their own community. Such cases were responded to with gossip or with intervention that could take the form of verbal admonishments, threats of physical violence, or removal of the child.

Hana ‘ino means to mistreat or handle carelessly (Pukui and Elbert 1971) and can be applied to objects as well as individuals, including children. In Ko‘u Hoaloha, definitions of *hana ‘ino* do not include physical discipline of children to teach them right from wrong, which is considered an important parental responsibility. The term “licking” was used to refer to appropriate punishment of a child. “Dirty licking” referred to severe punishment, which might be justified or unjustified. Hitting a child too hard, even if the punishment is administered for the legitimate reason of bad behavior, is *hana ‘ino.* Certain parts of a child’s body are off-limits. Parents may hit their child on the *‘ōkole* (buttocks) or the back of the legs. However, kicking a child or hitting too hard on any part of the body is *hana ‘ino. Hana ‘ino* applies particularly to the head. While slapping on the face in response to sassing is acceptable, hitting on the head for any reason is *hana ‘ino* and a grave offense. *Hana ‘ino* can also refer to emotional maltreatment, such as favoring or “petting” one child and neglecting another.

A teenage girl was beaten by her stepfather when she stayed out all night with her boyfriend. The beating, which left bruises, was responded to sympathetically by adult women and other teenage girls, but the stepfather’s behavior was considered within acceptable bounds, Although there were bruises, the injuries were not severe or permanent and the girl was considered to have contributed to her own beating by flaunting her behavior.

One morning the community awoke to the sounds of an eight-year-

old boy yelling as he was chased down the path by his mother striking at him with her rubber sandal. Clearly, her behavior was aggressive. There was no harm to the boy, who, despite all the noise, was able to evade her blows. In informal gossip that day there was mild amusement. The mother's behavior had been public and thus open to comment and speculation, and the boy clearly was doing more yelling than the physical assault warranted.

These two examples were considered by the community at large to be within the bounds of acceptability. The children were considered old enough to know the boundaries of misbehavior. The teenage girl had been flagrant in defying her parents' instructions about coming home in the evening and the boy had been flagrant in his disobedience and open defiance of his mother.

While some physical punishment, even that resulting in bruises, was tolerated in response to child misbehavior, it was not tolerated when directed at small children or infants. Cases of physical assault against infants or small children were not frequent but had occurred. These cases resembled classic descriptions of the "battered child syndrome" (Kempe et al. 1962) in that a frustrated parent lashed out at a child for normal behavior, such as crying. It was well known in the community that one man hit his baby because it would not stop crying. His wife took the baby and left, returning only when he promised not to repeat this behavior. Another man was known for having the "bad habit" of hitting infants and small children. He was frequently admonished by his relatives. The father in another family beat all of his children severely, younger and older children alike. His father intervened in the beatings and threatened him with physical violence in retaliation. The mother in this family also beat the children, but not as severely as the father. Another man came home drunk and became angry with his wife when she could not quiet the baby's crying. As the crying continued through their yelling, the father hit the baby with a closed fist. Another female adult who was staying in the house ran to get the grandmother. The grandmother immediately went to the house and took the baby home with her, claiming that the parents had no right to have a child if they were not going to love it and care for it. The grandmother announced her intention to keep the child and raise it as a *hānai.* Her right to do so was supported by the community. The parents begged the grandmother to return the child, promising they would never hit the baby again. After several weeks the grandmother relented and returned the child. As far as anyone knew, the child was not struck again.

The amount of caretaking required of siblings is another example of

the recognition of the boundaries of appropriate child treatment. Sibling caretaking is highly valued among Hawaiians (see, for example, Gallimore, Boggs, and Jordan 1974; Korbin 1978). Nevertheless, some child caretakers were considered maltreated in the extent of their responsibilities. One seven-year-old girl had almost total responsibility for her two preschool-age cousins. She was rarely seen in the community without these two young girls. She was *hānai* by her grandparents and lived in the household with her grandparents, aunt and uncle, and. the younger cousins. The girl took the initiative of moving to another aunt's house, complaining that all she did was watch babies. The aunt and other adults in the community supported the girl's move and admonished the grandparents, saying that they did not deserve to have the child as *hānai* if all they wanted was to make her work. The girl stayed with the second aunt for some time and then moved back with her grandparents.

A ten-year-old girl, an only daughter, had near-constant responsibility for her five younger brothers. Her parents frequently went away from the community for the day, leaving her in charge. In informal gossip, community adults considered her maltreated for having excessive child care responsibilities and no time "for play," to be a child. While nobody intervened on her behalf, they predicted that she would not want children of her own because she would be worn out long before adulthood.

A case of neglect of a three-year-old boy underlined the problems of a child who did not have a network of concerned kin. He was a stepchild, was not well liked by his stepfather, and his mother's kin did not live in the community. Unrelated adults, following the Hawaiian tradition of *aloha* (hospitality, sharing, and joint caring) for children, were kind to the child, watched out for him, and fed him when he appeared in their yards. (In fact, he often had stomachaches from eating too much in too many households.) He often was found wandering about the community well after dark when the rest of the young children had been gathered up and taken home. This was considered dangerous because the community is located on the ocean and in years past an unsupervised child had drowned. Community adults considered the boy to be neglected. However, since most were unrelated to the parents, they did not feel that they could intervene beyond caring for the child when they came across him. His plight was viewed as unacceptable by community standards and the parents, particularly the mother, culpable.

In another case of perceived neglect, an infant was given as *hānai* to an aunt. This aunt frequented bars and did not care for the child, leav-

ing her unattended and dressed inappropriately for the weather. Another aunt and uncle intervened, claiming the child for their own as *hānai.*

Harm to children for which caretakers were held responsible was not limited to direct actions. Children could be harmed by bad feelings among their caregivers. One child had been *hānai* to her aunt since infancy. When the child was approximately four years old, the biological parents decided to move far away and to take the little girl with them, The aunt was brokenhearted but did not complain. She explained that if you *hukihuki* (pull back and forth) a child, the child will suffer by becoming ill or through a misfortune. Harm also could come to children as a result of previous parental breaches in interpersonal relationships. This is what Ito refers to as "retributive comeback" (1978, 1987). When one boy was seriously injured in an unusual accident, neighbors and kin were saddened but viewed the incident as an inevitable consequence of the parent's negative interactions with others in the past.

Physical Discipline and Maltreatment

Cultural sanctioning of physical discipline has been posited as a necessary condition for child abuse in the United States (for example, Gil 1970), and child abuse has been viewed as physical discipline out of control. The cross-cultural literature provides mixed evidence on the relation between cultural sanctioning of physical discipline and physical child abuse. Dubanoski and Snyder (1980), in examining child abuse reports in Hawai'i, found that cultural factors including attitudes towards physical punishment had a significant effect on the distribution of child abuse reports in the population. Samoans, who believed that children should be physically disciplined to ensure proper behavior, had higher rates of reported physical abuse than would be expected. Japanese parents, in contrast, who did not hold a similarly high regard for the value of physical discipline, were represented less than expected (Dubanoski and Snyder 1980).

On the other hand, the cross-cultural record indicates that in many societies physical discipline is swiftly and unselfconsciously administered, yet serious inflicted injuries are rare (Korbin 1981, 1987b). Physical discipline may be more dangerous for children when it is negatively sanctioned. If physical discipline is a measure of last resort--following negotiation, threats, and pleas--by the time it is actually administered parental anger and frustration may be more likely to exceed acceptable boundaries (Parke and Collmer 1975).

Cultural sanctioning of physical discipline, under the right circumstances, can undoubtedly spill over into idiosyncratic abuse. What requires further examination is whether the causal argument works in the other direction: that cultural beliefs in physical discipline set the stage and provide a necessary condition for child maltreatment. An important question that must be resolved, and to which the cross-cultural evidence can contribute, is whether child abuse is most appropriately seen as parental *discipline* out of control or as parental rage out of control.

Parents in Koʻu Hoaloha expressed a preference for physical discipline because it is swift and entails little emotional disruption in the parent-child bond, Excessive scolding and yelling at children was believed to cause bad feelings that would have a lasting impact on parent-child relations, Parental concern about excessive physical punishment focused on the potential emotional consequences rather than whether the child would be physically injured. They expressed concern that if hit too often or too hard a child will resent the parents. Gerber (1985) has noted that Samoans view physical punishment as indicative of parental love and interest in their child's well-being.

Complaints about children's misbehavior and threats of physical punishment were frequent in Koʻu Hoaloha. More often than not, threats sufficed and children either complied with caretaker demands or removed themselves from the caretaker's presence. As discussed below, the goal of such threats was most often to get the child to cease annoying behavior. And, if the child is out of sight, so is his or her behavior.

Although threats of and actual physical discipline were utilized and accepted in Koʻu Hoaloha, discipline of children was kept within bounds by relatives living in close proximity. A grandmother, grandfather, aunt, or uncle did not hesitate to yell from one house to the next that a spanking had gone on long enough or was too severe a response to the child's behavior. Children were quite open about screaming for help more quickly and loudly than a spanking warranted as an effective strategy for summoning help to disarm an angry parent. Parents also admitted that they sometimes got angry and spanked a child too severely. They knew, however, that the grandparents or aunt next door would intervene. Intervention could take the form of verbally chiding or reprimanding the parent, threatening physical retaliation against the parent, or temporarily removing the child.

Those parents who did not have kin living nearby to help with and intervene in their childrearing practices seemed to recognize the value of an extended kinship network. One mother was nostalgic for the days when her father-in-law was still alive because he prevented her hus-

band from hitting their children too hard. Another mother whose kin lived outside the community noted that she never spanked her children at the end of the day because she was just too tired: she knew that it could easily get out of hand, and that nobody would be available to set limits.

If kin and neighbors do not intervene, ancestral spirits will. One mother reported that she beat her ten-year-old daughter too often and too severely. After one particularly harsh beating that left bruises, the child became ill. The mother viewed the illness as a sign from the ancestral spirits. In addition to being contrite and ashamed that she hurt the child when the girl had done nothing terribly wrong, the mother was fearful that the ancestors for whom the girl was named would become angry at the child's mistreatment and take her away to be with them where she would be treated more kindly.

Dubanoski (1981) also noted Hawaiian preferences for physical discipline, and found Hawaiians to be overrepresented in the state's child abuse reports. However, Dubanoski also found that child-abusing families were low on *'ohana* (extended family) involvement. This leaves it open to further research whether it is the acceptance of physical punishment or the lack of kin or other supports to keep discipline within bounds that accounts for these statistics.

Community Parameters of Child Maltreatment

In most societies, identification of child maltreatment relies on a complex interaction of: (a) harm or potential harm to the child, (b) caretaker behaviors that produced or contributed to that harm, and (c) cultural designations of culpability or responsibility (Korbin 1987b). In Ko'u Hoaloha, there are not rigid rules for determining when an incident exceeds cultural standards of acceptability. Incidents are generally judged on their own merits and the history of interaction among the involved individuals. The severity of the punishment or the extent of the harm inflicted are not sufficient in themselves to define the interaction. In addition to caretaker acts and consequences to the child, the following components need to be considered in assessing individual cases:

l Child behavior. It is expected that parents will punish child misbehavior, To fail to do so is an indication of poor parenting. The seriousness and purposefulness of a child's misbehavior is weighed in community determinations of whether punishment exceeds cultural boundaries of acceptability. Openly defying, sassing, or annoying adults exacerbates determinations of seriousness.

Additionally, children are expected to develop an ability to avoid an

angry parent without incurring further wrath. Community adults said that children must learn to be "cautious." When they were children, they would run away if they saw their parent with a stick and not come back until the parent had calmed down. Parents rarely will chase a misbehaving child around the community to inflict punishment. The interaction then becomes public and the adult's behavior is usually regarded as grist for community stories and humor. The goal of punishment is generally to get the child to stop the annoying or difficult behavior, at least in the adult's presence.

• Child's age. Until after toddlerhood, when children can be more on their own, it does not appear that children are regarded as capable of purposively disobeying or behaving badly, and therefore are not legitimate recipients of punishment. Infants and small children, however, could be exasperating to their parents and caretakers. It was not untoward for a mother to hold up an irritable toddler and exclaim publicly, "Oh, I like shake you!" However, it would be considered inappropriate for her to carry out the action.

• "Ways." Ito has noted that an individual's "transgressions can be excused or tolerated by a consideration of an individual's idiosyncratic 'style' or 'ways' " (1987:45). Some individuals in Ko'u Hoaloha simply were regarded as more violent than others. This also was true for other characteristics, such as gregariousness, Most Ko'u Hoalohans refused to speculate on the reasons for these characteristrics, attributing them instead to a quality of the individual person that is beyond explanation but emanates from the view that "people have their ways." Victims sometimes are blamed for not avoiding an individual known to be violent. Children also have their "ways" and if they are known to be troublesome, their behavior may precipitate punishment more quickly than similar behavior from another child.

• Reason. Except for individuals who simply had a violent "way" about them, physical aggression was expected to be accounted for with a reason or explanation for the behavior, Individuals who aggressed against another, including a wife or child, with no stated or apparent reason were more likely to be regarded as behaving inappropriately.

Concluding Remarks

In Ko'u Hoaloha, discipline of children is viewed not only as a parental right but as a parental duty. A badly behaved child is regarded as a source of shame to parents and an indication that they have been too lax and not carried out their responsibilities. Once beyond toddlerhood,

children are expected to behave well, to do their chores, to be respectful to adults, and to avoid annoying adults or causing a public disturbance. Harsh punishment when children seriously misbehave, then, is not surprising to Koʻu Hoalohan children or adults. Parents frequently complained about their children being "bad" and threatened to "lick" them, More often than not, threats seemed to suffice and children either followed directions or removed themselves from the situation.

The potential for punishment to get out of hand and the value of having other adults around was recognized by both adults and children. Parents quite openly acknowledged that they relied on grandparents and kin to intervene in overly severe discipline. Children quite openly acknowledged that they used this to their advantage by screaming more quickly and loudly than a spanking deserved to bring help and disarm an angry parent. This is quite a different milieu from that of the mainland United States, where a high value on family privacy often allows maltreatment of children to occur unabated until the child suffers serious injury.

While physical punishment occurs, severe injury to children is rare in Koʻu Hoaloha. The high value placed on children and the involvement of the *ʻohana* may act as deterrents to child maltreatment. The cross-cultural record indicates that a high value on children promotes good standards of care for children in general even if such values do not necessarily prevent the maltreatment of some children who may be less valued than others (Korbin 1981, 1987a). Cross-culturally, social networks serve multiple protective functions. First, they provide assistance with child care tasks and responsibilities. Second, they provide options for the temporary or permanent redistribution of children. And third, networks afford the context for collective standards and therefore for the scrutiny and enforcement of standards of child care (Korbin 1981, 1987a). Embeddedness of childrearing in a larger social network acts against the social isolation that has been linked with child maltreatment in industrialized nations (Garbarino and Crouter 1978; Garbarino and Sherman 1980; Gelles 1973). Cross-culturally, mothers who are isolated in child care tasks with little or no relief are the most likely to be rejecting and harsh with their children (Minturn and Lambert 1964; Rohner 1975). This isolation is clearly not the case in Koʻu Hoaloha where there are multiple caretakers, where a kinship network may intervene in cases of overly severe punishment, and where kin are available for permanent or temporary redistribution of children. Kin obviously cannot prevent all instances of child maltreatment, but the availability of supportive kinship networks appears to be extremely helpful in lowering its preva-

lence. As noted above, Dubanoski found that Hawaiians reported for child abuse and neglect had low *'ohana* involvement (1981).

Ko'u Hoaloha, a Hawaiian-Polynesian-American community, provides interesting material for thought in the consideration of family violence. On the one hand, Ko'u Hoalohans fit the stereotypic picture of Hawaiian aloha: gentle, giving, and generous. On the other hand, violence occurs, including in the family. This seeming contradiction between the gentleness of individuals and their aggressiveness has been examined by Ito (1987), who notes that gentleness and violence do not necesarily contradict or preclude each other. Thus, Hawaiians can be extremely gentle and loving with their children and spouses and at the same time harshly punitive and aggressive. Harsh punishment of children and violence between spouses is undesirable for maintaining the harmony in interpersonal relations that is highly valued among Hawaiians (see, for example, Gallimore and Howard 1968; Howard 1974; Ito 1987). Nevertheless, these behaviors may be considered an unavoidable part of life.

NOTES

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1. Ko'u Hoaloha is a pseudonym meaning "my friends." Because of the diversity of circumstances of Hawaiian-Americans, unless otherwise stated, the material in this article refers only to this community and is presented in the ethnographic present.

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