DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL RELATIONS OF CONFLICT IN FIJI

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Past anthropological studies of Fiji have mentioned the use of violence as a means of punishment, violent domestic conflict, and the role of force in the preservation of social order. Regarding the punishment of children, Cyril Belshaw observes that "the adult attitude [towards children] is highly permissive, provided the child does not irritate adults beyond endurance, at which point he is likely to draw merciless punishment upon himself" (1964:12). Marshall Sahlins notes that "the responsibility and requisite authority for maintaining the good behavior" of members of a household rest with the household elder who "could freely deliver a sound thrashing to certain disobedient co-familiars" (1962: 117). With respect to marital relations and disputes, he states "most men maintain the prerogative of giving their wives a sound beratement or occasionally a good beating" (Sahlins 1962:116). Andrew Arno records the use of "planned physical violence" as a sanction against unacceptable behavior (1976:61). He describes a case wherein men ambushed and beat two young men who had repeatedly terrorized and outraged their village by raping women and beating other men. An incident of violent retaliation by women is recorded by Sahlins, during which the women of one extended family "together baited and attacked a girl from another house reputed to have been dallying with one of their menfolk" (1962: 117).

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Recent events in Fiji have demonstrated the current importance of physical force in the preservation of social order, the 1987 military coups being the best known of these. Another, lesser-known event was the implementation, also in 1987, of the Fijian Provincial Administration (see *Fiji Sun,* 26 Feb. 1987), a system that proposed that village elders be allowed to prescribe beatings to youths who break village laws, disrupt the peace, or disgrace their village in towns through drunkenness, fighting, or arrest (see Cole, Levine, and Matahau 1984).

From these incidents and events, it is apparent that violence is a political tool in Fijian society, a means of sanction and punishment and of asserting and preserving social order and control. Yet these observations disclose little about the "boundaries" (see Counts's conclusion to this volume) of violent conflict: its prevalence, the factors which prevent or precipitate it, and the legitimacy of its use by different members of society. Nor do they help to distinguish minor quarrels from what Max Gluckman has called "social relations of conflict" (1972:9), these being conflicts or tensions that derive from structural inconsistencies within a social system. In this article, I will examine conflict and the use of violence in Fijian society from the perspective of social relations, focusing upon disputes within the domestic group (see Arno 1979 for discussion of structural conflict and hierarchical relations in Fiji).

The use and legitimacy of violence to discipline children and junior members of a clan will be compared with the use of violence during marital disputes, contrasting attitudes toward and repercussions of each form of violence. Regarding marital conflict, it can be said that violence is used by men against women, not vice versa. To understand why this is so, I detail the way in which gender is conceptualized in Fiji; specifically, how gender constructs affect behavior, Incidents of violence are reviewed in order to reveal social relations of conflict--where conflict inherent in social relationships contributes toward tension within the domestic unit, tension that may escalate into violence between spouses.

Following Arno (1976, 1979), means of resolution are included in this discussion of marital conflict. Resolution of serious domestic disputes may involve members of both a husband's and wife's clans. By involving individuals outside the domestic unit, marital disputes affect interclan relations as well as interpersonal ones, and therefore may carry political consequences for group as well as social relations. Appreciation of the political repercussions of domestic violence may help to explain why, in a society where men have authority over women, the use of violence in the exercise of their authority is nonetheless problematic.

Social Organization

The interior district of Ba Province, Viti Levu, lies within the Western Dialect region of Fiji (see Biggs 1948 and Pawley and Sayaba 1971 for discussion of linguistic and cultural diversity in Fiji). Within this area are six villages, the largest of which is the site of the district chief's residence and the site of most of my research.[1] This village has a population of approximately six hundred members, who are divided into six clans belonging to two totemic groupings. Clan membership and land inheritance are reckoned patrilineally, but there are also very strong matrilateral ties and obligations.

Marriage is clan exogamous and residence is virilocal. A woman usually marries outside her village. Most marriages are by mutual consent, though some are still arranged, especially those of eldest children. A marriage consists of four separate rites, the completion of which may take more than two years, the final rite occurring after the birth of a child. This lengthy time serves as a testing period; a couple may separate if incompatible, a woman returning to her own family. In the case of an arranged marriage, if parents do not consent to its dissolution then a couple may tolerate their situation or a woman may leave and seek refuge with kin other than her parents. Upon separation, children generally reside with their mother when young but later move to their father's house, taking up membership and land rights with his clan.

A newlywed couple lives with the husband's parents for a number of years. With children, they will build a separate house, but the paternal grandparents' house remains a focal point for the domestic unit. This unit includes grandparents, parents, their sons and unmarried daughters, and their sons' wives and children. Work such as hunting, gardening, food collection and preparation, and house construction is often shared by a number of these members. Eventually, couples come to rely more on their maturing children for help with domestic tasks than on siblings or parents.

Principles of seniority by primogeniture and birth order are important means of ordering individuals within the domestic unit, and these units within clans. Seniority by generation and relative age serves to establish an age hierarchy that ranks both women and men. The principle of seniority that gives older siblings (real and classificatory) authority over junior ones within the domestic unit and clan applies to relationships within the village as well, giving elders authority over juniors. As with other hierarchical relations, however, privilege is paired with

obligation: in return for deference and respect, elders are expected to care for juniors and see to their welfare. Leadership roles are not solely determined by age hierarchy, however. Status is affected by skill, knowledge, and the strength of one's personality, as well as by seniority and ascription (see Nayacakalou 1975:34).

Men hold and control leadership positions and are said to be the owners *(na leya)* of the clans, villages, and districts.[2] A women's organization operates in each village independently from men, however. Through this organization, women vie for and perform leadership roles at the village level and plan and coordinate village women's activities.

Men exercise authority over women. Their authority derives from a number of sources. First, the fact that they are leaders at the societal level--the district, village, and clan heads are always male--justifies extension of "traditional authority" (Weber 1958:296) over family members. In addition, men have control over religious practices that center on the clans' men's houses *(na beto).* Finally, they are considered stronger than women, and strength is valued in Fijian society. These factors allow them to lead society and to be leaders within the clan and household.

Yet the authority of men over women contradicts the idealized relationship between husband and wife. An ideal marriage partner is one's cross-cousin *(vei kila* or *tavale)*--the real or classificatory child of one's mother's brother *(koko)* or one's father's sister *(nei)* or by extension anyone of his or her clan, This relationship has been described as one that is "not bound by patrilineally defined rank; [cross-cousins] interact freely, and assist each other in everyday affairs" (Koch et al. 1977:278). They are considered "approximately status equals" (Arno 1979:7). A joking relationship typically exists between these individuals and the respect and formality normally exhibited between adults is absent. Interaction is relaxed, and cross-cousins may tease or play practical jokes on one another. Opposite-sex cross-cousins, who potentially are marriage partners, may display overtly lewd joking behavior. Sahlins observes that "close friendships arise among cross-cousins of the same sex-classificatory cross-cousins especially may become confidants" (1962:170).

As an ideal, the equality of cross-cousins, and therefore potentially of spouses, is in opposition to the hierarchical principle that men have authority over women. The significance of this contradiction will be discussed later in relation to conflict within the family and the resolution of marital disputes.

Between men and women, gender distinctions are perceived to be marked and the division of labor is well defined. Men are said to be

qwaqwa, which translates as "hard, strong, tough, and resistant." Women are perceived to be *malumaluma,* "soft, weak, gentle, and easygoing" (though I stress that this is the Fijians' self-perception). Men own and are the controllers of the land, clans, and villages in which they reside throughout their lives; women are pliant, moving between these in the course of theirs. Men are considered rigid and akin to structure, whereas women are malleable and akin to fluidity.

Men's and women's characters are said to be illustrated by their bodies: for men, in the intractableness of their spirit, the strength of their shoulders that are used to bear heavy loads, the power of their arms when throwing a pig-hunting spear or directing a fishing lance, and in their ability to withstand the inebriating effects of kava without having to tuba (run away). Women's bodies are perceived to be weak and soft. Their weakness is illustrated by their need for and use of baskets to carry loads on their backs. They do not spear fish, they collect them. They gather up prawns with their hands, and grope and feel for eels under rocks in the water. Their bodies are passive and accommodating, "like sleeping mats," mats which in themselves provide metaphors for womanhood, Women's bodies are receptive; their thick abdomens expand to accommodate life. The soft heavy breasts of old women provide amply for a sleeping child's head.

Maleness is epitomized by the right hand driving a spear, a penis penetrating, a taro shaft being planted in the earth. Femininity is epitomized by a woman's body opening and complying: when pregnant *(bukete),* their bodies are rounded like the raised mounds of garden plots *(na buke),* receiving and nurturing life, This gender dichotomization is believed to arise even before birth. It is said a midwife can determine the sex of a child by its position in a woman's womb. If lying on its mother's left side, it will be a girl; on the right side, a boy. A boy in the womb will be delivered quickly, "speeding out like a thrown spear, racing out to get on with the task of spearing fish." A long, drawn-out labor will see the birth of a girl: a reticent or reserved spirit.

Because of their perceived character, men are assigned tasks considered to be more physically taxing than those of women. These tasks include the clearing and burning of land, digging, and the preparation of soil for planting. Pig hunting is the sole purview of men, as are the spearing of fish and eel. Men are responsible for the construction and upkeep of houses and ceremonial buildings. In addition, they are assigned the protection and guardianship of land, a task that requires both ritual and military competence. A century ago, this responsibility would have required military duty during periods of intergroup war-

fare. Currently, it involves the performance of rituals that ensure the fertility of land, the administration of clan and village affairs, and functions involving diplomacy between different districts. The administration of village and district is the task that now consumes much of the time and energy of older men.

Women are responsible for most child care, firewood and water collection, food preparation, clothes washing, and house maintenance. Food production duties include fishing and digging for eels, planting, weeding and harvesting of crops, and collection of wild foods and fruit. Women are solely responsible for the manufacture of traditional items such as pottery, barkcloth, and housemats, and currently of clothing and linen. Household goods and furnishings, those "things within the house," are considered the property of women. Older women are responsible for the organization of women's activities at the clan and village level. They coordinate the production and distribution of women's wealth--mats, cloth, and household goods--for ceremonial exchanges and ensure that food preparation tasks are delegated and performed properly at feasts. Currently, they direct and oversee the operations of the village women's cooperative store.

In addition to the different responsibilities of women and men, the physical spaces utilized by them are almost wholly distinct. Men spend their free time socializing, sleeping, or drinking kava in men's ceremonial buildings, whereas women socialize and drink kava in their houses, or frequently in their kitchens--a place definitely considered to be women's space.

While gender distinctions and division of labor are certainly marked, it should be noted that there are qualities that are expected of persons regardless of their sex. Ideally, an adult will be "mature" *(va yalo matua):* willing to accept responsibility, respectful, even tempered, and capable of exercising restraint when dealing with others. Behavior that does not conform to this ideal, such as laziness or excessive kava drinking or display of emotions (particularly anger), is frowned upon whether exhibited by men or by women.

As we have seen, gender differentiation and division of labor is considerable, extending from what Durkheim calls "sexual services" to include "social functions" as well (1984:18-20). Organization of this society is more complex than simply sexual division of labor, however. Certain specialized tasks are performed by only a few skilled individuals within a village or district. These include, for women, midwife, healer and masseuse, and weaver; and fur men, carver, ceremonial orator, healer, and skilled craftsman. In addition, different clans of this district

have primary responsibility for certain roles, including warrior, leader, and orator.

This Fijian society is complex, therefore, being comprised not merely of same-type, independent units but of diverse, exogamous clans that are interdependent for marriage and the exchange of services.

Violence and Domestic Conflict

Within this village, family life and indeed village life are generally harmonious, and were so throughout most of my stay. When a dispute did arise, however, it could seldom be kept private. Walls are thin and the sound of an argument brings work and conversation to a standstill. People may gather to listen or watch from a distance. Anything that occurs inside a house may be observed by children peeking in doors or through cracks in the walls, to be related to others nearby. People argue loudly. Reasons for a dispute are made clear to anyone within hearing range.

Violence in the Disciplining of Children and Junior Clan Members

Threatened or actual physical reprimands of children are near-daily occurrences and are regarded with much less interest than marital disputes, Children are threatened from an early age with "the beating stick" *(na kwita).* Physical punishment is rarely meted out to children under three years of age, however. Mothers threaten infants to keep them away from the fire or from wandering out of sight. By age three or four, if a threat does not suffice a mother will bend over and go through the motions of scanning the ground for a small stick, a gesture that will cause a child to hasten out of her way. But if the child does not escape, she or he may be subject to a swat or two on the fleshy part of the back of the shin, a swat that would certainly smart and cause a child to cry but not inflict injury. This form of punishment continues to age five and is most often awarded to children who do not heed warnings to stay out of trouble, sit still, or be quiet.

By ages five to seven, parents' expectations of their children increase considerably. They are expected to perform simple domestic chores, such as collecting firewood or water, In addition, they are considered old enough to have some control over their bodies and behavior, to exercise restraint within the house, to keep their voices low, and to behave properly during meals. Punishment of children of this age is not severe but does inflict pain as children wince, holler, and cry to get away. A thrashing on the back of the legs is not regarded as abusive if a child has

been negligent and if he or she is considered old enough to carry some responsibility.

In addition to these reasons for punishment, a boy may be beaten for "behaving like a girl," that is, he may have been playing with girls or shown greater interest in their activities than in those of boys. Physical punishment is intended to discourage such behavior, to "strengthen" a boy, and prevent his becoming a *rai lewa,* literally, "man who appears or acts like a woman."

Most often, I observed young girls being punished by their mothers. In part, this is because their chores are performed nearer the house than are those of boys, and they are supervised more closely. Boys would be punished more often for misbehavior or neglect of chores if they were around to be admonished.

The harshest punishment of a child recorded was meted out to a nine-year-old girl by her mother. This girl had repeatedly neglected her chores, taunted her mother when reprimanded, disobeyed her when sent to a children's church service, and had lied about her inattendance. This series of events raised the wrath of her mother, who hit the girl several times with a stick and then sent her off to a nearby village to live with her *nei* for two weeks, until the mother's anger had abated. People living near this family felt that the child deserved some sort of punishment and did not criticize the woman for disciplining her daughter. However, it was felt that both the punishment and this woman's display of anger were excessive. After the incident, neighbors began to pay more attention to this family and to gossip about them. Women told her mother- and sister-in-law that they felt the woman was lazy and expected her young daughter to perform chores she should have done herself. In this case, where physical punishment was considered harsh given the age of the child, its use was deemed illegitimate. While villagers did not interfere at the time of this incident, their gossip was intended to prevent its reoccurrence.

By adolescence, a child performs a number of household chores routinely. Parents have only to threaten older children for them to respond quickly. At this age, fathers begin to play a greater role in the disciplining of their children. The oldest boy whom I witnessed being physically reprimanded by his father was about fourteen. He had neglected to help his father with gardening chores after school. His father yelled at, chased, and whacked the boy several times on the shoulders and back with a stick as punishment.

Young unmarried women continue to be threatened and physically punished by their parents, usually for failure to perform designated

chores or for disobedience. Under certain circumstances, it is acceptable for brothers to physically discipline sisters. Two cases illustrate these circumstances. In the first, a married woman who admitted to having an affair while her husband was absent from the village was beaten as punishment by her brother. A second case of punishment of a sister by her brother involved a young couple who resided in the wife's village. This couple argued frequently, until finally the husband decided to separate from his wife and return to his own village. The couple then fought over custody of their one-year-old daughter. The woman did not want to care for the girl, but the father did not want to bring her back with him either. After a heated argument, the wife left their house and went to her parents' nearby home. This woman was considered by other villagers, men and women alike, to be foolish, argumentative, and unreasonable because she wanted her husband to care for their daughter. This was considered irresponsible, even unconscionable, and led to further arguments with her own family. During one of these, her older brother threatened her, chased her outside and around the house, and hit her on the shoulder with a stick. Following this dispute, the woman returned to live with her husband and within the following month moved with him and their daughter to the husband's village.

In both of these cases, consensus held that the brother was justified in punishing his sister, for she had behaved in a manner that disgraced the family. I did not hear of any case of an adult sister physically punishing her brother.

Informants told me that older boys are not beaten: "Parents do not beat youths because they are too big; they will beat you back!" Despite this assertion, physical punishment of youths in their late teens and twenties *is* practiced. I recorded several instances when young unmarried men were reprimanded by their clan elders, both verbally and physically. On one occasion a youth was verbally reprimanded by his clan's headman when he complained of work he was required to do with fellow clansmen. A second instance saw a youth criticized publicly and at length by a clan elder for improper dress at a ceremony at which he was helping to mix kava. On a third occasion a clan headman punched a youth after the youth pushed and tried to start a fight with another young man, one of his clansmen, after a drinking bout. The elder's reprimand broke up this fight immediately, and the youths retreated quickly.

In addition to clan elders' maintaining control over younger clansmen, village elders reserve the right to prescribe beatings to youths who disrupt their village. I did not see or hear of this being acted upon.

However, I did witness a youth, party to vandalism of a local primary school, make a solemn apology to elders at the weekly village meeting. The principle whereby seniors can physically discipline juniors extends to the chief of the district as well, who, in a classificatory sense, is referred to as the most senior father *(momo levu).* I was told that he could punish anyone within the district but did not hear of his ever having done so.

Violent Disputes among Others

Violent disputes are not unheard of between young people of the same sex. I recorded one case where two young women fought physically over a young man. Youths (usually of different villages) occasionally engage in fistfights, especially when they are drunk, after a long kava- or beer-drinking session (consumption of alcohol is prohibited in this village and fights due to drunkenness are therefore infrequent). Occasionally, violence erupts during arguments between older men. These incidents are infrequent and are not met with approval for, as noted above, failure to exhibit restraint and respect when dealing with others is seriously frowned upon. In addition and more importantly, people who fight may well fear reprimands from the spirits of their ancestors, who will cause them to become ill and possibly die (see Spencer 1941). This fear serves as a strong deterrent against such behavior,

Abusive and Aberrant Violence

One instance of what was considered child abuse within a family was recorded in this village. A woman injured one of her children (an infant) with a burning ember, purportedly with intent. This was described as a horrible and senseless act for it inflicted pain and injury on an innocent child. The child required medical attention at the district nursing station as a result, The nurse then intervened in the affairs of the family and stayed in their house for a week, caring for the child and watching over the mother.

A second incident involving aberrant behavior for which outside interference was considered justified occurred in a nearby village. A middle-aged man, who was treated as an outcast in his village, went on a violent rampage. He poured kerosene in his brother's house and set it afire, destroying it and terrifying the family and villagers. This man was not restrained, but his brother moved to an adjacent village and

stayed there for six months. Shortly after his brother's return, the man set fire to the men's ceremonial building. On this occasion village men tried to physically restrain him. During the struggle that ensued the man was beaten, had his jaw broken, and almost had his arm severed by a man wielding a cane knife. Once overpowered, he was tied up and brought to the nursing station for treatment. The police were then called and he was arrested. The explanation given for his actions was that he was possessed and therefore could not control his behavior. The use of what villagers considered excessive violence in the control of his behavior was considered legitimate in this case.

This discussion of the conditions under which violence is deemed legitimate in the punishment of children and young adults and of those incidents when violence was considered abusive or aberrant helps to clarify the parameters for the legitimate use of force in this society. The use of physical violence by family, clan, or village elders is acceptable when a child has been disrespectful or negligent of his or her responsibilities if the violence is not excessive--that is, does not cause bodily harm--and if the violence is part of a reprimand rather than simply a show of uncontrolled anger. Use of violence in these circumstances is condoned and incurs no serious breach or "moral crisis" (Gluckman 1972) among family members. In contrast, it is clear that violence that is abusive and aberrant--without cause or need and beyond restraint--is not considered legitimate. This type of violence is condemned and justifies intervention by outsiders (including ancestors) to limit and prevent its occurrence. It may justifiably be physically controlled by whatever means necessary to protect other members of society.

The use of violence in punishing an offender has been referred to as an application of a penal form of law. This form of law "acts through fear of punishment" and penalties applied are repressive, harming the perpetrator himself or herself of the crime (Durkheim 1984:22). Usually, applications of such penalties are not contested and are not open to interpretation, I would argue that in this area of Fiji the disciplining of children, juniors, and in extreme cases deviant members of society constitutes the application of this form of penal law code. No negotiation is involved and physical restraint or punishment is considered legitimate, This differs from what Durkheim describes as a civil code of law (1984: 68), which is restitutory and requires expiation and possibly intervention / mediation to restore a normal state between parties. As I will now explain, I believe that this form of law is applied in cases of physical violence between spouses.

Violent Marital Disputes

Conflict between spouses, particularly if it involves violence, will be recounted and discussed for days, even weeks or months if it is serious. News of a dispute travels quickly between clans and villages. The tone of voice of both men and women in these discussions registers disapproval, and in the case of women, sometimes horror. Violence between spouses is a serious matter that may result in a breach within a family, divorce, serious injury of a woman or even her death, and strained if not hostile relations between affinally linked clans.

When disputes were discussed among Fijians, I heard criticism of both men's and women's conduct. Men were criticized for being argumentative, impatient, wrathful, unreasonably demanding, and ill-humored, especially when suffering from a hangover because of excessive kava drinking. Men were also described as lazy for not doing their share of garden work, particularly if their wives' work was limited by very young infants. Some men were considered lazy drunks, men who spend all their time drinking kava and socializing with other men. A man could be blamed--by both men and women--for his wife's unhappiness, especially if he was described as jealous, in which case he may have attempted to restrict her to work in and around the house, discouraging her from attending clan or village women's meetings, from socializing with women in the evenings, or from participating in ceremonies, especially out-of-village ones. Men may express disapproval of and scorn for these types of men, describing them as *rivariva* (foolish, mad, ridiculous). But they generally do not interfere with other families' quarrels. A woman, too, may be criticized or blamed for an argument by both men and women. They criticize her for neglecting her responsibilities to her family, for laziness, or for being argumentative. Among themselves, women criticize a woman for being heedless--for giving her husband cause to complain given the repercussions she may potentially face. A woman who commits adultery is most seriously condemned.

When asked whether men were able to or allowed to hit their wives, I was told by both men and women that yes, they were able. Yet violent conflict is considered unnecessary and is not socially acceptable behavior. Women abhor its occurrence and cry at hearing of it. They feel that they should be able to argue with their spouses without fearing violence but know that arguing back in itself may sufficiently anger a man to the point of violence. Men feel that violent conflict should not happen, that men who use violence are unreasonable for wishing to control their

wives' every action. Such control, one man explained, is unnecessary: men own the land and clans, but women should be free within the household, free to own goods within the house and to socialize with other women once they have attended to their responsibilities at home. Despite this statement, informants could identify few households in which serious disputes never occurred.

I asked women if they ever beat their husbands or hit back during a fight. They responded with mixed confusion and disbelief. To hit an angry man during an argument would be to further enrage him, an incautious and unheard-of act.

While women say that they do not fight back physically against their husbands, they do yell at them, scream, and cry out, One argument saw a young woman yell at her husband, weep, and storm off in a rage into their kitchen. This woman had pleaded with her husband to go to their gardens to collect food. He had been helping a clansman with the building of a house for more than a week and as a result had neglected his own household. This not only caused hardship for the family but also found his wife having to borrow repeatedly from her affines, something she did not want to have to continue, After their argument, this man gave in and went to work in their gardens.

Acts of violence by men against their wives include face slapping, hitting, punching, and the use of a stick to beat--an act to which the term *kwita* refers. In one fatal incident recounted to me, a man used a cane knife to kill his wife and then himself.

In the event of a serious argument, a woman may leave her home and seek refuge with one of her natal kin, usually her parents, brother, or *nei.* These are relations from whom a woman can expect care, protection, and accommodation. She may go alone or take her young children. Leaving home in such circumstances is called tuba (running away), a phrase that, if applied to a man, denotes ridicule of the actions of a weak or defenseless individual. A woman may return after a few days or a week if she feels her own anger and that of her husband have subsided. However, the use of violence by a man is treated more seriously, particularly if it has involved hitting, punching, or the use of a stick to beat. In such cases a woman may stay away for months, assuming that she returns at all, which in some cases she does not. Once with her own family, the anger of her kin will prevent a husband from bothering her further. Brothers threaten to beat a man who has hit their sister.

Children are exposed to marital disputes when young, and girls are taught that escape is their expected and acceptable defense. They are

also taught to expect formal measures of reconciliation before returning to an estranged spouse. Children are aware that some women do not return to their husbands, and in rare cases, that they are killed by these men.

Means of Reconciliation

A husband who wishes reconciliation with his wife must approach her and her kin and request that she return home. If their anger persists, he will be told to leave and may even be threatened. A man may return again later. If the anger of his wife and affines has subsided, they may agree to reconciliate.

Reconciliation requires that a husband perform an act of atonement, a ritual called *i soro.* During this ritual a husband, usually speaking through an intermediary, surrenders and apologizes to his wife and her kin. Through his intermediary, he will then present to her kin goods such as kava and whales' teeth *(tabua),* which are considered traditional forms of men's wealth. In addition, he presents wealth to his wife, usually kerosene or cloth, which is considered a form of women's wealth. These presentations signify his humility and sincerity.

This apology and presentation of wealth abases a man in relation to his affines and makes reparation for his violence and for the breach it has caused. Acceptance of these gifts indicates the reestablishment of mutual respect and goodwill between husband and wife and the resumption of relations between a man and his in-laws and, by extension, between their clans as well. These parties communicate the dissolution of ill will and resumption of good relations by mixing and drinking kava together.

The response of a woman and her kin to a husband's attempt at reconciliation depends to some extent upon the circumstances of the dispute and the prior marital relationship. On one occasion, a woman left her house after an argument with her husband during which he slapped her face. She went to stay with her father's sister. When her husband came to reconciliate after four days, she refused to speak with him. Her kin sent him away, telling him that their anger had not yet abated. At the end of the week he returned, bringing a whale's tooth, kava, and three drums of kerosene for his wife and for her *nei.* These gifts were accepted, kava was mixed and drank, and the woman returned to her home. While this dispute did not in itself appear a serious one, this man had in fact seriously beaten his wife some time ago. Recalling this incident, the woman left her home and stayed away until he demonstrated

goodwill. The presentation of gifts reassured the woman and her kin that there would be no further escalation of this dispute.

During a second incident, a woman quarreled with her husband's sister, an unmarried and pregnant young woman who was staying with the couple at the time. The wife and sister fought when the pregnant woman refused to reveal who the father was, even though her sister-in-law tried to convince her that he should be made to take responsibility for the child. The pregnant woman's brother interceded on his sister's behalf (the strength of the brother-sister relationship is considerable in Fiji), telling his wife to be quiet for it was not her business to interfere. This couple's argument then became heated, the result being that the husband hit his wife with a stick. She left their house and went to stay with her kin in a different village, leaving her three children in the care of her husband and his family. She returned two months later without a formal apology from her husband, but only after his sister had gone to live with a relative in a different village.

Discussion

Arno's discussions of the use of *i soro* rituals of reconciliation to end disputes between men in Fiji are relevant to this study of marital conflict. He posits that rituals of reconciliation in Fiji are used in situations where tension arises as a result of structural contradictions within a social system (Arno 1976, 1979). Structural conflict or social relations of conflict have been defined by Gluckman as "deep seated conflict of social rules or principles of organization" (1972:18). Arno expands on this definition, stating that deep conflict is caused by "inconsistencies or flaws in the social organization of a group, incompatibility of basic tenets of a system, or the lack of fit between ideological principles and reality" and that this situation "creates the possibility of a dispute without resolution" (1979: 14). When disputes arise as a result of structural contradictions, people may resort to ritual means of reconciliation to obviate conflict. These rituals assuage tension without actually challenging or eliminating its sociological source.

Arno suggests that such deep conflict is incurred in Fiji within hierarchical kin relations, especially in relations between father and son. The superior position and authority prescribed for a father in relation to his son are in opposition to the ever-rising position and authority of a maturing, ambitious man. Conflict between these individuals is inherent in this relationship, Arno states (1979:6). It is inevitable, yet it is also irresolvable: an aging father may be jealous of a son's prowess,

while a son may aspire to his father's place of authority. When a dispute arises in Fiji between individuals who are in such a "social relationship of conflict" (Gluckman 1972:18), the person of junior status will invariably perform the *i soro* ritual, thereby submitting "to the senior regardless of the facts of the case" (Arno 1979:7).

I suggest that such a relationship of conflict also exists between spouses. A husband and wife are at once "married cross-cousins" and as such are equals who are involved in a relationship requiring cooperation, selflessness, and intimacy. As marriage is clan exogamous, spouses are necessarily members of different clans. Interclan relations are neither static nor hierarchically defined, as are intraclan relations. Where hierarchy is absent, relationships must be negotiated and continually reconfirmed through the exchange of gifts and services. Clans cooperate with each other during ceremonies, for example, when one clan may volunteer to cook for another's feast in exchange for its services at a later date. During exchanges clans attempt to give as much as they receive, thereby maintaining relations of equality rather than indebtedness. Conversely, clans may compete with one another, as they do in the raising of funds for village, school, or church projects. Where relationships are negotiable--as in relations between clans and their members--there exists the potential for both cooperation and conflict.

Yet spouses are also a man and a woman, a relationship with a hierarchical dimension, A situation exists wherein the cultural principles defining the nature of spousal, affinal, and clan relations and that of gender relations are in opposition.

Were a man able to inflict physical violence as punishment on a woman without alienating her and causing a serious breach with his affinal kin, I would concede that women/wives are truly subordinate to men/husbands in this Fijian society. In such a case, I would also argue that the use of violence by men/husbands enables them to perpetuate a marriage and social system characterized by "forced division of labour" (Durkheim 1984) according to sex.

However, the use of violence by men against their wives is not condoned in Fijian society. Marital disputes arise in which both women--who are well aware of the potential consequences of assertive behavior --and men engage in heated debate. Yet when violence against a woman occurs, a man must make reparation, formally apologize to his wife, submit to his affines, and, I would argue, compensate his wife for the injury perpetrated against her. This is required in order to maintain the ideal of equality between spouses, spouses who ideally are cross-cousins and necessarily are representatives of different clans. By up-

holding the ideal of equality between spouses, this gesture also maintains relations of equanimity between clans (possibly serving to prevent further outbreaks of conflict between them). The performance of rituals of reconciliation by a husband indicates that in cases of marital conflict the principle of gender hierarchy is subordinated in order to maintain that of equality between clans and their members.

In addition to revealing conflict embodied within the spousal relationship, the cases recounted identify situations where the responsibility felt toward a sibling or member of one's own clan is opposed to that felt toward one's spouse. In one case, a husband was torn between obligations he felt toward a clansman who required labor for a large work project and toward his wife and the provision of food for the conjugal unit. In the second case, a man chose to side with his sister, to whom he has distinct obligations and who is also a member of his own clan, at the expense of his relationship with his wife, someone to whom he is not consanguineally related. These two cases illustrate the degree of conflict that can arise from the opposing demands of consanguineal versus affinal relationships.

Ritual reconciliation does not, of course, deny the existence of social conflict and violence in relations between men and women. Nor does it resolve, eliminate, or prevent it. It does, however, give women an avenue of escape when conflict occurs, It creates expectations regarding restitution and establishes the precedent that men will atone for the breach that they have caused through their resort to violence. It evades rather than resolves the issue of contradictions in the status of women as wives (subordinate) and as cross-cousins (equals), while repairing the breach between spouses and affines and restoring amicable relations between clans.

In extreme cases of marital violence, the graveness of this breach is made very clear. In one incident, a husband complained that his wife was lazy and unwilling to work. She argued that she was weak, ill, and unable to work. During their fight, this man punched and broke his wife's jaw, sending her to the hospital for three weeks. The incident was reported to the police, who intervened and threatened this man with arrest should he do such a thing again. Although he was not arrested, this man's status was lowered considerably in his village; he was afterwards referred to as a "rascal" (a derogatory term implying troublesome person or troublemaker) and considered to be a fool.

A second incident, in which a woman died as a result of a beating from her husband, indicates the seriousness with which such incidents are regarded and handled. This husband told his wife that he wished to

leave her for another woman, whereupon she became angry and an argument ensued. The husband struck her on the head, a blow that knocked her unconscious and led to her death. He was jailed as her murderer, and furthermore, his clan then had to compensate the woman's family for her death. Like for like compensation was made: one of the man's sisters was required to marry into the dead woman's clan. In addition, the couple's only child was taken by her maternal grandparents and became a member of her deceased mother's clan.

Conclusion

In this article, I have reviewed incidents of conflict to ascertain the character and boundaries of violence in Fijian society. Violent punishment and reprimand of children and junior members of society is allowed, but its use is limited and must be justified by that person's negligence or disobedience. Physical violence among members of this society occurs but is contained by individuals' fear of punishment by their ancestors. Willful injury of children and uncontrolled violence are intolerable acts that do not go unchecked. In extreme cases, strong measures are taken to limit and prevent their occurrence.

The use of violence in marital disputes by a husband against a wife is a contemptible act, one that causes a serious breach between individuals and the clans of which they are a part. The repercussions of such violence touch on more than a single conjugal unit. They may disrupt relations and cause hostility between clans, villages, and possibly districts. Such disruptions interfere with the interaction, cooperation, and exchange of services that occur at different social levels, bringing about enmity that, in precontact times, may have resulted in violent clashes between groups. These disruptions have serious repercussions both for members of these social groups and for society as a whole.

In Fiji, rituals of reconciliation exist that allow for the obviation of conflict between husband and wife (as well as between most individuals, as Arno has pointed out). These rituals institute principles of restitutory civil law, thereby enabling the repair of a relationship, the restoration of normal relations between individuals, and the reinstatement of a person in his or her domain (Durkheim 1984:68).

Acts of violence against women reveal their vulnerability in this society. Perceived as weak and socialized *to be* weak, women are potential victims of the strength and power of men. Yet the exercise of power over women contradicts and undermines the ideal exchange and cooperative relations that should exist between spouses, relations that establish a

basis for intimacy within the family and for long-term relations between the clans of which they are a part. While rituals of reconciliation certainly do not deny the conflict that can exist between men and women, they nonetheless uphold this ideal of cooperation between spouses. In this respect, I would agree with Leach when he states: "the individuals who make up a society must from time to time be reminded, at least in symbol, of the underlying order that is supposed to guide their social activities. Ritual performances have this function for the participating group as a whole; they momentarily make explicit what is otherwise a fiction" (1981:16).

NOTES

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1. Fieldwork was conducted for twelve months between January 1987 and January 1988 in the interior district of Ba Province, Viti Levu. I gratefully acknowledge financial assistance from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and the Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto.

2. Western Fijian terms used in this article employ Fijian orthography.

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