

◆ 5  
Maintaining Social Tranquility:  
Internal and External  
Loci of Aggression Control

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What accounts for peaceful societies? In Chapter 2, Bruce Knauft accounted for peaceful behavior in terms of the adaptive advantages conferred by sociability and cooperation; in Chapter 3, Robert Dentan examined the historical experiences of enclaved societies and refugee bands. Here, Douglas Fry takes another perspective. In *Maintaining Social Tranquility* he argues that early experiences may create barriers to the expression of aggression in later life. The focus of Fry's work is a comparison between two Zapotec communities in Oaxaca, Mexico. One is markedly more violent than the other. The difference is explained by different socialization processes. In the nonviolent community, parents model peaceful behaviors and warn their children about the consequences of physical aggression. In the more violent community, parents teach their children to anticipate the use of force, and model it for them in the use of corporal punishment. Substantial cross-cultural data support the importance Fry gives to socialization. Later in this volume, Jean Briggs also makes the point (in an unexpected way) in her analysis of the Inuit treatment of children (Chapter 6). Peace begins in the nursery.

—THE EDITORS

◆ In this chapter, I consider conflict prevention and conflict management in two Zapotec communities that exhibit different levels of physical aggression. One community is quite peaceful; the other is markedly more aggressive. A comparison of conflict-control mechanisms in the two locations—both in Oaxaca, Mexico—can help highlight some of the ways in which tranquility is maintained in the more peaceful community.

Table 5.1 frames the discussion of conflict prevention and control mechanisms. Although the distinctions presented in the table between *internal*, *external-informal*, and *external-formal* are of heuristic value, of course, in reality these are not absolute, mutually exclusive categories. The Zapotec employ a variety of formal (cf. Nader 1969) and informal (cf. O'Neil 1981, 1986) means to prevent and resolve conflicts (also cf. Black

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1984: 26; Draper 1978: 31). The two communities are basically similar regarding the operation of formal control mechanisms, and also regarding some informal controls, but differ in interesting ways when it comes to *internal*, individual mechanisms of control. In other words, the people of these communities *internalize* different attitudes and world views regarding the expression of aggression and the resolution of conflict.

Table 5.1 Continuum of Internal-to-External Conflict-Management Processes

Level 1 Internal (individual) Locus	Level 2 External-informal Locus	Level 3 External-formal Locus
Denial of anger Denial that a conflict exists Avoidance of conflict situations and/or disputants Internalization of values incompatible with the expression of violence (e.g., respect, equality) Positive image of others in the community Fear of witchcraft Beliefs that anger, hostility, and/or aggression are associated with illness Fear of gossip and so on	Gossip Witchcraft Intervention by nonauthor- itarian other(s) Ostracism and so on	Local authority structure (community police and judicial authorities); hearings, fines, jail District and State authorities; hearings, legal fees, fines, prison sentences

*Note:* Level 1 is largely self-imposed, although culturally constructed. Levels 2 and 3 are both largely imposed by others.

The internalization of different views, attitudes, and values in turn contributes to marked behavioral differences between the two communities. Specifically, the data presented in this chapter suggest that different internalized cultural patterns contribute to the variation between these two communities in amounts and types of aggression; that is, members of the more violent community share a cultural schema that at times includes physical aggression, while members of the tranquil community possess an internalized cultural schema that more directly discourages aggressive behavior. I argue that nonviolence is optimally maintained in the more peaceful community through internal and external controls operating in unison, mutually reinforcing each other, in contrast to what occurs in the more violent community, where internal controls against the expression of aggression are much less developed. After presenting some background information on the two communities, I will examine these propositions in the light of several different data sets.

### ◆ The Communities

La Paz and San Andrés<sup>1</sup> have been in existence since at least the 1500s and have similar recent histories. They are Zapotec-speaking communities that lie six to seven kilometers apart in the Valley of Oaxaca. While Zapotec is spoken on a daily basis, most men and some women also speak Spanish. Over the last several decades, the populations of both communities have been increasing. La Paz has a population approaching two thousand people, while San Andrés has a population of almost three thousand. The overwhelming majority of marriages in both locations continues to be endogamous.

Private landholdings are used for subsistence farming of maize, beans, and squash, and for growing the cash crop, *maguety*. About three-quarters of the farmers in each location plant *maguety*. San Andrés informants report that, typically, a person from their community owns between one and three hectares; informants from La Paz report that in their community the average holding is between three and five hectares. These informant estimates are substantiated by data obtained on economic questionnaires, wherein a sample of La Paz households was found to own more land (almost four hectares per family) than a San Andrés sample (just over two hectares per family). Furthermore, a substantial number of citizens in San Andrés (37 percent) own virtually no land (one hectare or less), while this is much less often the case in La Paz (16 percent). These differences in land ownership result largely because, although both communities have roughly the same amount of farmable land, San Andrés has a larger population than La Paz. Also, variation in the amount of land owned is slightly larger within La Paz than within San Andrés.

Unlike the rural Mexican communities studied by Friedrich (1972), Greenberg (1981, 1989), and Nash (1967), San Andrés and La Paz lack rival political factions and political bosses (*caciques*) (cf. O'Neill 1969: 32). There are no *mestizo* subgroups in either location, and stratified class structures are lacking. La Paz has no *barrio* divisions. The larger San Andrés is divided into two *barrios* of approximately equal size, although there are no marked social or economic differences between them. The two neighborhoods are linked by a cross-cutting network of kinship ties (cf. Kearney 1972: 23). People pass regularly from one *barrio* to the other to run errands, go to the fields, and pay visits. Further ethnographic descriptions of one or both of these communities can be found in Fry (1986, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1992), K. Fry (1989), and O'Neill (1972, 1975, 1979, 1981).

### ◆ Differences Regarding Nonviolence

Multiple lines of behavioral data indicate that striking differences exist regarding the expression of aggression in these two communities. O'Neill

(1979: 302) explains that while animosities and quarrels arise in La Paz, "relatively few of these problems have led to physical violence." During celebrations or parties, where many people are inebriated, fighting often breaks out in San Andrés; but in La Paz during similar occasions of heavy drinking, fighting is much less common (Fry 1986: 333-346). Fistfights among drunks in San Andrés regularly result in bruises, scrapes, and cuts before the combatants are separated by other people. In La Paz, however, fights occur less frequently and tend to end with one participant leaving the altercation of his own accord. Besides the lower frequency of fighting in La Paz, this difference in the termination of fistfights also reflects the reluctance of people from La Paz to participate in physical violence. Even while sober, San Andrés citizens engage in physical aggression; but in La Paz such occurrences were never observed. Judicial records in the district archives show a much higher assault rate for San Andrés than for La Paz (Paddock 1982, pers. com. 1986).

Additionally, several wife-beatings were witnessed in San Andrés, but none were seen in La Paz (Fry 1986). In San Andrés, patterns of jealousy have become institutionalized in various ways. San Andrés men attempt to control their wives and assure fidelity through fear, containment, and sometimes force. In La Paz, however, women are much closer to being equals with men—perhaps due in some part to women's long-standing economic contribution to the family through pottery-making—and mutual respect is a valued quality in husband-wife relationships (cf. K. Fry 1989). In La Paz, even in cases of infidelity, a circumstance where wife-beating might be socially condoned, husbands do not necessarily beat their wives. An informant told me of one case of adultery that resulted in the birth of a child while the husband was away from town working. When the husband returned to La Paz, rather than becoming violent, he wept and ordered his wife to give the infant up for adoption in a neighboring town (cf. Fry 1986: 314-327).

The district archives show San Andrés to have had a higher homicide rate than La Paz for the 41 years for which records were available between 1920 and 1968: 18.1 homicides per 100,000 persons per year in San Andrés compared with 3.4 homicides per 100,000 persons per year in La Paz (Paddock 1982, pers. com. 1986).

Information regarding the occurrence of homicides gathered from informants in the communities during 1981-1983 corresponds with the district archive data. La Paz informants reported no murders within memory, while O'Neill (1969) describes a murder that occurred in 1935 in La Paz (cf. Fry 1986). On the other hand, details of homicides in San Andrés suggest that murders occur every three to five years (cf. Fry 1986: 346-354). In 1986, a reliable La Paz informant noted that there still had not been a murder in La Paz for a very long time. In San Andrés, meantime, a man had been ambushed and killed just a couple days before our return visit; and

another recent death, which one account held to have been an accident, was said in a different version to have been a homicide.

Most of the recent murders in San Andrés resulted from disputes over women. Fighting among men at parties in San Andrés frequently has its roots in jealousy, which can be sparked, for example, if a man repeatedly dances with another man's wife. Generally, San Andrés men take care not to arouse jealousy in their peers, and wives are careful to avoid arousing jealousy in their husbands.

In La Paz, jealousy is considered an emotion of youth that is not appropriate in grown men (Fry 1986: 320-321, 1988). In contrast to San Andrés, for example, unrelated men and women talk casually with each other. The husband who does express jealousy becomes the subject of disapproving gossip. This difference between the two communities is reflected by the fact that citizens of La Paz regularly discuss the "ridiculous" manner in which San Andrés men are prone to jealousy.

San Andrés is religiously homogeneous. On the other hand, the most serious source of conflict and hostility within La Paz appears to be religious in nature. A conflict between the Catholic majority and a small group of Evangelists has been smoldering with periodic eruptions for the last couple of decades. But these tensions over religion in La Paz have not resulted in loss of life (cf. O'Neill 1979: 302).

Thus overall, while San Andrés is not the most violent community in the vicinity, it has a substantially higher level of violence than La Paz. A comparative analysis of the two communities, therefore, can highlight certain mechanisms that, while they maintain peace in La Paz, are weaker or absent in San Andrés.

#### ◆ Formal Controls

O'Neill (1981: 356) defines formal control mechanisms as those that are explicitly codified, institutionalized, and involve penal sanctions. In San Andrés and La Paz, a formal legal system exists, similar in many respects to the local judicial systems described by Nader (1969) and Parnell (1978, 1988) for the Sierra Juarez region of Oaxaca. Since most interpersonal disputes in San Andrés and La Paz do not progress to the state or national legal systems, the community judicial system is the most important level of formal social control for the citizens of these communities under most circumstances (cf. O'Neill 1981: 356-358).

As is typical in Mesoamerican peasant communities, citizens of San Andrés and La Paz are elected to fill positions (*cargos*) in civil/religious hierarchies. The term *cargo* means burden and in both communities serving a position is considered a sacrifice that one makes for the good of the community. San Andrés is a municipality (*municipio*) in and of itself, while La

Paz is a subunit of a municipality (an *agencia*). However, La Paz functions very much as if it were a *municipio*, as O'Neill (1972: 295) also observes.

The highest-ranking local official in San Andrés is the mayor (*presidente*). The mayor in La Paz is referred to as the *agente* (although sometimes *presidente*). One role of a mayor is to listen to grievances and disputes within the community. In both communities, a judge (*sindico*) assists the mayor in hearing legal cases. Disputes involve a variety of matters: animals destroying crops, a teenage boy with amorous intentions detaining a teenage girl in the street, a claim that a neighbor has moved a property-marker in a field, and so on.

Nader (1969) points out that the goal of Sierra Zapotec law is to restore personal relations to equilibrium. Correspondingly, Morrissy (1978) reports that the local authorities in a Valley Zapotec community close to San Andrés and La Paz dispense justice in such a way as to restore the balance between disputants.<sup>2</sup> The authorities in both San Andrés and La Paz operate toward similar ends (cf. Fry 1986; O'Neill 1981). The local authorities levy fines and imprison wrongdoers in the local jail (usually for only a day or two), but often they simply listen sympathetically to what a complaining citizen has to say. When the authorities see one party as clearly being in the wrong, they are likely to lecture the wrongdoer, impose a fine, and/or require a payment of restitution. The authorities take into account the attitude of a citizen appearing before them. A respectful, humble, apologetic defendant is likely to get off much easier than an argumentative, self-righteous one. In a San Andrés case where a young, drunk husband hit his wife hard enough to leave a large lump on her head, the husband was respectful and conciliatory, and the authorities required him to pay to the municipality an amount equal to several days' wages; that is, a moderate fine. In summary, the formal authority structures and concepts of justice are very similar in the two locations, and therefore differences in levels of aggression cannot be traced to markedly different *formal* social control mechanisms in the two communities.

#### ◆ Exploration of Internal and External Loci of Control

A main difference between the two communities is that the people of La Paz internalize values and attitudes that consistently run counter to the expression of aggression and the prolonging of conflict, while by contrast, the citizens of San Andrés internalize other attitudes and values. The internalization of particular values and attitudes in La Paz provides an internal, or individual, locus of conflict-prevention that does not exist to the same degree in San Andrés.

Below, I explore four topics that illustrate how different loci of control predominate in these communities. The first topic involves divergent com-

munity images and worldviews. The second topic considers differential use of some internally oriented conflict-management tactics. For both topics, information was gathered through behavior observations and informal interviews with a variety of informants.<sup>3</sup> The third topic involves different patterns of child discipline, and stems from structured questionnaire interviews with forty-nine respondents as well as general behavior observations. The fourth topic considers differences in children's aggression, and is based on ethological behavior observations of forty-eight children between the ages of three and eight.

### *Community Images and Worldviews*

A number of researchers writing about societies with low levels of aggression have discussed the role of internalized values and/or worldviews that favor nonviolence (cf. Hollan 1988:52). For example, the Semai "have an image of themselves, developed during enculturation as nurturant, dependent, affiliative, and nonaggressive. . . . Such an image largely precludes aggression as a behavioral alternative" (Robarchek 1980: 113). Robarchek (1979: 111) also writes that "conflict runs counter to fundamental Semai values and calls into question both the cultural ideal and the carefully nurtured image of one's fellows as friendly, helpful, cooperative and generous." Draper (1978: 33) suggests that among the !Kung, social norms are strongly internalized and that these people "devalue aggression; they have explicit values against assaulting, losing control, and seeking to intimidate another person by sheer force of personality."

In both San Andrés and La Paz, the social ethics of respect (*respeto*), equality (*somas iguales*), and cooperation (*cooperación*) are especially valued (cf. O'Neill 1979, 1981, 1986; Selby 1974). The people believe that they should treat their fellow townspersons respectfully (cf. Nader 1969), fulfill their social obligations, and serve their community when asked to do so. Certain behaviors are incongruous with the maintenance of respect: stealing, destroying another's property, committing adultery, and physically attacking others are disrespectful acts to be avoided. Although the citizens of both communities regularly espouse the virtues of respectful conduct, Fry (1986: e.g., 298-361) provides various examples of how people from San Andrés are generally more likely to argue, insult, lie, cheat, come to blows, and damage another's property than are the people of La Paz. This is not to say that all people from San Andrés lack respect; but overall the community patterns are noticeably different. The people of La Paz manage to live in closer correspondence with the ideals of respect and equality than do the citizens of San Andrés.

Fried (1953: 286) notes that "there are, besides the ideal norms mentioned by informants, usually alternative patterns or acceptable substitutes, although these may not be so clearly formulated by them as the ideal

norms." This seems to be the case in San Andrés. The citizens of San Andrés hold a community image of themselves as basically good, but, unlike the Zapotec of La Paz, many citizens also lament that some individuals lack proper respect and may act violently. One informant on different occasions said: "There are one, or two, or maybe three really bad people in town," "Men are really jealous here," "Most people are good, but not all." Another informant complained that people in San Andrés fight, are not religious, commit adultery, and lack respect: "In the old days they had more respect, but not now. Especially when they are drunk, men lack respect. Sometimes feuds or disputes develop between men, and one person may kill the other" (Fry 1986: 3-4). Such statements reflect a typical ambivalence among the people of San Andrés. It seems that many citizens would like to view their community in a more positive light, yet when faced with recurring evidence to the contrary concede that some people are disrespectful bastards (*cabrones*) who may act violently.

I recorded the opinions of six persons from San Andrés on the nature of the people of La Paz. They agreed that La Paz is a good and friendly place, and some stated that La Paz is just like San Andrés. On the other hand, not a single person from La Paz said that their San Andrés neighbors were just like themselves. To the contrary, they employed the adjectives quarrelsome, dangerous, jealous, unfriendly, and disrespectful when describing the people of San Andrés. One fifty-year-old man from La Paz referred to the people of San Andrés as "unfriendly, egotistical barbarians, who are always swearing." Another man voiced concern that, by living in San Andrés, I was placing myself in peril-that they might kill me. He told me that in San Andrés "they kill people and then leave the bodies in the street!"

A La Paz informant referred to his own townspeople as peaceful or pacifists (*pacíficos*). Generally, the people of La Paz express a consensus that their community is a friendly, peaceful place. Several men emphasized that in La Paz they do not fight, and one man expressed the sentiment that all of La Paz is like one family. Overall, the citizens of La Paz maintain a self-image of themselves as respectful, peaceful, nonjealous, and cooperative.

In San Andrés, however, there appears to be a countervailing set of attitudes, to the effect that sometimes aggression is justified, as voiced in sentiments that avenging a close relative's death may be honorable; that killing a sexual rival is certainly understandable; that fighting, especially when drunk, is to be expected with regularity. Thus, the people of San Andrés internalize ambivalent belief and value systems regarding aggression and do not hold a consistently nonviolent image of their community.

Why is La Paz a peaceful place? One factor is that the people of La Paz more consistently internalize attitudes and images of themselves that countermand the expression of aggression. Unlike the people of San Andrés, the

citizens of La Paz do not talk of the presence of disrespectful bastards or violent persons in their community; and unlike San Andrés, La Paz lacks a widely held countervailing belief or value system that condones violence. The La Paz Zapotec have ideals, values, and beliefs that run more consistently counter to the expression of aggression than do the people of San Andrés.

*Conflict-Management Strategies:  
Denial, Avoidance, and Escalation Prevention*

O'Neil (1981, 1986) describes a variety of social-control mechanisms operating in La Paz, some of which are externally oriented (e.g., gossip), and others more internally focused (e.g., denial of anger, denial that a problem exists, and avoidance of another person). Some mechanisms have both external and internal dimensions. For example, the belief in La Paz that hostility, anger, and violence may be caused by certain illnesses may operate as an internal check on conflict. Externally, such beliefs also may reduce conflict in La Paz, because a person suffering from an illness has a socially acceptable excuse for aggression and can be forgiven by others.<sup>4</sup>

A variety of mechanisms help preserve the peace in both La Paz and San Andrés. However, the internalized patterns of conflict avoidance, denial, and escalation prevention are more consistent in La Paz. The following event illustrates all three mechanisms: One night, when an angry, inebriated La Paz man came looking for a householder, the man simply avoided the problem by pretending not to be at home. He let his unmarried sister deal with the intoxicated visitor while he remained locked inside his house. The next day, the drunk denied to family members that he had had any angry feelings toward this neighbor the night before. Both parties simply let the matter drop.

One La Paz man explained to me that it is usually better to abandon a complaint against another person if the problem is not resolved in a timely manner (Fry 1986: 307). He said he had not pursued a grievance against a fellow community member because "it was not good to prolong a dispute and make someone angry at you for a long time."

While one informant from San Andrés expressed a similar attitude, many disputes and feuds are nonetheless prolonged by the citizens of San Andrés. For example, one man confided that he was waiting until a new set of local authorities took office in order to press a claim to a plot of land. And San Andrés men sometimes harbored grudges for years. For instance, according to the people of San Andrés, along with disputes over women, motives for murder include ongoing interpersonal feuds and avenging previous killings.

In San Andrés, it is typical for brawlers to fight until other persons break up the fight, demonstrating a reliance on informal external control.

By contrast, when individuals from La Paz exchange blows, chances are that one disputant will flee the area of his own accord, thus illustrating internal control and the principle of avoidance. Overall, individuals from La Paz take greater measures to prevent and avoid conflicts, and to deny that they exist; individuals from San Andrés are more willing to harbor grudges, become involved in personal feuds, and escalate existing disputes.

#### *Patterns of Parental Child Discipline*

Steinmetz (1977), in a study in the United States, found that intergenerational patterns of conflict resolution occur within families. She reported that if parents use *discussion* to resolve conflicts between themselves and with their children, then their children also tend to adopt this approach. She also found that *verbal aggression* and *physical aggression* were adopted by children if these conflict-resolution styles were used by their parents.

Psychologists have suggested that when a parent or other adult employs physical punishment on a child, the child may use the adult as a behavioral model (cf. Bandura 1973; Huesmann 1988). Additionally, several anthropologists have noted that physical punishment of children is sometimes absent or very rare in cultures with low levels of aggression (e.g., Briggs 1978: 60, for two Canadian Inuit groups; Dentan 1968: 59, 1978: 132, and Robarchek 1980: 113-114, for the Semai; Draper 1978: 37, for the !Kung San; Levy 1978: 228-229, for the Tahitians; Sorenson 1978: 24, for the Fore). On the basis of such findings, I predicted that parents in La Paz would employ less physical punishment than parents from the more aggressive San Andrés, and that parents from La Paz would use verbal means of disciplining their children more often than San Andrés parents.

I present attitudinal and observational data regarding child discipline not only to examine these predictions, but also because the child-discipline findings provide another example of the greater manifestation of internal control in La Paz in comparison with a more external focus in San Andrés.

The assessment of attitudes toward the use of physical punishment was approached from several angles during structured interviews with samples of fathers from both communities (Fry 1993).<sup>5</sup> For instance, respondents were asked how they would respond if two of their own children were fighting. For the San Andrés sample, the majority of the respondents (71 percent) included punishment in their answer, while less than half of the respondents from La Paz (40 percent) included punishment in their response (difference-of-proportions test:  $z = 1.99$ ;  $p = .023$ , 1-tailed).

In both communities, boys are frequently assigned the chore of taking the bulls, goats, and sheep to graze or drink. Respondents were asked what a father should do if his son, by not caring properly for the bulls, let them eat another farmer's alfalfa. In San Andrés, the majority of the fathers (65 percent) included punishment in their answers to this question, while less

than one-quarter of the sample from La Paz (20 percent) suggested punishment—a very significant difference (difference-of-proportions test:  $Z = 2.71$ ;  $p = .003$ , 1-tailed).

A set of seven child-discipline questions were asked regarding sons and then the same questions were repeated pertaining to daughters. All questions began: "What should a father or mother do if their son/daughter . . ." and then the questions were completed by one of the following: (1) "tells a lie?" (2) "does not do his/her work?" (3) "fights with others?" (4) "hits his/her father or his/her mother?" (5) "takes things belonging to the neighbors?" (6) "does not obey his/her parents?" and (7) "does not respect his/her parents?"

Fathers from San Andrés favored the use of physical punishment significantly more often than did the La Paz fathers (Mann-Whitney  $U$  test:  $z = 3.73$ ;  $P = .0001$ , 1-tailed; see Table 5.2). Regarding negative nonphysical responses (e.g., scolding), no significant difference was found to exist between the samples (Mann-Whitney  $U$  test:  $Z = .28$ ;  $P = .39$ , 1-tailed). Finally, a highly significant difference between the two samples was found regarding positive nonphysical responses (Mann-Whitney  $U$  test:  $z = 3.68$ ;  $p = < .0001$ , 1-tailed). That is, fathers from La Paz favored the use of positive verbal responses significantly more often than did their counterparts from San Andrés (Table 5.2). Thus the primary disciplinary method suggested by the San Andrés fathers was to administer physical punishment to their children, reflecting an external locus of control. One San Andrés man advocated: "The idea that we have here. . . is to hit him, give him a blow in order that he then obeys."

By sharp contrast, the preferred disciplinary method for La Paz fathers was to respond positively and nonphysically. La Paz respondents advocated talking to their children in order to correct misbehavior, and they emphasized the importance of teaching and showing children the correct patterns of behavior that were expected of them. This La Paz pattern is congruent with the suggestion that values and attitudes favoring nonviolence are internalized in La Paz. This approach emphasizes prevention of child misconduct by teaching children appropriate behavior. While physical punishments were sometimes advocated in La Paz, this means of correction generally played a subordinate role to alternative approaches. Thus, most La Paz fathers agreed with the verbal explanations such as, "Listen son, if you do not obey. . . I am not able to assist you. . . . You, as my son, ought to [have] respect. . . . I am your father. . . . You ought to respect my words, because you know that your father and your mother are the ones that raise you."

Furthermore, ethnographic observations correspond with these questionnaire findings and indicate that substantial differences exist in how children are actually disciplined in San Andrés and La Paz. Beatings and other types of severe punishment were witnessed in San Andrés. In

Table 5.2 Preferred Disciplinary Styles in San Andrés and La Paz for Fourteen Types of Child Misconduct

	San Andrés	La Paz
Physical Punishment Responses <sup>a</sup>		
Mean:	62.6	23.0
Standard Deviation:	34.1	20.9
Range:	(0-100)	(0-64)
Negative Nonphysical Responses <sup>b</sup>		
Mean:	17.9	19.9
Standard Deviation:	21.1	27.9
Range:	(0-79)	(0-83)
Positive Nonphysical Responses <sup>c</sup>		
Mean:	30.7	70.9
Standard Deviation:	30.7	30.7
Range:	(0-100)	(8-100)

Notes: a. Common physical punishment verbs included hit, punish, punish with a stick, and pull ears.

b. Common negative nonphysical verbs included scold, lecture/advise, obligate/compel, and threaten.

c. Common positive nonphysical verbs included tell/say, correct with words, educate, talk to, teach/show, and explain.

contrast, comparably severe punishments were *never* observed in La Paz. The proposition that La Paz children seldom actually are beaten gains additional credence from O'Neill's (1969:263) independent observation that in La Paz, "the physical disciplining of a child might be undertaken with a *vara* (cane), reported to be so by fathers *but never observed*" [emphasis added].

In La Paz, on two occasions, mothers were seen threatening their children with sticks, but in neither of these cases did the parents actually hit the children. By contrast, in San Andrés I observed at least eleven separate child beatings with sticks, ropes, or belts. In one case, a child began screaming and came running around the corner of the house, pursued by an adult male: "He had a belt and swung it striking her on the backs of her legs. She screamed, still running. A woman with a baby in her arms. . . [attempted] to stop the man from chasing the girl, but he raised his arm with the belt as if to hit her and the baby, and she stepped aside" (Fry 1986: 288). Apart from these beatings, on at least five occasions, San Andrés children were seen running from adults with sticks. This tally of San Andrés beatings does not include the regularly occurring beatings that older children administered to their younger siblings or other forms of physical punishment seen in San Andrés (but not in La Paz), such as when parents threw rocks at their children, kicked them, or struck them very forcefully by hand.

The pattern of child discipline in La Paz may help children develop their own internal controls against acting aggressively. Parents explain the consequences of misdeeds to children and convey in words and actions ideals such as respect, cooperation, humility, and nonviolence. One father said, "If my boy sees that I also do not have respect for other persons, well . . . he thus acquires the same sentiment. But if I have respect for others, well he imitates me. It is done like this. Above all, the father must make himself an example, by showing how to respect." On the other hand, the heavy reliance on physical punishment in San Andrés may not be nearly as conducive to the internalization of self-restraints against aggression. Not only do San Andrés socializing agents model physical aggression during punishment episodes, but social ideals that run counter to violence may simply not be conveyed from parent to child under such circumstances.

### *Patterns of Children's Aggression*

Various researchers have differentiated play aggression from serious aggression among children (Aldis 1975; Blurton Jones 1972; Fry 1987; Smith and Lewis 1985). Parents in both communities report that serious fighting among children is bad and should not be encouraged. In La Paz, play aggression appears to be more closely linked to real aggression and is also discouraged to some degree. On several other occasions, I heard La Paz parents telling children to cease playfighting. O'Neill (1969: 251) notes that out of twenty-one La Paz fathers questioned, only four said that they approved of play aggression, and the majority disapproved of both play fighting and real fighting. Once a La Paz woman noticed that I was observing several boys playwrestling, and she came over to me to explain that the boys were *only* playing. In La Paz, both types of behavior are seen as being within the realm of parental influence and control. When asked how he would respond if his children were fighting, a La Paz man answered, "Advise them. Tell them not to do it, that it is bad for brothers and sisters to fight. This is not good."

Parents in San Andrés however, while also saying that they disapprove of children's aggression, nonetheless affirm the view that a certain amount of fighting and playfighting is part of the nature of children. Paralleling the ambivalent community image that people from San Andrés regularly express, we also see an ambivalence regarding what constitutes acceptable children's behavior in San Andrés. Observations show that citizens from San Andrés do not necessarily break up or discourage fights among children when they see them. San Andrés parents hold an attitude that little or nothing can be done about such behavior in children—illustrated by a mother's idle remark as her sons threw rocks at each other, "The boys are always fighting."

I employed ethological behavior observation techniques to record the

agonistic interactions of samples of twenty-four children from each community.<sup>6</sup> The mean age of the children in San Andrés was 5.5 years ( $SD = 1.7$ ) and in La Paz 5.6 years ( $SD = 1.7$ ), which is not a significant difference by a Mann-Whitney  $U$  test ( $z = .15$ ;  $p = .88$ , 2-tailed).

As reported in Fry (1988, 1992), the rate of play aggression was significantly higher in San Andrés than in La Paz by a binomial test ( $z = 7.20$ ;  $p < .00005$ , 1-tailed). The sample from San Andrés averaged 6.9 episodes of play-aggression per hour, while the rate for the La Paz sample was 3.7 episodes per hour. Likewise, the rate of serious aggression was significantly higher in San Andrés than in La Paz ( $z = 2.81$ ;  $P = .0025$ , 1-tailed). Aggression occurred at an average rate of .78 episodes per hour among the San Andrés youngsters and .39 episodes per hour among the La Paz children.

Thus systematic behavior observations indicate that even by the age range of three to eight years, children in La Paz show greater restraint against fighting and playfighting than do San Andrés children. As described, adults from La Paz only rarely fight, and should they become involved in a physical confrontation are likely to separate of their own accord. This pattern of restraint and avoidance is mirrored by La Paz children. I suggest that these differences in children's behavior once again reflect the internalization of different beliefs and values regarding the expression of aggression in these two communities. The Zapotec children of San Andrés and La Paz imitate the behaviors of their elders, especially their parents. They increasingly engage in behavioral patterns that are accepted, expected, and/or rewarded by other community members. Through socialization, La Paz children of this age range already begin to develop internal controls against physical agonism, both of the play and serious varieties. The fact that adults are busy and cannot constantly attend to what children are doing suggests that the La Paz children engage in less agonism, not simply because La Paz adults externally monitor their activities, but because they are internalizing the self-restraints against physical aggression that typify their community.

\*            \*            \*

In summary, during socialization, the people of La Paz internalize certain attitudes, beliefs, self-images, and community-images that act as a first level of aggression control, contributing to the overall peacefulness in the community. Restraint against acting aggressively comes from within. Citizens of La Paz may deny their feelings of anger, avoid conflict situations, reassure themselves that all the people in their community are good and peaceful persons, reaffirm the ethic of respect, and, when disputes do arise, people from La Paz—again at an internal level of control—tend to employ restraint to prevent the spread, escalation, or lengthy duration of the conflict.

Compared with La Paz, San Andrés has a less developed *internal* locus of aggression control. Citizens of San Andrés internalize a different set of beliefs, values, attitudes, self-images, and community-images that allow *for* the overt expression of aggressive behavior; that is, people from San Andrés have a series of beliefs and attitudes that contradict the ideals of respect, cooperation, and nonviolence. Thus, most citizens from San Andrés lack the *strong* internal restraint against expressing violence and escalating or prolonging conflicts that people from La Paz generally exhibit. The prevention and control of conflict in San Andrés is relatively more dependent on external mechanisms of control, both formal and informal, that La Paz also possesses as "backup" mechanisms *for* occasions when internal control mechanisms do not work. Thus, one reason La Paz is less violent than San Andrés is because La Paz has an additional line of defense against the overt expression of aggression, namely, internal control mechanisms, which prevent and/or reduce the severity of conflicts. This interpretation is substantiated by the data presented on (1) community images and world views; (2) patterns of conflict avoidance, denial, and restraint; (3) disciplinary beliefs and practices; and (4) patterns of child agonism.

The focus in this chapter on conflict-control mechanisms does not imply that other factors are unimportant to the etiology of nonviolence or aggression. To the contrary, I am in agreement with Huesmann's (1988) multidimensional approach to the study of aggression and with Dentan's (1978: 133-134) perspective that nonviolence can be attributed to various conditions—enculturation, economics, ecology, history, and social structure—existing or operating in combination (cf. Fry 1986, 1988, 1992).

Besides the internalization of different beliefs, attitudes, and conflict-management strategies, what other factors contribute to differences in peacefulness between San Andrés and La Paz? Certain community comparisons are summarized in Table 5.3. To begin with, many common explanations *for* conflict in rural Mexico can be ruled out. Explanations based on political factions (cf. Friedrich 1972), disputes between *barrios* (cf. Greenberg 1981, 1989), rivalries between healers (cf. Nash 1967), *machismo* (cf. Romanucci-Ross 1973), inequities in wealth (cf. Greenberg 1981; Nash 1967), social stratification, and interethnic tensions (cf. Planet 1977) would seem to contribute little or nothing to *our* understanding of why La Paz is more peaceful than San Andrés, because both communities lack political factions, political bosses, rivalries among healers, multiple ethnic groups, *machismo*, and marked social stratification or substantial inequities.

La Paz has only one *barrio*; San Andrés has two. However, San Andrés is not split along *barrio* lines: the relations among people from the different *barrios* are not different from the interpersonal relations within *barrios*. And land is distributed *more* or less evenly between the *barrios*. San Andrés informants consistently reflect the belief that everybody is about equal regarding landholdings: "We all have the same amount of land,

Table 5.3 Comparisons Between San Andrés and La Paz

San Andrés	La Paz
Zapotec-speaking	Zapotec-speaking
Population: 3,000±	Population: 2,000±
Endogamous	Endogamous
Subsistence crops & <i>maguay</i>	Subsistence crops & <i>maguay</i>
Average holdings: 2± hectares	Average holdings: 4± hectares
37% own less than 1 hectare	16% own less than 1 hectare
No <i>caciques</i> or political factions	No <i>caciques</i> or political factions
Two <i>barrios</i> , no <i>mestizos</i>	One <i>barrio</i> , no <i>mestizos</i>
Largely autonomous local govt.	Largely autonomous local govt.
Uniformly Catholic	Majority Catholic, some Evangelist
Tortilla-making for resale (recent)	Pottery-making tradition (female)
Women lack respect, freedom	Greater respect, freedom for women
Prevalent jealousy	Jealousy rare
Periodic wife-beatings	Wife-beatings rare
Fistfights regular	Fistfights uncommon
Horseplay common	Horseplay exceedingly rare
Swearing common	Swearing rare
Ambivalent community image	Nonviolent community image
18.1/100,000 homicide rate	3.4/100,000 homicide rate
Children disobedient	Children obedient
Children more aggressive	Children less aggressive
Physical punishment	Positive verbal discipline

almost nothing." Interestingly, as mentioned earlier, La Paz actually has a wider range of size of landholdings than San Andrés. Thus the variation is greater in La Paz, and patterns of equity in land distribution do not explain differences in peacefulness. Furthermore, neither community is facing a situation wherein some individuals have differential access to resources as occurred in the communities studied by Greenberg (1981, 1989) and Nash (1967).

While various factors can be eliminated as probable contributors to the differential peacefulness between these two communities, access to land and jealousy merit further consideration. Earlier in the chapter I noted that the citizens of La Paz have more land on the average than do the people of San Andrés: about one-third of San Andrés families own one hectare or less, in contrast with La Paz, where about only one-sixth of the families own one hectare of land or less. Consequently, more pervasive shortages of land in San Andrés over the last several generations may have contributed to—and may continue to contribute to—greater tensions and competition than in La Paz. Such tensions sometimes shatter the peace. However, I should reiterate that when disputes over land do occur in San Andrés, they are between individuals, not larger community factions, which contrasts with the situations described by Friedrich (1972) and Greenberg (1981, 1989). Furthermore, while indicating that occasionally land disputes are

motives for homicide in San Andrés, an informant discounted the idea that killing is generally viewed as a viable strategy for attaining land: "One man kills another over the land and then he has to flee or is put in jail. Both feuding men are gone, but the land remains!"

Sex-role socialization patterns also appear to contribute to different levels of community tranquility. Specifically, jealousy regularly contributes to violence in San Andrés in a way that rarely occurs in La Paz. In San Andrés, most of the recent murders involved disputes among men over women. One man was killed after publicly declaring his affection for a married woman—a mistake he committed while quite inebriated. In La Paz, by contrast, jealousy is considered an emotion of youth and is rarely expressed by adult men. While the origins of differences in patterns of male jealousy between these two neighboring communities remain unclear, there can be little doubt that socialization processes continue to perpetuate these differences from one generation to the next as children learn community-appropriate sex-role behavior (cf. Fry 1988).

It would be simplistic to propose that the peacefulness of La Paz in comparison with San Andrés can be accounted for by any single variable. In all likelihood, La Paz is more tranquil than San Andrés due not only to the enhanced, internal, conflict-control mechanisms described in this chapter, but also because jealousy does not permeate La Paz and land resources are not as scarce in La Paz as in San Andrés. Other factors may be important as well.

#### ◆ Notes

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1. San Andrés and La Paz are pseudonyms. Carl O'Neil, who worked previously in La Paz, also uses La Paz as a pseudonym for this community.

2. The restoration of equilibrium and normal relations between disputants—rather than the eye-for-an-eye type of justice—appears to be the goal in various societies, such as the !Kung (Draper 1978:38-39) and the Semai (Robarchek 1979), although this ideal can be accomplished through informal as well as formal channels.

3. This report is based on fieldwork conducted in these communities for approximately eighteen months between August 1981 and September 1983 and for several weeks during the summer and fall of 1986. Initially, I lived in San Andrés and made frequent visits to La Paz. In both places, rapport was established with community members. My wife and I participated in community activities in both locations, regularly visiting households and taking part in community celebrations. Special attention was paid to recording patterns of aggressive behavior and parent/child interaction. For the last twelve months of fieldwork, we maintained residences in both locations, and after initially spending more time in La Paz to compensate for more time previously spent in San Andrés, we switched from one community to the other on a weekly to biweekly basis. This allowed me to remain informed on current events and to conduct research activities in both places. The profiles of the two communities offered here primarily reflect the 1981-1983 field project, and of course social conditions should not be assumed to have remained constant over subsequent years, especially given the magnitude of social and economic change occurring throughout Mexico.

4. Such informal mechanisms of aggression control are also reported for other groups. For example, gossip is discussed by Robarchek (1988:n. 5) for the Semai; Hollan (1988:58) for the Toraja; and Romney and Romney (1966:67) for the Mixtecos of Juxtahuaca. Pastron (1974) and Hollan (1988) discuss denial for the Tarahumara and the Toraja, respectively. The issue of avoidance is considered by Pastron (1974:389) for the Tarahumara; Hollan (1988:54, 64) for the Toraja; Sorenson (1978) for the Fore; Draper (1978:43) for the !Kung; and Robarchek (1979:106) and Dentan (1978:130) for the Semai. The association of illness with anger and/or aggression is treated by Dentan (1978:97) for the Semai; Hollan (1988, especially pages 59 and 62) for the Toraja; and Romney and Romney (1966:71) for the Mixtecos. Also, fear of sorcery and witchcraft is listed by Romney and Romney (1966:67) and Hollan (1988:58) as well as by Sorenson (1978:13) for the Fore.

5. Sixteen questions relating to child discipline taken from longer, structured interviews are analyzed here. Analyses are performed on eighteen interviews from La Paz and on thirty-one from San Andrés. All respondents from both locations were fathers, and none of the respondents were from the same compound. Only males were chosen to be respondents for two reasons. First, many women in both places did not speak Spanish with enough fluency to provide answers to all of the questions. Second, restrictive patterns of male/female interaction in San Andrés presented a situation wherein the interviewing of females by males was neither socially acceptable nor advisable. Nor did it seem appropriate to hire female assistants under such conditions. The mean age of the fathers in both samples was forty years ( $t = .833; p < .70$ , 2-tailed). Additional details are reported in Fry (1993).

6. Specific methodological details are provided in Fry (1986, 1988, 1990). In brief, the samples were similar regarding characteristics such as age of parents, number of siblings, age order within the family, and economic standing within the community. Children were observed for a total of 150 hours, which averages to about three hours per child. Following Altmann (1974), focal individual sampling was used, and observations were narrated into a tape recorder carried in a small backpack or recorded on paper using a shorthand notation scheme. I recorded a run-

ning commentary of behavior engaged in by focal children using previously defined behavioral categories. After the initial period of accustomization, children did not pay much attention to me.

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