



Public health nurses knowledge of child abuse and/or neglect in American Samoa
by Patricia Eileen Monahan

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF NURSING
Montana State University

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Abstract:

The problem of this study was to determine American Samoan Public Health Nurses' knowledge in the area of child abuse and/or neglect, and to identify the sources of their knowledge.

Data were collected from all public health nurses in American Samoa through the use of a 17 item questionnaire. The data were organized into tables, and were analyzed in percentages.

It was found that the nurses had a good understanding of theoretical information in the area of child abuse and/or neglect, however their ability to recognize hypothetical abuse situations was poor. The nurses were generally aware of their responsibility to report child abusing situations. Registered Nurses had a greater amount of child abuse knowledge than Licensed Practical Nurses.

Only 14 percent of the nurses indicated that they had had personal experiences working with child abuse and/or neglect situations. When viewed with the knowledge that harsh physical punishment of children is common in American Samoa, this fact and the nurses' inability to identify hypothetical abuse situations, suggest that the nurses' cultural perceptions of discipline/abuse have minimized their ability to recognize abusing situations.

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July 27, 1979

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSES' KNOWLEDGE OF CHILD ABUSE AND/OR
NEGLECT IN AMERICAN SAMOA

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF NURSING

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Bozeman, Montana

June, 1979

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special note of gratitude and appreciation is due to Margaret Barkley, Professor of Nursing at Montana State University, who served as chairperson of the thesis committee. Her support and assistance have allowed this study to become a reality.

The writer would also like to express thanks to Margaret Vojnovich, Assistant Professor of Nursing, and Douglas Herbster, Assistant Professor of Education. Their time and efforts were kindly offered during the project.

I would also like to thank my husband, Don, for his support while I was involved in the study.

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ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was to determine American Samoan Public Health Nurses' knowledge in the area of child abuse and/or neglect, and to identify the sources of their knowledge.

Data were collected from all public health nurses in American Samoa through the use of a 17 item questionnaire. The data were organized into tables, and were analyzed in percentages.

It was found that the nurses had a good understanding of theoretical information in the area of child abuse and/or neglect, however their ability to recognize hypothetical abuse situations was poor. The nurses were generally aware of their responsibility to report child abusing situations. Registered Nurses had a greater amount of child abuse knowledge than Licensed Practical Nurses.

Only 14 percent of the nurses indicated that they had had personal experiences working with child abuse and/or neglect situations. When viewed with the knowledge that harsh physical punishment of children is common in American Samoa, this fact and the nurses' inability to identify hypothetical abuse situations, suggest that the nurses' cultural perceptions of discipline/abuse have minimized their ability to recognize abusing situations.

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Child abuse is recognized as one of the major health problems of children. A scan of the history of civilization illustrates that the crippling and killing of children has occurred since the beginning of time. Indeed, within the past 10 or 15 years reports of child abuse have been made by numerous countries throughout the world. Although the true dimensions of the problem, it has been estimated that in the United States child abuse occurs in 10 per 1000 births (McNeese and Hebel, 1977:4). Child abuse seems to be not an isolated, rare phenomenon, but a universal pattern of child rearing.

All persons involved in the helping professions should be knowledgeable in areas which are additional to their major field. Study of human behavior and of various societies throughout the world is a necessity for anyone who would attempt to assist people to deal with the problems of their human condition. Nursing as a discipline has acknowledged this fact, and the study of transcultural nursing is becoming one of the major foci of nursing education.

This author recently worked for the Public Health Department of American Samoa. While there, she was spontaneously approached by many Public Health Nurses who were seeking information about child abuse. In addition, she became aware of the fact that American Samoa has a significant child abuse problem. The current child protection officer, Letumu Talauega, stated that although no formal statistics regarding

this problem exist, there are "many incidents" of this type in American Samoa, and it is a "very serious" problem.

The 1977 Legislature of American Samoa developed a Child Protection Act (see Appendix C) which requires members of the helping professions, and all citizens of American Samoa to report suspected child abuse if they have a reasonable cause to suspect that such an action has occurred. Public Health Nurses have a great amount of contact with the people of American Samoa. For this reason, it can be concluded that they have the potential for playing a significant role in the identification and prevention of child abuse in American Samoa.

Need for the Study

Child abuse and/or neglect is a recognized problem in American Samoa. Although statistics regarding the incidence of this problem are not currently available, the enactment of the Child Protection Act of 1977 and the appointment of a Child Protection Officer are evidence that this problem does exist in this territory.

The Public Health Nurse in American Samoa makes home visits to all families in her assigned villages. She also conducts well child clinics and visits the schools in these villages. In addition, she provides primary health care services at the dispensaries which are at various locations throughout the islands. Because of these functions, the Public Health Nurse is in a unique position to observe parent-child

interactions and to recognize signs of abuse and/or neglect in the children with whom she is in contact.

Nurses must expand their roles to include preventing the maltreatment of children, reporting it, and treating it. Their education must not only alert them to the child abuse problem, but it should assist them in learning to work with people involved in abusing situations. This study attempted to determine whether the Public Health Nurses of American Samoa have the knowledge necessary to adequately perform this function.

The information gained from this study should be valuable to all persons involved in the education and supervision of Public Health Nurses in American Samoa. This information should also be of assistance to members of the helping professions, both within and out of American Samoa, in their attempts to work in the area of child abuse.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to determine American Samoan Public Health Nurses' knowledge in the area of child abuse and/or neglect, and to identify the sources of their knowledge.

General Procedure

A seventeen item questionnaire was distributed to all Public Health Nurses in American Samoa. Permission to distribute these questionnaires was obtained from the Montana State University Human Rights Committee, the Director of Nursing Services at Lyndon Baines Johnson

Tropical Medical Center, and the Associate Director of Public Health Nursing Services in American Samoa.

Objectives

The following objectives have been formulated:

1. To determine the nurses' competency in identifying situations where child abuse and/or neglect has occurred.
2. To discover if the nurses are aware of their legal responsibilities to report incidents of child abuse and/or neglect.
3. To have the nurses identify the sources of their knowledge about child abuse and/or neglect.

Assumptions

1. The Public Health Nurses have been exposed to information in the area of child abuse.
2. The Public Health Nurses have been exposed to the American Samoan Child Protection Act of 1977.
3. The Public Health Nurses have had experience with child abuse situations.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

1. A questionnaire approach to assessing Public Health Nurses' knowledge of child abuse could provide a limited sample of their knowledge or potential behavior.

2. Only Public Health Nurses in American Samoa are the subjects of the study.

3. Working in child abusing situations is laden with emotion. This study did not attempt to assess emotional criteria. This study was delimited by the fact that there could be subtle differences between the experimenter's language and culture and the subjects' language and culture.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this study the following terms are used:

Child Abuse and/or Neglect - Any physical or mental injury inflicted on a minor by his caretaker through non-accidental means; a failure to provide, by those legally responsible for the care and maintenance of the child, the proper support, education, medical or any other care necessary for his well-being.

American Samoan Public Health Nurse - Any person licensed by the Government of American Samoa, and employed by the Public Health Division of the Department of Health of American Samoa, to provide nursing care to the citizens of American Samoa.

Culture - That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Extended Family - A family consisting of two or more close relatives along either the male or female line, their spouses and children.

For example, a husband, his wife, his children, one child's son and wife.

Nuclear Family - A married couple with their children.

Kinship - The social recognition and expression of genealogical relationships that are both consanguinal and affinal. Kinship ties can be based on supposed as well as on actual relationships.

Summary

American Samoan Public Health Nurses work closely with children, mothers, and entire families. Because of this relationship, they are in a unique position to recognize signs of maltreatment in children and to recognize families which have a potential for abuse. For this reason, a study of nurses' knowledge in the area of child abuse is very important. Evidence of their knowledge in this area was obtained through the use of a questionnaire. This questionnaire was administered to all nurses in the American Samoan Public Health Department:

The findings of this study should help all persons involved in the education and supervision of American Samoan Public Health Nurses to more adequately meet the educational needs of these nurses. In addition, the findings should be of interest to all members of the helping professions who are concerned about the problem of child abuse and/or neglect.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This review is organized under the following headings:

Culture as an Important Consideration in Health Care

Transcultural Nursing

Social Change

The Changing Family in Changing Society

Child Abuse and Neglect

 An Overview

 The Abusive Parent

 The Abused Child

 Situations in Which Abuse Occurs

 Sociocultural Determinants of Child Abuse

American Samoa

 General Information

 Social Organization

 Traditional Roles Within the Family

Change in American Samoa

Child Abuse in American Samoa

After presenting information regarding social change, its potential effect on the family, basic concepts underlying child abuse situations, and general information about American Samoa, these concepts will be applied to American Samoa.

The thesis that is presented is that in American Samoa:

- (1) Child abuse is traditionally a culturally accepted phenomenon.
- (2) The trend toward a modernized life style has brought with it many new life stressors.
- (3) Modernization is causing a weakening of the influence of the extended family - and with this, the traditional family support system is deteriorating.
- (4) The potential for child abuse to occur in American Samoa is increasing as a result of these changes.

Culture as an Important Consideration in Health Care

In the world as it exists today, it is extremely important to understand cultural differences and similarities. Mass communication, space age transportation and modern political systems have created situations throughout the world in which people interact daily with people from various countries and cultures. The United States alone is a country whose population is comprised of people who have emigrated - and who continue to arrive - from areas throughout the world. Given this fact, it is recognized that it is vitally important for people in the helping professions to become knowledgeable of and to understand cultural diversities.

An editorial comment in World Health, a publication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, states, "Health work is based on a scientific attitude, but its application is

conditioned by the cultural milieu . . . Health systems, health practices, and health beliefs are a part of culture" (1971, p. 3). Not only do people from variant ethnic and cultural backgrounds have different lifestyles and value systems, they experience different attitudes and responses to health and illness (Pasquali, 1974, p. 20). This idea is further developed by Koshi who discusses cultural and biologic variations among different peoples. He lists areas in which variations frequently occur. They include: skin color and hair texture; bone and body structure and size; rate of growth of children; beliefs regarding birth, death and general health practices; susceptibility to certain diseases; what persons do to keep well and what they do when they become ill; responses to pain and suffering; general body care; and sense of privacy. On the basis of these variations, it can be concluded that health services cannot be comprehensive unless cultural considerations are made by health care providers.

Literature abounds with information regarding specific differences which exist in the health beliefs and behavior of various peoples. These references cover a wide range of information which varies from Warner's (1977, p. 686) discussion of primitive cultures' views of illness as being caused by evil spirits, to Long's (1977, p. 1215) description of caring for an elderly nomad Arab woman in a large British medical center, to Robert's (1975, p. 64) article on child care customs among rural Columbia people.

Understanding cultural variations is a field of study which is vast - but as yet, still developing in the health fields. Nursing as a discipline has recognized the need to develop knowledge in this area. In fact, a specialized field of nursing study has evolved for this purpose.

Transcultural Nursing

Leininger defines transcultural nursing as "That field of study in nursing which focuses upon the humanistic and scientific comparative body of knowledge regarding nursing and caring behaviors, practices, values and beliefs of people from all cultures (or subcultures), and with respect to the modes of health maintenance and illness restorative systems" (1977, p. 7). The area of transcultural nursing, therefore, includes information regarding patients' behaviors and attitudes, nurses' sociocultural orientation, and the various health care systems throughout the world. Advances have been made in constructing formal information bases in each of these three areas, and as a result, culture specific information is becoming available for nurses. When nurses have this information, they will be able to more effectively assess patients and will know how to meet their needs in ways which reflect an understanding of the patients' value and belief systems.

Leininger maintains that understanding cultural factors is integral to quality health care provision. In fact, she calls cultural "the fourth dimension of nursing" and states that culture should be

interwoven with the already acknowledged physical, psychologic and sociologic dimensions of nursing. Knowledge of these four areas of need should be the basis of comprehensive nursing care (1977, p. 11).

Social Change

"It is a fundamental characteristic of culture that, despite its essentially conservative nature, it does change over time and from place to place" (Murdock, 1965, p. 113). Throughout time mankind has evolved from savagery to civilization; thousands of cultures have developed, prospered and fallen.

William Ogburn attempts to explain the process by which cultures change in his theory of cultural evolution. He discusses (1964, p. 24) the fact that social changes are affected by four processes: invention, accumulation, diffusion and adjustment. Through invention new elements of culture - material or nonmaterial - are developed out of combinations of previously known elements. Accumulation occurs when more new elements are added to a cultural base than are lost. Diffusion refers to the spread of inventions from one area to others, whereas adjustment denotes the change which occurs in part of one culture as a result of an invention in a closely correlated part of that culture or of another culture. Thus, an invention such as steam driven machines results in an accumulation of changes - factories, for example. These changes diffuse or spread throughout society and force adjustments to be made in people's living patterns. An example of this is the fact that with

the advent of factories, people must take occupations away from home, rather than work on home-based activities.

Murdock (1965, p. 116) explains cultural change more broadly by stating, "Changes in social behavior, and hence in culture, normally have their origin in some significant alteration in the life conditions of a society." He goes on to class events which are known to be especially influential in producing cultural changes. Some of these are: increases or decreases in population; changes in geographical environment; migrations into new environments; contacts with people of differing cultures; natural and social catastrophies such as floods, crop failures, epidemics, wars and economic depressions; and accidental discoveries.

Accepting Ogburn's and Murdock's theories of cultural change, one can readily understand the effect that modern technological development has had on the entire world. Science has not only altered individuals' roles in society, it has revolutionized the complexion and organization of societies throughout the world.

Contemporary modernization - that development occurring since World War II - differs from the social and cultural change of the past because today's world-wide information systems allow very rapid diffusion to occur among cultures. The present era is the first time in the history of mankind that the world can be viewed as one system.

Goldthorpe (1975, p. 1) states that ours "is not a divided world . . .

On the contrary, the world is one . . . (it is) . . . a world in which all are increasingly involved with one another." Cultures are no longer single and unique with distinctive structures. Involvement and interrelation now occur among societies and throughout the world. There are no untouched cultures.

Prior to World War II, attempts were made by anthropologists to protect backward, isolated societies from rapid change. They thought "slow change was better than fast change, that less change better than more change, that it was a pity to disturb the life of isolated peoples who were reasonably balanced in relationship to the territory they had and the technology they were using" (Mead, 1974, p. 24). After the war, however, people were not concerned with the human aspect of modernization. The new concern was the problem of how much technology was to be introduced everywhere and how quickly. As a result, technological advancement has now affected most of the world's societies.

Ogburn would categorize the world's societies as experiencing cultural lags. This condition occurs when one part of a culture changes before or in greater degree than another part, thereby causing less adjustment between the parts than existed in the past. He states that, "Cultural lags are one characteristic of the process of social evolution which occurs in a closely integrated society in periods of rapid change" (1964, p. 24).

One cultural lag which many societies are experiencing has been created by modern educational systems. In primitive or underdeveloped cultures, education occurs in the sense that adults attempt to influence children to live lives like their own, using skills which they themselves use. The end of this type of education is continuity; making "by education the sort of adult that is admired in the society in which the teacher himself grew up and to make the child ready for a world like that in which the teacher lives" (Redfield, 1953, p. 120). Conversely, modern education is a mechanism of change. It attempts to turn the child of a laborer into a clerk, of a farmer into a lawyer. It has for this reason created a cultural lag. Children have been encouraged to change and have accepted new ideas and values, while adults attempt to maintain the status quo. For this reason, developing countries which initiate formal education programs create turmoil and instability within their societies and in the lives of their people.

The Changing Family in Changing Society

The family is a universal social grouping; at no time in human history has the family not existed. Young presents the idea that the family holds four functions fundamental to human social life: the sexual, the economic, the reproductive, and the educational (1964, p. 103). Without the family's sexual and reproductive functions, life would cease; and without education, culture would come to an end. "The family - the toughest, the most adaptable, the most vital of all human

institutions - has survived the fall of civilizations, the impact of every catastrophe that has befallen mankind, the pressures and demands of every age and society" (Young, 1964, p. 103). Despite the fact that the family has survived these pressures, it is continually altered by the culture of which it is a part.

Yinger states, "The family cannot be understood as an isolated phenomenon. It must be seen in the context of the economic and political institutions, the religious influences, the population facts of the society of which it is a part" (1969, p. 272). Its roles, its relationships and its functions are all directly related to the society in which it exists.

The report of a United States government sponsored conference on the family in transition stated, "If there is a theory of demographic transition, there is a theory of family transition; the two are inter-related" (1969, p. 37). The report goes on to discuss the idea that premodern families tended to be large multigenerational kin groups. In these families, marriage occurred at early ages and fertility was virtually unlimited. With the advent of industrialization and advancing education, the transition to a predominating nuclear family has occurred. Goode (1964, p. 108) expresses this idea by stating that since World War II "in all parts of the world and for the first time in world history, all social systems are moving fast or slowly toward some form of the conjugal family system and also toward industrialization

. . . with industrialism the traditional family systems, usually extended or joint family systems, are breaking down."

The family is loosing its functions in modern society. No longer do education, religious training, food production or other support activities occur within the home. They occur in specialized institutions which are apart from the home and which in general are antecedents of the industrialization process. In order to understand the changes that have occurred within families of a particular society, the factors which affect the form and functions of these families must be analyzed. Ogburn suggests that these factors are: (1) community size (How many people live within the area of the community in which the family exists?), (2) economic growth (Are goods and services produced by the family or by other organizations?), (3) the role of technology (What amount of knowledge and use of invention occurs within this society?), (4) social control (Are property, production and sex subject to control by laws, sanctions and customs within this society?), and (5) cultural lags (To what degree are the interrelated parts of a culture changing at various times and rates?) He states (1964, p. 81), "In general, the social valuations that take the form of laws, sanctions, moral codes, and ideologies are singularly resistant to change. The economic or technological aspects of families often change first, and the ideational aspects change later, thus remaining for a time out

of harmony." In short, during periods of rapid change, the structural parts of the family are in conflict.

Blood discusses the fact that ordinarily, kinship ties thrive under conditions of social stability, and become weakened during periods of change. He expresses this idea through a chart which is represented below

<u>Social Change</u>	<u>Strength of Kin</u>
1. None	1. Moderate
2. Moderate Change	2. Weakened
3. Social Revolution	3. Minimal
4. Social Collapse	4. Maximal

(Blood, 1970, p. 197)

Given Ogburn's and Blood's ideas regarding the condition of the family in times of social change, it is essential to consider the effects these changes have on individual members of the family.

In modern industrial societies, families have become smaller and have broken away from clan ties. They must adjust their routines to educational and occupational programs, and must fulfill their functions by means that are controlled by non-family institutions. Nuclear families are autonomous insofar as they are free from obligations to any but family members. However, these families have a great problem in establishing control over the social and material resources that

they need to function well. Blitsten (1963, p. 273) suggests that autonomous nuclear families suffer from three weaknesses:

First, the performance of their functions demands the cultivation of intensive relationships between husbands and wives and parents and children. Yet, there are many inescapable interferences with them. Secondly, the maintenance of these families depends upon non-family organizations. Thirdly, autonomous nuclear families are largely the responsibility of only two people. The demands that this responsibility makes upon them as individuals are often heavier than personal resources can support. Consequently, a great many autonomous nuclear families fall short of achieving their goals.

Blitsten discusses the fact that psychological studies have revealed the connection between methods of childrearing in families and the performance of adults as social units in their societies. "Family failures are associated with destructive incompetency such as crime and mental illness in adult populations" (1963, p. 274). Winslow relates the ability of individuals to function productively in society with the organization of their family. "Family structure largely determines to what extent emotional needs will be met. If they are not met in the family, the person must look elsewhere. The outcome of his quest may involve some form of deviancy" (1970, p. 291). One such deviancy which

is expressed within the family is the problem of child abuse and neglect.

Child Abuse and Neglect

The neglect and abuse of children has been evidenced since the beginning of time. The natural animalistic instincts of the human race have not changed with the passage of the centuries. Children have been crippled and killed either through ignorance or superstition, by shame or in secrecy. This wastage of children's lives continues and appears to be even increasing in this enlightened modern day (Fontana, 1971, p. 3).

An Overview - Fontana is one among numerous authors who discuss the fact that abuse of children has occurred throughout the history of mankind. Documentation of this fact can be obtained by scanning world literature; sources abound which depict children who are subjected to abuse and who are exploited by adults.

Acknowledging the fact that the maltreatment of children is a universal phenomenon gives an important perspective to the current view of child abuse. It is completely possible that despite recent efforts by professionals to control the incidence of child maltreatment, the problem is one which cannot be abated. Man may be psychodynamically and socioculturally programmed to express his stress against his children.

Despite this possibility, work in the area must continue. Understanding a phenomenon is the first step toward controlling it. Therefore, if the occurrence of abusive behavior is ever to be controlled, research on the problem of child abuse must continue, and attempts by members of the helping professions to prevent, detect and treat abusing situations must continue.

McNeese and Hebeler describe child abuse as occurring in several forms. Among these are physical abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse and neglect. They state that although these forms may exist as single entities, they frequently occur in combination (1978, p. 3). Each type of abuse should be understood by health workers, and they upon noting any sign of maltreatment should initiate an assessment of the presence of other signs which would indicate an abuse or neglect situation.

Physical abuse is the nonaccidental injury of a child. This type of injury results from punishment that involves activities like hitting with a closed fist or an instrument, kicking, inflicting burns, or throwing. Physical neglect can be defined as the failure to provide the necessities of life for a child. Lack of medical care, adequate nutrition and housing, and appropriate clothing are factors which constitute neglect. Sexual abuse is a term which is used to refer to any sexual activity between an adult and a child. This type of activity can range from assaultive sexual attacks to fondling or other forms of

nonassaultive abuse. Lastly, a definition of emotional abuse and neglect is the failure by parents to provide an environment in which their child can thrive and develop. Manifestations of this situation are ignoring, terrorizing, threatening or rejecting the child (McNeese and Hebeler, 1978, p. 4).

Child abuse may occur as an isolated incident, or may be a recurring and chronic behavior. Whether it is episodic or long term, there are variables which have been identified as existing in each abusing/neglecting situation. Hurt illustrates these variables in equation form:

PARENT + CHILD + SITUATION → ABUSE (1975, p. 7)

Each incident contains all three elements; no single element is caused in itself, but in combination with other elements. A discussion of these three contributing elements follows.

The Abusive Parent - Abusive parents appear to represent a fairly broad cross section of the world's population. They are found in all cultures and societies; vary in intelligence and education; and are present in all socioeconomic, racial and religious groups. The major percentage of parents who abuse their children seems not to be criminal or insane. They are in most cases individuals with little emotional strength who live in highly stressful environments. However, McNeese and Hebeler state that 10 to 20 percent of child abusers have psychopathic personalities (1977, p. 8).

Five classification categories for abusing parents have been developed. These include: mentally ill, overflow abuse, battered child, disciplinary abuse and misplaced abuse. The mentally ill are psychopathic individuals who are in need of hospitalization and intensive psychiatric treatment. Parents who exhibit overflow abuse are unable to cope with their own frustrations and inadequate feelings. They compensate for these feelings by striking at anyone or anything, including their children. Individuals who were battered as children frequently become abusing parents; abusing behavior is patterned into individuals who are victims of it in their youth. Parents who practice disciplinary abuse physically punish their children's real or imagined wrongdoings. Misplaced abuse occurs as a result of displaced aggression. An example of this is a woman who in anger at her husband, abuses her child rather than show aggression toward her husband (Delsordo, 1963, p. 213). These classifications serve as a broad overview of characteristics which researchers have identified as being present in abusing parents. A brief discussion of these characteristics follows.

Smith (1975, p. 52) describes abusing mothers as having an average age of 23.5 years. The study showed that abusing parents are predominantly from low socioeconomic classes, and that their families lack cohesiveness i.e., there are divorces and separations, extramarital relationships, premarital conceptions, etc.

Various investigators, including Elmer (1967), Lynch (1977) and Smith (1975) report that a common characteristic of abusing parents is the fact that they have severe emotional difficulties. A history of suicide attempts, nervous breakdown, drug and alcohol addition, or criminal activity is frequently present. Many abusers are simply emotionally immature and dependent. Lynch (1977, p. 36) states that abusing parents have a basic inability to form good relationships. Cline (1978), Figgins (1977) and Elmer (1967) also discuss the social isolation of these parents. Abusers do not have close friends. Many live far from their families, or have no connections with their relatives. Military families exhibit a large incidence of abuse for this reason.

"Parents of abused children are often the products of abuse and may have been repeatedly beaten or deprived during childhood" (McNeese and Hebel, 1977, p. 11). Because of their own inadequate family backgrounds, most abusing parents have little understanding of their children's basic needs.

Steele and Pollack (1968, p. 109) stated that they observed a recurring pattern in abusing parents' child rearing practices. They demand inappropriately high expectations of their children. Not only were these expectations great, they occurred at times when the infant or child was developmentally completely unable to respond to what is wanted.

The Abused Child - The children most likely to be physically abused are infants and preschool children because they are defenseless, demanding and nonverbal. Smith (1975, 49) stated that the average of abused children is 18.5 months, and that there is an equal incidence of abuse for both male and female children. The victim of sexual abuse may be a boy or a girl; however, it most frequently occurs with school-age and adolescent girls. Neglect and emotional abuse are not restricted to any age group or sex (McNeese and Hebeler, 1977, p. 6).

Several researchers have found that the child's history, characteristics and behavior may contribute to the child being abused. Children who were separated from their mothers during infancy are at a risk for abuse. This separation can be caused by premature birth, neonatal illness, or maternal illness. It is hypothesized that because of this separation, parent-child bonding is not established - i.e., normal love and attachment do not develop, and the basis for healthy relationships are not formed (Lynch, 1977, p. 18).

McNeese and Hebeler (1977, p. 6) state that although abused children are generally not different from normal children, they are usually perceived as different by their parents. However, overactive, demanding, ill children are more likely to be abused (Hurt, 1975, p. 10). Therefore, any child who is difficult to satisfy or who makes increased demands on the parent is more likely to be abused.

Situations in Which Abuse Occurs - A family's social and economic situation and its psychological environment are related to incidents of abuse. Elmer (1967, p. 42) states that abusive families "live under constant stress of a kind and degree unknown to non-abusive families." The definition of a stressful event is quite variable; what one family perceives as a crisis, another may tolerate without difficulty. McNeese and Hebel (1977, p. 13) discuss two types of stressors which are involved in abusing situations: emotional stress and situational stress. Examples of emotional stress are a death in the family, physical or mental illness in the family, and divorce or separation of the parents. Situational stress includes occurrences like loss of a job, loss of income, inadequate housing and poverty.

Snyder and Spietz (1977, p. 23) discuss certain characteristics which they observed in homes where abuse occurs. Some of these include the facts that the homes were darkened by closed curtains or shades, households were disorganized, and high levels of noise existed as a result of televisions, airplanes, appliances and stereos. Morse, Hyde, Newberger and Reed (1977, p. 613) found that recent moves and a lack of telephones also seemed to be a part of abusing families' living situations.

As previously discussed, child abuse is the result of an interaction between a child and a parent with a stressful event serving as a catalyst. All three elements are necessary for abuse to occur: given

predisposing characteristics of the parent and child, stresses are likely to precipitate violence.

Sociocultural Determinants of Child Abuse - Gil (1975, p. 12) stated, "Incidents of serious physical attack on children which can be understood dynamically as symptoms of individual psychological disorders and/or environmental stress may at the same time be deeply rooted in culturally supported attitudes." This statement leads to a broader perspective of the problem of child maltreatment.

Attacks on children are the result of emotional problems of abusive parents, and at times also of abused children, as well as from interpersonal relationship problems in the families, and from environmental stresses. However, sociocultural factors, too, play a large part in determining whether abuse will occur.

The manner in which individual personality disorders are expressed, and the content of neurotic and psychotic fantasies and symptoms in any given society, tend to be influenced by the sociocultural context in which they develop. Such disorders, fantasies, and symptoms tend to be extreme manifestations of attitudes and behaviors which, at a less extreme level, constitute a normal element of the culture and are sanctioned by it. In other words, what a society considers sick and deviant in human behavior is not necessarily

qualitatively different from what it considers healthy and normal. The difference may be quantitative only (Gil, 1975, p. 12).

Various cultures' child rearing philosophies and practices provide an example of this quantitative difference between acceptable and non-acceptable parent behavior. Most societies "have not developed absolute cultural taboos and legal sanctions against the use of physical force against children by adults. Not only is the use of physical force not prohibited, it is even encouraged by many societies" (Gil, 1975, p. 8). The philosophy of spare the rod and spoil the child is still widely accepted. Because of this belief, parents feel quite justified in disciplining children through physical means (Steele and Pollack, 1968, p. 110).

In many societies, children are considered to be their parents' property. On the basis of this value, infanticide has been a common practice. Bakan (1971, p. 30) discusses the fact that the practice of killing of infants has occurred throughout history. He states, "Infanticide has been reported as a regular feature of numerous cultures including the Eskimo, Polynesian, Egyptian, Chinese, Scandinavian, African, American Indian, and Australian aborigine." Whether it was as a sacrificial offering, a means of population control, or a means through which to be rid of undesirable female children, this destruction of children was culturally approved.

What is accepted as normal behavior in one society is seen as deserving incarceration or death by another. A further complication of this idea is the fact that as societies evolve, their people's perceptions and values are altered. "Some actions we now label abuse were once the commonplaces of daily life, and what is common in some places today is taken for abuse in others" (Hurt, 1975, p. 5).

When does the acceptable use of physical force in disciplining children become an unacceptable form of abuse? In what situations is it acceptable to damage or destroy infants? The answer to these questions are socioculturally determined.

In discussing American society, Gil states:

There exist significant differences between various segments of the American population concerning the extent of physical abuse of children which is considered appropriate, and which is actually practiced. In spite of such differences, however, it cannot be denied that some measure of violence against children is patterned into the childrearing philosophies and practices of nearly all Americans (1975, p. 11).

What causes this use of force against children to be accepted? Why are some social groups seemingly more predisposed to using abusive amounts of physical force? There seems to be a connection between a person's exposure to violence in childhood and his tendency as an adult to inflict violence. Children often pattern their own behavior after

their parents' behavior. If their parents use physical force, they may teach by example that physical force is an acceptable means of social interaction. Evidence of this is the fact that victims of child abuse frequently become perpetrators of the same type of behavior.

Gil (1974, p. 166) believes that impoverished children in American society and those who are members of ethnic minorities are victims of a "cycle of violence." Society allows these children to suffer with poverty, malnutrition, racial discrimination, and poor medical care and education. He feels these problems are acts of violence against the young and that they perpetuate a violence syndrome in society.

Given these ideas about sociocultural determinants of child abuse, and the psychodynamic issues which contribute to the problem, it can be stated that the phenomenon of physical abuse of children occurs on a spectrum. At one end, the perpetrators are normal individuals who are behaving in a culturally accepted fashion. On the other end are incidents involving persons with severe personality disorders whose attacks on children are precipitated by environmental stress factors.

American Samoa

General Information - American Samoa is a group of seven islands lying 2200 miles southwest of Hawaii and 1200 miles northeast of New Zealand. Approximately 30,000 people on Samoa's 76 square miles, with approximately 95 percent of this population living on the island of Tutuila. Because of the islands' position 14 degrees south of the

equator, the climate is tropical. Although the temperature remains fairly uniform around 80 degrees, the air is humid due to the 200 inches of annual rainfall. The islands are densely forested, with the exception of the coastal strips and lower mountain slopes which are covered with coconuts and small brush (Kennedy, 1968, p. 18).

Although the origin of the people of Samoa is a matter of much anthropological debate, it is known that the islands were settled in the first century A.D. Mass maritime migrations were probably made from Samoa, and as a result of these movements the other Polynesian islands were settled. These islands include Hawaii, the Cook Islands, Tonga, French Polynesia, Easter Island and New Zealand (Holmes, 1974, p. 7).

White men made infrequent visits to the Samoan islands as early as 1722, and after the middle 1850's missionary activity became strongly established. These missionaries had a profound impact upon the lives of Samoans - to the extent that nearly 100 percent of modern Samoans identify themselves as Christians.*

In the late 1850's, Germany, Britain, and the United States had active trade interests in the Samoan Islands. As a result of this

*Despite this Christian background, belief in ancient mythology and spirit lore remained. In fact, belief in spirits who cause illness, death and suffering still prevails (Holmes, 1974, p. 64).

conflict of interest, political struggles developed to such intensity that by 1889 the U.S. and Britain were on the brink of war with Germany. A settlement of these disputes was arrived at, and in 1899, Western Samoa (the two western islands of the Samoan chain) was declared a colony of Germany, while American Samoa became an American Territory (Holmes, 1974, p. 15). Control over the islands was granted to the Department of Navy in 1900, and this governance continued until 1951 when the U.S. Department of Interior became the administrator of the islands. This presence of Americans in Samoa has had a great effect on the lifestyles of the Samoan people. (U.S. influence on Samoan culture and traditions will be further discussed later in this review.)

Social Organization - "The fabric of the Samoan social organization with its complex interrelationships . . . is the dominant influence in the lives of the people" (Clark et al., 1974, p. 700). This idea is discussed by Holmes (1974, p. 18) who states that the important units of social organization are the household, the extended family and the village.

Villages range in size. They contain from 3 or 4 to 1000 households. An average village has 60 households which contain nine to ten people each. In charge of each household is a titled male, a matai, who is responsible for the behavior and for the welfare of everyone who lives under his authority. In describing the household, Holmes states:

Those who live with the matai usually include his immediate family - spouse and offspring - plus an assortment of collateral relatives such as elderly parents, grandchildren, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters of the matai, and their families. The group may also include people who have been formally or informally adopted by the household head. Household composition is, however, somewhat impermanent because Samoans have a wide choice of households in which they live, and mobility from one household to another is a common feature of Samoan family life. People are normally welcome in any household with which they have blood or affinal ties (1974, p. 18).

The above quote touches one particularly significant characteristic of Samoan family life - i.e., the fluid movement of family members from household to household. Children can on their own impetus reside in any household in which members of their extended family live. This practice is unquestioned, and in some cases, children live with their parents for only a few years of their lives.

Another family characteristic which deserves specific mention is the number of couple's offspring. Clark (1974, p. 700) states, "Samoans generally have a large number of children . . . Children are seen as a source of power, and men who have many children tend to feel blessed." Baker et al., (1976, p. 15) surveyed 131 Samoan women and

found that the number of children which is traditionally considered ideal is 9.3 per couple.

These two characteristics, the fluid movement of family members and the desire by couples for many offspring, contribute to the extremely large size of the Samoan extended family, or aiga. Holmes (1974, p. 19) states, "Since Samoans claim membership in a given aiga by virtue of blood, marriage or adoption ties, . . . all Samoan aiga are large, and any given Samoan can always trace a relationship to, and therefore membership in, a dozen or more aiga." He adds the fact that one aiga has 961 persons claiming membership in it.

The family is all important to Samoans, and traditional family ties are strong. Because of this, the aiga has a great influence on the lives of Samoans. One example of this influence involves obedience to family members. Within the aiga, any one member is required to show obedience to any other member who is older than he/she. (An exception to this rule is the matai, to whom all are obedient.) As a result, children must unquestionably meet the demands of not only their fathers and mothers, but of aunts, uncles, grandparents, and older siblings and cousins. As these same children grow older and enter adulthood, they must still obey the commands of their elders. Mead describes these relationships as ones of "universal servitude" to all acknowledged relatives (1928, p. 41).

The aiga influences Samoans' lives in ways additional to this required obedience. Another example of the influence which the family holds over its members related to the Samoans' concept of property. Material items - food, clothes, furniture, etc. - belong to the entire family. What one family member possesses, any relative may take at any time for an indefinite period of time. This is done without asking: borrowing or stealing have no meaning in the family situation. One simply takes and uses what one desires from relatives' possessions (Calkins, 1962, p. 44).

Related to this concept of property is what Ablon calls the aiga's "mutual aid function" (1971, p. 391). She states that in times of family crisis such as weddings, funerals or periods of financial need, persons will receive from family members gifts and cash contributions of thousands of dollars to cover their expenses and needs. In return for this aid, all members can expect to receive like assistance in their times of need.

Traditional Roles Within the Family - Many authors (Mead, 1928; Holmes, 1974; Clark et al., 1974; Ablon, 1970; Goldman, 1970) discuss the traditional roles played by various family members. Although they are presently in the process of change, these traditional roles have held great importance for the Samoan people.

All men who are not matai, and all women engaged in agricultural work on family land plots. They traditionally worked during most

daylight hours at farming activities while their children remained at home to perform household tasks. Young boys fished and prepared and cooked most meals, while their sisters were responsible for caring for younger siblings. When a girl reached the age of six or seven, she was fully responsible for feeding, bathing, teaching, and disciplining up to five or six younger siblings.

As soon as children became strong enough to carry heavy loads (around 12 years old), they became workers on the family plantations leaving younger siblings to cook, perform household tasks, and care for the children (Mead, 1928, p. 28).

One can see why Brother Herman stated, "The family is the most important feature of native life" (____, p. 1). Members of the aiga relied on one another for survival.

Change in American Samoa

It is an acknowledged fact that the traditional native cultures of various Polynesian societies are disappearing. Since the arrival of the white man on these islands, the Polynesians have accepted the white man's religion and values - resulting in a drastically altered life style. In spite of this deterioration of Polynesian life styles, the people of the Samoan Islands have to a large extent managed to maintain their traditional values and way of life. Holmes (1974, p. 94) called this cultural conservatism a "phenomenon of cultural stability."

Margaret Mead (1928, p. 277) described this conservatism by writing, "The Samoans have only taken such parts of our culture as made their life more comfortable, their culture more flexible." Oliver described these islands as "presenting a radically different picture from the usual South Seas spectacle of native peoples cheerfully and unknowingly losing their identity and their heritage in a setting of successful and expanded economy established and controlled by white men" (1961, p. 220).

Although Samoa has retained much of its traditional culture, changes have in fact occurred. Until the 1960's, however, this change was much slower and less dramatic than in other Polynesian societies. Keesing, in 1936, divided the history of cultural change in Samoa into three periods:

(1) 1830-1869 - The period of Samoan mission-trader equilibrium when "the Samoan accepted those goods he wanted from the trader, and bowed to the voice of an evidently superior Deity.";

(2) 1870-1934 - A period of "political and judicial changes in accordance with the will of alien authorities whose word was backed by warships and prisons."; and

(3) 1934 on - A period characterized by a "set of influences that may broadly be called educational (which) have commenced to spread out from the urban centers, by way of the schools." (p. 476)

Mead also discussed the effect schools had on Samoan life. "With the introduction of several months a year of government schools, these children are being taken out of their homes for most of the day. This brings about a complete disorganization of the native households which have no precedents for a manner of life where mothers have to stay at home and take care of their children and adults have to perform small routine tasks and run errands" (1928, p. 28). (As mentioned previously, before this time, the children performed all household tasks while adults worked in the family plantations.)

Holmes suggests that in American Samoa, a fourth period of cultural change began about 1961. At this time, the U.S. Congress became interested in the territory and granted large amounts of funds to be used to improve education, develop industry, and promote tourism on American Samoa. This author writes (American Samoans) "have been exposed to the most pervasive Western educational influence ever devised in a developing territory. That influence has been the educational television system established in 1964" (1974, p. 98). This system brings 180 U.S. developed video lessons a week into the classroom of 24 government schools in American Samoa.

The significance of this educational system lies not just with the fact that Samoan children were taught by English speaking persons on video tapes, but with the technological developments which were required for this educational system to be functional. In order for transmission

signals to reach islands 60 miles from Tutuila, a transmitting tower was constructed on a high mountain peak. However, technicians had to be able to reach this high control room, so a tramway system was constructed across Pago Pago Harbor to transport them. A further complication was the fact that few villages had electricity, so power lines had to be installed to make the television system functional.

With the advent of electricity, Samoan families quickly purchased televisions - and now report that watching TV is one of their favorite pastimes. (Productions from the U.S. comprise the great majority of shows broadcast for these people.) The resistance to change which American Samoans had demonstrated has been bombarded. Since 1964, the Western World has been literally brought into the homes of these people. As a result, their values, perceptions and goals in life have been altered.

In 1928, Margaret Mead wrote:

Economic instability, poverty, the wage system, the separation of the worker from his land and from his tools, modern warfare, industrial disease, the abolition of leisure, the irksomeness of a bureaucratic government - these have not yet invaded an island without resources worth exploiting. Nor have the subtler penalties of civilization; neuroses, philosophical perplexities, the individual tragedies due to an increased consciousness of personality and to a greater

specialization of sex feeling, or conflicts between religion and other ideals, reached natives (p. 276).

It is apparent that this statement no longer holds. In fact, American Samoa manifests many of the attributes which Mead listed.

Government schools have taken children from their traditional roles in the family, forcing women to abandon their work on family plantations. This educational advancement has resulted in disorganization of Samoan households, and created turmoil and conflict between youth, who through their education have experienced Western ideas and values; and older adults, who continue to value the traditional Samoan life style.

The development of this educational system in American Samoa has been only one of many diffusions from Western society. Another major alteration has been the transition from a subsistence to a money economy. It is approximated that at present, 10,000 American Samoans, one third of the total population, are in the wage labor force. While a large number of these people are employed as teachers, health service workers, public work employees and clerical workers in a variety of government agencies, there is a substantial number of Samoans employed by private enterprise. Two fish canneries alone employ 2000 Samoans.

While in 1960 families raised most of their own food, plantations now go uncultivated because family members are off working for wages.

Accompanying the increase in money available has been an influx of imported material items, plus an increasing desire to own them.

Samoans now use large amounts of imported foods - soda pop, beer, and other "junk" foods. This has resulted in a deterioration in the quality of the Samoan diet and "has had deleterious effects on children's health" (Keesing, 1953, p. 56). Additionally, obtaining luxury items such as pickup trucks, stereos, radios, refrigerators, etc. has now become a priority, and as a result, many aiga members no longer give freely of their money or possessions to their matai or to relatives. Because of this development, the matai system of social organization has lost much of its strength.

Another major development of contemporary Samoan life is the fact that many Samoans are moving from the islands to the U.S. In 1974, it was approximated that 40,000 Samoans lived on the West Coast of the U.S. or in Hawaii (Holmes, 1974, p. 105).

Baker et al. (1976, p. 3) report that the major reasons for this migration are "better education for children and self, better jobs, and to be with a relative who had migrated earlier." Holmes adds that the "desire to escape what they consider an oppressive traditional social system involving heavy obligations to the matai" is an additional factor motivating Samoan to emigrate to the U.S. (1974, p. 105).

The diffusion of Western ideas, values, economics and technology has forced major adjustments for the Samoan people. American Samoa has

since the early 1960's become a modern society (Munsey, 1977, p. 767) in which the desire for money and education have contributed to the breakdown of a social organization which existed for hundreds of years prior. The influence of the matai is deteriorating, many children upon marriage break ties with their aiga, "generation gaps" exist between the young and the old, young adults no longer desire to have large numbers of offspring (Baker et al., 1976, p. 15), and the stresses which result from the demands of twentieth century living are becoming apparent for the people of American Samoa.

Child Abuse in American Samoa

Bakan discussed the fact that infanticide has been reported historically throughout the world, and specifically mentioned Polynesia as an area where the killing of infants was a regular feature of life. In the Hawaiian Islands, it was customary to kill all children after the third or fourth. While in Tahiti during the Nineteenth Century, more than two-thirds of the children were destroyed "generally before seeing the light of day. Sometimes in drawing their first breath they were throttled to death, being called Tamari'i Hia (Children Throttled)" (1971, p. 30). The reason for these actions was the fact that members of the low social class were obligated to destroy their children, while members of the higher classes were obliged to refrain from killing their children.

Based upon the fact that Hawaii and Tahiti - and other islands which practiced infanticide - were inhabited by migrating Samoans, one could assume that Samoans, too, participated in this practice. However, there is no evidence of this type of behavior by Samoans. In fact, in 1184 Turner wrote "infanticide as it prevailed in Eastern Polynesia, was unknown in Samoa. After they were born, children were affectionately cared for" (p. 78). Nonetheless, documentation of physical punishment of Samoan children by adults is found in the literature.

Attempts at early training are often accompanied by severe punishment. Erring children are sometimes slapped on the buttocks, legs or face or switched on the legs or buttocks with brooms made of coconut leaf midribs or even with leather belts. Mothers usually administer punishment, although belt whippings of older children by fathers is not uncommon. Threats that the aitu (ghosts) 'will get you' are sometimes made, but the common deterrent to improper behavior is refusing to allow children to go out and play in the moonlight when all the other children are doing so. While youngsters may be reprimanded for making too much noise or for standing in the house, little is said about the very common practice of throwing stones or bullying smaller youngsters. Parents often resort to stone throwing themselves; a crying baby may receive a shower of small pebbles

accompanied by shouts of "Soia!" (Stop it!) or "Uma!" (Enough!) (Holmes, 1974, p. 78).

Mead, too, refers to this physical punishment of children - but does so indirectly. In her discussion of the fluid movement of different family members from household to household, she states that it is not infrequent that children who have been "severely beaten over" by their fathers in the morning will be found later in the day living in a different household (1928, p. 43). She also mentions the fact that children can be physically reprimanded outside of the household or relationship group:

If a crowd of children are near enough, pressing in curiosity to watch some spectacle at which they are not wanted, they are soundly lashed with palm leaves, or dispersed with a shower of small stones . . . No one who throws the stones actually means to hit a child, but the children know that if they repeat their intrusions too often, by the law of chance some of the flying bits of coral will land in their faces (1928, p. 25).

Although these citations appear to be means of normal disciplining, they are indirect indications of types of punishment which do occur.

Numerous authors discuss Samoan people's tendency toward flares of temper. Beaglehole (1957, p. 179) stated, "The Samoan is likely to flare up easily with emotional and physical outbursts if frustrated by

social relationships . . . Thus physical brawls and violence are far from being unknown in families. They most often occur when a command is not followed." Keesing and Keesing (1956, p. 8) list numerous elements of Samoan character. Among them are "security", "conformity", and "group responsibility" on the one hand, with "devisiveness", "deviousness", "turbulence", and the "potential for violence" on the other.

On the basis of this information, it can be concluded that Samoan society traditionally condones the use of physical punishment by adults against its children. It should be questioned whether the punishment that is provided qualitatively fits McNeese and Hebelers' definition of "disciplinary abuse" - i.e., "severe punishment for real or imagined wrongdoings" (1978, p. 4).

No direct evidence is cited in the literature which specifies instances of physical abuse of children. (In fact, it is interesting to note that there are no words in the Samoan language for the terms "child abuse" and "child neglect".) Those citations previously mentioned seem to be in the realm of "normal parental discipline" according to the definition provided in the American Samoan Child Protection Act of 1977 (Appendix).

However, the fact that a Child Protection Act was mandated, and the fact that a Child Protection Officer was appointed, indicate that there is an abuse problem. Despite the fact that physically,

disciplining children is condoned in American Samoan society, this law is a legal sanction against excesses in physical abuse.

Until this point, the present discussion has centered on the physical abuse of children. At this time, mention of physical neglect and sexual abuse is warranted. Barrow and Sieben (1967, p. 136) mention the fact that although parents are quite fond of their children, they frequently neglect them.

Certainly, Mead's (1928, p. 28) description of seven and eight year old girls being completely responsible for feeding, bathing, teaching and disciplining up to five or six younger siblings might be considered neglect by present U.S. standards.

Holmes states that after infants are turned over to their older siblings for care, "If the older child is not attentive to how much nourishment the baby is getting, serious health problems can result. Malnutrition combined with other complications (usually of a respiratory nature) can take a heavy toll of children during the beginning months of their second year of life" (1974, p. 77). Is this neglect on the part of the parents?

Mead in discussing the sexual relations of adolescents, mentions that young girls having sex with older men and young boys with older women "are exceedingly frequent occurrences" (1928, p. 88). She also discusses incest. Acknowledging that incest does in fact occur, she

states that men accused of this type of activity are severely ostracized by their village.

Physical abuse and neglect, and sexual abuse of children occur in American Samoan society - although they are not traditionally called as such. The diffusion of U.S. values into American Samoan society has caused the Samoan people to recognize their problem and has prompted them to take action to curtail it. (Witness: the Child Protection Act of 1977)

The social change which is occurring in present-day Samoa has brought with it the stresses of the modern world.

- The islands have moved from a subsistence economy to a monetary system, and poverty and malnutrition are becoming apparent.

- A modern educational system has created a generation gap between young and old. Cultural lags abound.

- Young Samoans are breaking ties with their aiga because they do not want the responsibility and obligations of the extended family. However, they are losing the traditional family support system which has been evident throughout Samoan history.

These and other changes have resulted from U.S. presence in the Territory. As Samoan lifestyles, goals and values more closely approach those of people from the U.S., severe stressors have become apparent in their lives.

