

**HUMAN RIGHTS AND VIOLENCE:
INTEGRATING THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPHERES**

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Overview

In this chapter, Eisler calls on us to examine the relationship between violence and abuse in intimate relations and human rights violations in all spheres of life. She argues that this is a missing link in human rights theory as well as in most analyses of social violence.

Eisler introduces an integrated approach to human rights that looks at interrelationships between private and public spheres. She documents how in its parent-child and gender relations the family has often socialized people to accept human rights violations as normal. Instead of classifying gender relations as peripheral "women's issues," Eisler views these relations as a fundamental building block for all human relations.

We can see this connection by looking at regimes known for their human rights violations: they also try to force women into subservience. But even in more democratic nations, the failure to adequately address domination and violence in gender and parent-child relations impedes the construction of what Eisler calls a partnership rather than dominator society.

Force-backed domination in the home is thus linked to force-backed domination by the state, and the domination of half of humanity by the other is a political rather than only personal issue. Recognizing the link between physical and structural violence at the micro- and macrolevels can help us develop adequate analyses and solutions.

Everybody who watches television or reads the newspaper at some point has had to ask themselves why armed aggression, military coups, torture, and terrorism have been so impervious to appeals of either reason or emotion. Why, despite the great human yearning for peace, has warfare -- be it in the name of God, nationalism, or tribalism -- been so recurrent? Why all over the world have reforms and revolutions carried out in the name of liberty and justice at best been only partly successful? Why, instead of steadily moving forward against injustice and repression, are we chronically forced to defend gains already made? In short, why,

despite the mounting struggle over the last three centuries against institutionalized violence and oppression, have we been unable to build the foundations for a world in which human rights are in practice and not just theory protected and respected?

Probing for answers to these questions led me to two other questions which, once articulated, make it possible to see these issues in a different, and much larger context. How can people brought up in families where violence and abuse are commonplace be expected to respect the human rights of people outside their families? Can people brought up to accept brutal practices -- such as child and woman beating and/or genital mutilation and the selective malnutrition of female children -- in their private lives realistically be expected to create a society free of torture, repression, warfare, and terrorism?

The simple answer is they cannot. On the contrary, people who grow up in such families, or who are taught to acquiesce to such practices in other people's families for the sake of social convention, are in fact effectively conditioned to accept human rights violations, not only in the private sphere of the home but also in the public sphere of our nations and our world. In other words, human rights violations in the private and public spheres are interrelated, and only a new integrated approach to both violence and human rights can lead to realistic solutions to problems that otherwise seem insolvable.

This chapter outlines a new conceptual framework for human rights in which the public and private spheres are fully integrated.¹ It begins with a reexamination of the historical development of human rights theory and action that shifts the dialogue about institutionalized violence from issues of national and international relations to underlying questions about human relations (see Eisler 1987b; 1993). It argues that an effective approach to the problem of violence requires a new analysis of human society: one that reassesses many conventional beliefs, both religious and secular, and goes to the foundations of what I have called a partnership rather than dominator model of social organization (e.g., Eisler 1987a; 1987c; 1991; 1994; 1995; Eisler and Loye 1990). Specifically, it shows that unless we address the institutionalization of violence, abuse, and domination in our most intimate relations, we will

¹For a more conventional review of human rights theory, from the natural law tradition derived from Aquinas to marxist-constructionist approaches, see Donnelly 1985. There is an extensive literature on human rights, including publications such as The Human Rights Quarterly, the Human Rights Watch, the ICJ (International Community of Jurists) Review, and the Encyclopedia of Human Rights. Unfortunately most of these publications have tended to address the human rights of women and children only in passing because they focus almost exclusively on the so-called public sphere, generally ignoring what happens in peoples' day-to-day relations in the so-called private sphere.

continue to have chronic human rights violations in all our relations -- in both the private and the public spheres. And it concludes with proposals for specific actions -- actions designed to help us move toward the next phase in the worldwide struggle against institutionalized violence and domination by focusing on the foundations for a world in which human rights can in reality, and not just rhetoric, be recognized and honored.

The Public and Private Spheres

Logically speaking, in a world where human rights are truly valued, the distinction between private and public violence, cruelty, oppression, and discrimination would be seen as absurd. Yet many people still today see private or family relations as separate and distinct, or at best far less important, than political and economic relations in the public sphere. And, though once we analyze it, it makes no sense, this is the view that has shaped -- and by so doing, distorted and stunted -- the historical development of both human rights theory and action.

A basic problem is that from the very beginning the modern movement for human rights -- for a world where violence, cruelty, and oppression are not considered "just the way things are" -- was literally what it is still often called: the movement to protect the "rights of man." Philosophers such as John Locke in the seventeenth century and Jean Jacques Rousseau in the eighteenth century, who proposed the then novel idea that men have "inalienable rights," never spoke of the same rights for women or children.

Indeed, since their concern with despotism was limited to relations among men and men (or more specifically, among free property-owning white men) in the public or political arena, they did not even address the question of despotism in the private or family sphere. On the contrary, while they frontally challenged the then widely accepted notion that kings had a "divine right" to rule over their "subjects" in the state, the supposedly also divinely ordained right of men to be "kings" in the "castles" of their homes was for these men sacrosanct. For, according to them, rather than being individuals innately possessed of "natural rights," women and children were merely members of men's households, "naturally" to be controlled by them.²

There were women, such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Abigail Adams in the eighteenth century and Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Sojourner Truth in the nineteenth century, who argued

²Eisler (1987b) provides a more in-depth discussion of the historical antecedents to the split between the "private" and "public" spheres, and between "women's rights" and "human rights." Bunch (1990) also addresses this split.

that women too have human rights.³ There were also a number of men who made this point. For example, in his essay "The Subjection of Women," published about 150 years ago, the English philosopher John Stuart Mill noted that only "when the most fundamental of the social relations is placed under the rule of equal justice" can a just society be realized ([1869] 1973, 238). Similarly, in The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State (1884), published shortly after Marx's death, Friedrich Engels recognized the family relations between women and men as the model for class oppression. But by and large, as they still generally are today, such writings were banished to the intellectual ghetto of feminism.

Thus, the splitting off of "human rights" from "women's rights" and later also "children's rights" was established. This in turn led to the accompanying distinction in human rights theory and practice between the "public" (or men's) world and the "private" world, to which women and children were still generally confined by custom, and sometimes also by law.

Yet human society is based, first and foremost, on the relations between the female and male halves of humanity and on their relations with their sons and daughters. Our very first lessons about human relations (and thus also about human rights) are learned not in the public but in the private sphere. This is where people learn to respect the rights of others to freedom from violence, cruelty, oppression, and discrimination -- or where they learn violence, cruelty, oppression, and discrimination.

Once we examine human rights from this unified perspective, many things that otherwise seem random and unconnected begin to fall into place. Specifically, the link between force-backed domination in the state and force-backed domination in gender and parent-child relations becomes visible.

We can then see why throughout history regimes noted for their human rights violations, such as Hitler's Germany, Khomeini's Iran, Stalin's Soviet Union, and Zia's Pakistan, have made the return of women to their "traditional" (or subservient) place in a male-headed family a priority. We can also see why today in the United States those who would push us back to the "good old days," when most men and all women still "knew their place" and "holy wars" were the order of the day, have likewise opposed equal rights for women. For example, it helps explain why rightist-fundamentalists pushed for a "Family Protection" Act that would have cut

³For example, in the first U.S. Women's Rights Convention in 1848 (the same year Marx and Engels issued the much more publicized Communist Manifesto), Elizabeth Cady Stanton adapted the U.S. Declaration of Independence as a Women's Rights Manifesto by adding two critical words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal..." (Stanton [1948] 1972, emphasis added).

funding for battered women's shelters -- thus protecting a family structure where male "heads of household" can violently exercise despotic control.

This connection between rigid male domination in the family and despotism in the state also helps explain the Muslim fundamentalist custom found in chronically violent areas -- where terrorism continues to be seen as legitimate and honorable -- of not bringing men to trial for the "honor" killings of their wives, sisters, and daughters for any suspected sexual independence. For it is through the rule of terror in the family that both women and men learn to accept rule by terror as "normal," be it in their own societies or against other tribes or nations.

As Engels noted, in the despotic Roman Empire the male head of household had life and death powers, not only over his slaves but also over the women and children in his household. Similarly, under the English Common Law, which developed during a time when monarchs maintained their rule through fear and force, husbands were legally permitted to beat their wives if they disobeyed them -- the well-known phrase "rule of thumb" going back to a legal reform decreeing that the stick a man used could be no thicker than his thumb.⁴ So here too we clearly see the systems relation between force-backed domination in the home and force-backed domination in the state.

Moreover, as the psychotherapist Alice Miller points out, if we examine the childhoods of brutal despots like Adolf Hitler, we see yet another link between the institutionalization of domination based on cruelty and terror in childrearing and the institutionalization of domination backed by cruelty and terror in the state (1983). The biographies of such demagogic archcriminals reveal that their cruelty and violence -- and particularly their violent persecution of "inferior" or "dangerous" people, be they Jews in Germany, Blacks in the American South, or "disobedient" women in the fundamentalist Muslim world -- is in large part rooted in the violence and cruelty they experienced as children.

To be sure, not all people raised in violent households become violent and brutal. But studies such as the classic The Authoritarian Personality have documented how individuals who participate in and/or acquiesce to authoritarianism, violence, and scapegoating in the state tend to be individuals from families where authoritarianism, violence, and scapegoating were also the norm (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Sanford 1950). In other words, such studies verify what common sense would tell us: that the link between cruelty and violence in the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of the state is all too real.

⁴Eisler (1977) discusses the English and American common law affecting women (see also Blackstone [1765-69] 1908).

Personal and Family Rights

But, we might ask, should a government or international agency have the power to interfere in people's private affairs? Even granting that what we experience and learn in our families affects our attitudes and behaviors in all spheres of life, shouldn't what happens inside a family be free from outside interference? What about the right to privacy?

Certainly the right to privacy, or more precisely the right to protection from governmental interference with the right to privacy, is an important civil right. But the right to protection from governmental interference in certain areas of personal choice and action -- such as with whom to speak and associate, with whom to have intimate (including sexual) relations, whether to conceive or not to conceive, and whether to carry or not to carry a pregnancy to term -- is a personal right.

In other words, these are not family rights. Rather, they are individual rights -- even though they may involve personal choices and actions that characteristically take place within the family.

Moreover, personal relations in families have always been socially regulated. For example, the killing of one brother by another in the privacy of their home is generally regarded as a crime in both tribal and modern codes of law.

But while every society in fact interferes with internal family affairs through both custom and law, subjecting them to both legal regulation and outside scrutiny, all too often these customs and laws have been applied very selectively. Indeed, all too often they have served to permit, rather than prevent violence, cruelty, oppression, and discrimination.

For example, Islamic laws still permit a husband to have more than one wife and to divorce wives (who are often completely dependent on their husbands for economic survival) by simply repeating "I divorce you" three times -- while women do not have the same right. As late as the nineteenth century (long after the Declaration of Independence proclaimed that all men have inalienable rights to life, liberty, and property), women in most American states had few if any political or economic rights, and were upon marriage legally divested of any right to control property, including even property they brought into the marriage. And only a few years ago, the Kenyan legislature refused to enact a law forbidding husbands to beat their wives -- as some members of the Kenyan Parliament argued, because this would interfere with men's traditional

right to "teach their wives good manners."⁵

Even when there are laws on the books that ostensibly protect women or children, these laws are often selectively enforced -- or not enforced -- in ways that actually protect their violators from scrutiny and punishment. An example is the still widespread failure in much of the world to legally prosecute husbands who beat their wives (sometimes even despite laws prohibiting such battering) on the ground that this is a "domestic" or internal family affair. Still another example is how, despite laws and international conventions outlawing slavery, the practice of families selling girl children into prostitution (or sexual slavery) continues unabated in parts of the world (particularly Asia), in large part because it is generally not prosecuted.⁶

So while there has been, and continues to be, much talk about protecting the family, the principle of noninterference in the private or family sphere has often in fact been used to maintain a particular kind of family: a family in which women and children have few if any individual rights. And under cover of this mantle of "family protection" men still can with impunity dominate and hurt women, parents can do the same to children, and women and children have no recourse in either custom or law.

This is why the distinction that is here being made between personal and family rights is so critical. Clearly a person's right to make certain private decisions should be free from governmental interference. But that is not the same as immunizing family decisions -- or more specifically, the decisions of those who wield power in a family -- from public scrutiny and regulation. In short, the protection of personal rights is not synonymous with noninterference

⁵This comes from a Time magazine report quoted in Women's International Network (WIN) News (Autumn 1979, 42). Another legislator, Kimunai Arap Soi, even charged that the bill was "very un-African." (Ibid.) But as the Kenyan women's magazine VIVA observed: "there is nothing 'African' about injustice or violence, whether it takes the form of mistreating wives and mothers, or slums, or circumcision. Often the very men who...excuse injustice to women with the phrase 'it is African,' are wearing three-piece, pin-striped suits and shiny shoes." (Quoted in Heise 1989, 8).

⁶A pioneering work on this subject is Barry (1979). Barry is director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (P.O. Box 10077, State College, PA 16805, U.S.A.), an organization trying to bring to the attention of the international community the worldwide traffic in women. This campaign is particularly urgent today, as due to the rapid spread of AIDS, the sexual enslavement of women not only condemns millions of girls and women to a miserable existence sexually servicing men, but in many cases to death. For example, in the all too accurately named "cages" of Bombay's red light district, the World Health Organization estimated that in 1992 35% of the girls and women were already infected with the AIDS virus, up from 3% in 1988 (Drogin 1992). The situation in other sex tourist centers, such as Bangkok, where girls from the poor northern parts of Thailand and other regions of Asia are regularly sold to sex entrepreneurs, may be even worse.

with actions within the family -- and in fact there often is a direct conflict between the two.

Traditions of Domination

Another familiar argument against "outside interference" in family affairs is that the family is the repository of traditional religious and/or cultural values with which neither laws nor governments, much less international agencies, should be permitted to interfere. But once again, if we go beneath the rhetoric to the realities and re-examine what is here at stake, we see that the issue is not so much one of preserving religious or cultural traditions, but of preserving those traditions that maintain a particular form of familial and social organization. And we also see that from the very beginning it has been precisely the re-examination -- and rejection -- of cultural and/or religious traditions that has fueled the modern movement for human rights.

In fact, the whole basis of the modern human rights movement is the rejection of autocratic cultural traditions backed up by fear and force. For instance, the autocratic rule of kings was once justified, and staunchly defended, by religious authorities who claimed that kings and other "noblemen" have a divinely-ordained right to rule. It was also vigorously defended by secular philosophers such as Edmund Burke -- who argued that the doctrine of "the rights of man" would lead "to the utter subversion, not only of all government, in all modes, but all stable securities to rational freedom, and all the rules and principles of morality itself" (Burke quoted in Castel 1946, 425).

This kind of rhetoric is all too familiar, as it is still in our time used to oppose "women's rights" and "children's rights" by both religious authorities and secular writers who would have us see women's and children's rights as subversive of the moral order and a threat to family and social stability. Not only that, but violations of women's and children's rights -- including brutal violence against women and children -- are to our day often justified in the name of tradition.

Thus the cry against interference with ethnic traditions is still raised to defend the genital mutilations which in parts of Asia and Africa kill, maim, and blight the physical and psychological health of millions of women and little girls every year. Unlike male circumcision, with which these practices are sometimes erroneously equated, these are not ceremonial cuttings of skin. They often consist of cutting off the clitoris (designed to deprive women of sexual pleasure, and thus presumably the desire to "stray") or cutting off the labia and tightly sewing up the vaginal opening (making sexual intercourse impossible until a larger opening is again cut

before marriage).⁷

Due to the challenge by women's rights advocates around the world, some national leaders have condemned such practices.⁸ But to date international human rights organizations have not taken a strong stand -- even though genital mutilation is estimated to affect over 100 million women in Africa and Asia and is being brought by immigrants into Europe, Canada, and the United States.

This failure by international human rights organizations to speak out against an institutionalized, governmentally protected form of torture is all the more incomprehensible since the elimination of torture is universally accepted as a top human rights priority. A reason given by international human rights organizations, when they give a reason at all, is that genital mutilation is not torture in the conventional legal-political sense: an instrument of political oppression to exact conformity and suppress dissent. But while the practice of genital mutilation is embedded in religious rites and/or ethnic customs, its essential purpose is in fact extremely political. It is an effective means of perpetuating male power over -- indeed, male ownership of -- women. Moreover, like the torture of political prisoners, genital mutilation is an effective means of breaking a person's spirit, since it not only causes traumatic pain, even death, but afflicts its survivors with major physical and psychological problems for the rest of their lives. Like the painful and deforming foot binding of girls in pre-Revolutionary China, genital mutilation thus exacts conformity and suppresses dissent precisely because even the victim is socialized -- from childhood -- into accepting it.

But the idea that human rights organizations must not speak out against this form of torture out of respect for cultural traditions is not only illogical. It is ludicrous. Every

⁷A groundbreaking work on this subject is Hosken (1984). Hosken's quarterly Women's International Network (WIN) News has a regular feature on genital and sexual mutilations. At a World Health Organization-sponsored conference in Dakar, Senegal, in 1984, the Inter-African Committee (IAC) was established as an umbrella organization dedicated to abolishing female circumcision and to dispelling the ignorance and myths that perpetuate this practice, such as the false belief that the Koran demands circumcision. (An updated copy of the Hosken Report, is available from Fran Hosken, Women's International Network News, 187 Grant Street, Lexington, MA 02173). Hosken also distributes The Childbirth Picture Book, a valuable tool for women in developing countries, which includes information on excision and infibulation. To date The Childbirth Picture Book has been translated into English, French, Arabic, and Spanish. Hosken is currently working on a Somalian translation, as genital mutilation is almost universally practiced in that nation.

⁸African nations that have begun to take measures against the continuation of genital mutilation include Egypt, Kenya, and Sudan, where in 1979 at the Khartoum Seminar the World Health Organization (WHO) recommended the eradication of these practices.

institutionalized behavior, including cannibalism and slavery, is a cultural tradition. And surely no human rights advocate, or for that matter anyone else, would today dare to justify cannibalism or slavery (which were once also traditional practices in certain cultures) on cultural or traditional grounds.

Neither would any human rights advocate have justified apartheid or segregation based on race in South Africa as a cultural tradition -- which it certainly was during the years of white rule. Yet segregation based on gender, which is still the norm in much of the Muslim world (including whole nations such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan), is still defended by some Muslims and non-Muslims on the grounds that it is a cultural tradition. This, even though it too effectively bars one group (women) from equal access to educational and employment opportunities, even freedom of movement, and although this group is in fact half of the population!

Similarly, no human rights advocate would think of justifying house arrest. Yet is this not what the cultural tradition of secluding women accomplishes when it confines women to special quarters which they may not leave without male permission? And while it is tempting to frame this issue in regional terms, because the examples from the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia are so striking, it is important to remember that gender segregation, or what Dessima Williams calls gender apartheid, is to varying degrees a universal problem.⁹

For example, the custom of segregating jobs into women's and men's work, with work assigned to women given lower status and pay, regardless of requirements of technical skill, intellectual ability, or moral sensitivity, has been a major factor in maintaining the subordination of women to men worldwide. Thus, in the former Soviet Union, where employment outside the home was encouraged for women, the sad fact is that the occupations and professions where women were concentrated -- from street cleaning to medicine (which in the U.S. has been dominated by men and extremely lucrative) -- were poorly paid. In the United States, despite legislation mandating equal opportunities for women, the same pattern prevails. It is not inaccurate to say that for many American women the opportunity to enter the paid labor market has in practice meant the opportunity to work in jobs where they get lower wages than white males.

This leads to another critical point. To note that the evils of gender-based segregation are not yet as fully recognized by human rights advocates as the evils of race-based segregation is

⁹Dessima Williams introduced the term "global gender apartheid" at the First Minoan Celebration of Partnership held in Crete in October 1992, cosponsored by the Center for Partnership Studies.

not in any way meant to make invidious comparisons between traditions of racial discrimination and violence and traditions of gender discrimination and violence. Obviously discrimination and violence based on race is a major problem worldwide all too graphically evidenced by the magnitude, and injustice, of the economic disparities between North and South.

But to recognize this should not blind us to the magnitude, and injustice, of the economic disparities between men and women -- and to how truly shocking their omission from conventional discussions of either economic or political rights really is. This comes into even clearer focus when we consider that in most parts of the world women and children are the majority of the poor and the poorest of the poor (Eisler 1987a, 172-84). It becomes even more shocking in light of the fact that globally women as a group work much longer hours than men as a group; that according to the United Nations 1985 State of the World's Women Report, women perform two-thirds of the world's work, for which they only earn one-tenth of its income and own less than one-hundredth of its property.

In the United States, the fact that women who hold outside jobs still do most of the childcare and housework is commonly called the "double burden." In the former Soviet Union -- because of the long hours women had to spend (after their jobs and in addition to taking care of children and home) standing in lines for food and other necessities -- it could properly have been called the "triple burden." But once again, this is not meant to single out particular countries, such as the United States or the former Soviet Union. Economic discrimination (or to borrow Johan Galtung's term, "structural violence" [1980]) against women is ubiquitous.

The Double Standard for Violence

Physical violence against women -- which, once again, has only in recent years been systematically studied and reported -- is also ubiquitous. Thus, domestic violence against women is a major problem in most parts of the world, including the United States, where, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, a woman is beaten every fifteen seconds (U.S. Department of Justice 1986). It too is deeply ingrained in many cultural traditions, with study after study showing that it cuts across all national, racial, and socio-economic lines. Study after study also shows that this tradition of domestic violence, which blights the lives of countless millions of women worldwide, has been passed on from generation to generation precisely

because men have not generally been held accountable, much less prosecuted for this violence.¹⁰

Even the killing of female children and women is not prosecuted in some cultures if it is by a male family member.¹¹ And where statistics are kept by sex, they show that victims of family murders are overwhelmingly women and children, as, for example in Austria, where in 1985, 54 percent of all murders were committed within families and 90 percent of the victims were women and children (Bernard and Schlaffer 1986).

As Lori Heise (1989) writes, few phenomena are as pervasive, yet so ignored, as violence against women. She also notes that most of this violence is rooted in long-standing customs, like the habit of men around the world of using alcohol as an excuse for beating their wives and girlfriends. And these patterns of violence against women -- from the selective starving of girl children and bride burnings of India¹² to the rape of a woman every six minutes in the United States (F.B.I. 1988) -- have continued precisely because they have for so long been generally perceived as "normal," even by the victims themselves, who have been socialized by their families to accept such brutality. Thus, in the United States rapes have been widely reported only in recent years, since in the past -- as is still the case in many cultures today -- the rape victim and not the rapist would be punished, under traditions that blamed women for "tempting men to sin" or for "not being at home where they belong."

While government restrictions on foreign travel (as in the case of Soviet Jews) have been soundly condemned by international human rights organizations, the inability of millions of women (not only in Islamic nations but in many other parts of the world) to travel without male permission is still rarely noted in the general discourse about human rights violations.

¹⁰Recent studies from the United States and Canada verify this, showing that when men are prosecuted and jailed for domestic violence (as people routinely are for violence against friends or strangers), this acts as a deterrent. See for example Berk and Newton 1985. The experience in Minneapolis, where husbands are prosecuted and jailed, also showed the importance of holding men legally accountable for violence against their wives or lovers.

¹¹For example, so-called "honor" killings of women suspected of sexual independence are still not prosecuted in many parts of the Middle East, and the killing of baby girls, which reappeared in China after the government instituted its one child family policy, is likewise still condoned by custom, not only in parts of rural China but in other regions of the world.

¹²"The Lesser Child: The Girl in India," a report prepared by the government of India to mark South Asia's Year of the Girl Child 1990, has verified the heartbreaking situation of women in India. For example, it reports UNICEF findings that 25% of Indian girls die before the age of 15 because of systematic patterns of neglect, discrimination, and sometimes infanticide due to their gender (Crossette 1990).

Similarly, this discourse still generally fails to recognize how deeply ingrained traditions of cruelty to children have been in all parts of the world. This includes traditions of physical abuse, such as beatings (which in most parts of the world are the norm rather than exception, and sometimes are even condoned by law) and sexual molestations (which according to some estimates, affect 25 percent of U.S. girls (Blume 1990, xiv). It also includes more subtle traditions of psychological abuse that are now understood by a growing number of scientists as psychosocial, rather than purely individual, pathologies (Eisler 1995, esp. 182-87).

This double standard for human rights (read, men's rights) and women's and children's rights obviously has extremely adverse consequences for the quality of women's and children's lives -- often even resulting in their deaths. But it also has extremely adverse consequences for boys and men. This is documented by a recent study based on data from 89 nations, which shows how gender discrimination and violence undermine the overall quality of life for everyone (Eisler, Loye, and Norgaard 1995).

It is ironic -- and politically dangerous -- that the systems connection between what happens in the private and public spheres is more often recognized by those working against, rather than for, human rights. For example, U.S. right-wing fundamentalists accurately see male authority in the family as the cornerstone of the kind of society they would impose. But it is also understandable, since right-wing fundamentalists draw upon integrated traditions of domination that span the entire spectrum of human relations -- from the family to the tribe or state.

All of which takes us back to the urgent need for a new integrated approach to human rights. For like the submerged mass of an iceberg with only its tip in view, traditions of domination and violence in the private sphere provide the foundations for domination and violence in the more visible political or public sphere (Eisler 1995).

Indeed, it is only when we begin to apply a single standard to human rights violations, whether they occur in our intimate or international relations, that we see how the distinction between the public and private spheres has prevented the application of human rights standards to the most formative and fundamental human relations.

For the basic fact is that people learn in their families what behaviors will be punished, or not punished -- and thus effectively condoned. And as long as cruelty and violence in families are condoned rather than condemned and prosecuted, not only will these continue from generation to generation, but so also will acts of cruelty and violence outside of the family (Eisler 1995).

From Domination to Partnership

Today the world stands at a crossroads. On the one side is the well-trodden path of violence and domination -- of man over woman, parent over child, race over race, nation over nation, and man over nature. This is the road leading to a world of totalitarian controls and ecological or nuclear disaster. On the other side lies a very different path: the road to a world where our basic civil, political, and economic rights -- including protection from domination and violence and, just as urgently, protection of our natural environment from man's fabled "conquest of nature" -- will at long last be respected. This road could take us to a new era when partnership and peace, rather than domination and violence, are the general norm.

I use the terms domination and partnership in a specific way. They describe two contrasting configurations or models of social organization that make it possible to see patterns that are not visible using conventional categories such as capitalism versus communism, religious versus secular, or right versus left (Eisler 1987a; 1995).

In the *dominator* model, human differences -- beginning with the differences between male and female -- are automatically equated with inferiority or superiority, with those deemed superior (such as men) dominating and those deemed inferior (such as women) being dominated. In this model, human rights are, by definition, severely limited, as the whole system is ultimately held together by fear and force.

By contrast, in the *partnership* model -- again beginning with the difference between women and men -- difference is not automatically equated with inferiority or superiority. Boys and girls do not learn early on to divide humanity into in-groups and out-groups. Instead, both halves of humanity are equally valued and "softer" more stereotypically "feminine" values such as caring, non-violence, and empathy can in fact (not just rhetoric) be given social and economic precedence, since men do not have to be socialized for domination and conquest -- be it of women, other men, other nations, or nature. In short, in this model human rights can in fact and not merely theory be protected in both the so-called private and public spheres.

Models are abstractions. (See charts for some salient features of both models). But the degree to which a society orients to one or the other profoundly affects all areas of our lives.

It is noteworthy that new evidence from archaeology indicates that, contrary to what we have been taught, for thousands of years in our prehistory many societies oriented primarily to the partnership rather than dominator model. In other words, strong-man rule, be it in the family or the state, has not always been the human norm (Eisler 1987a; 1995; Eisler and Loye 1990).

A detailed discussion of these models is beyond the scope of this chapter. The main point I want to bring out here is that if we look at the modern human rights movement as a key element in the struggle to free ourselves from a dominator model of human relations, we can see that the first phase of this movement challenged what we might term the top of the dominator pyramid: domination -- and with it, institutionalized violence -- in the public or political sphere. And we can also see that the next essential step is the challenge to the base upon which that pyramid rests and continues to rebuild itself: domination and institutionalized violence in the private sphere of family relations, and even more specifically, in the day-to-day relations between women and men and parents and children.

Indeed, the "culture wars" launched in the United States by the heads of the right-wing fundamentalist movement center on strengthening a male-headed family where women must render unpaid services (with no independent access to income), and children of both genders must learn that orders from above have to be strictly obeyed on pain of severe physical punishment. Viewed from the dynamic perspective of *the cultural transformation theory* I have proposed (e.g., Eisler 1987a; 1987c; 1991; 1995), this reinforcement of traditions of domination in gender and parent-child relations by those who consider rigid rankings of domination divinely ordained makes sense. It is a reaction to the growing challenge to traditions of force-backed domination in the so-called private sphere of our foundational day-to-day interpersonal relations.

For example, not so long ago, the common wisdom was "spare the rod and spoil the child." Now we are beginning to recognize child beating as child abuse. It used to be joked that "if rape is inevitable" a woman should "relax and enjoy it." Now rape is increasingly recognized as an act not of sexual passion but of aggression and violence. Gradually the ethnic tradition of genital mutilation is being recognized as a brutal means of maintaining male sexual control over women. Increasingly customs like the payment of "bride price" -- where women (often mere children) are purchased from their own families into arranged marriages where they must not only bear a man children but often work from dawn to dusk -- are recognized for what they are: a form of slave trade.

These are major changes in consciousness that could presage a new integrated stage in the modern political movements to shift from a dominator to a partnership model -- and with this, to real respect for human rights. But changes in consciousness must be accompanied by social and political action if they are to result in changed institutional infrastructures.

A Call to Action

Meetings such as the 1993 United Nations Human Rights Conference in Vienna brought increased attention to violence against women and other human rights violations in the private sphere.¹³ The next step is a reformulation of human rights theory and action to fully integrate the private and public spheres. More specifically, what needs to be formulated are new human rights guidelines for use by governmental and non-governmental agencies for altering their charters, policies, and most important, action agendas.

This is not as difficult as it may seem, since many of the building blocks for an integrated approach to human rights are already in place. Most notably, during the past two decades there have been two U.N. conventions that specifically deal with the human rights of the hitherto generally excluded majority -- women and children. The first is the 1979 U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which for the first time moved beyond the spurious distinction between the public and private spheres, specifically addressing the need to integrate "women's rights" into the purview of both human rights theory and action. The second is the 1989 U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, which likewise focuses heavily on the private or familial sphere.

There are other conventions that provide materials for constructing a new integrated framework for human rights. For instance, United Nations conventions condemning slavery (or the ownership of one human being by another) and UNESCO reports such as the 1975 analysis of prostitution "hotels" in Europe (which document women's torture and imprisonment) could be extremely useful. So also could the Forward Looking Strategies from the United Nations Decade for Women, (1975-1985), the 1990-1995 System Wide Medium Term Plan for Women and Development, the Fourth (1995) U.N. World Conference on Women Platform for Action, and the research of INSTRAW (the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for Women).

There are also the resources of numerous non-governmental organizations. Examples in relation to the problems and rights of women are the International Women's Rights Action Watch (organized by Arvonne Frazer at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs of the

¹³ I was particularly active in one of these conferences, "Empowering Women: Achieving Human Rights in the 21st Century," an international conference held October 29-31, 1992 at Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, which focused on some of the building blocks needed for a new integrated model of human rights as a vehicle for reducing violence worldwide.

University of Minnesota to monitor, analyze, and encourage law and policy reform in accordance with the principles of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), the Sisterhood is Global Institute (presently headquartered in New Zealand), and groups such as Women Living Under Muslim Laws International Solidarity Network (in Grabels, Montpelier, France) and Terre des Femmes (founded in 1981 in Lausanne, Switzerland, to include gender-specific persecution as political persecution under the provisions of the Geneva Refugee Convention of 1948).¹⁴ Monitoring the needs and problems of children are organizations such as UNICEF, the Children's Defense Fund in Washington DC, the Inter-American Children's Institute in Montevideo, Uruguay, and Defense for Children International-USA in New York, to name but a few.

Moreover, the theme for the 1994 U.N. International Year of the Family was "building the smallest democracy at the heart of society." This too points to a growing consciousness of the need highlighted in this chapter to move beyond the double standard for violations of the human rights of women and children in the family and violations of men's political and economic rights in the state.

Governmental reporting of human rights violations in the "private sphere" has also begun. Started during Jimmy Carter's presidency but discontinued during the Reagan regime, the U.S. State Department -- in response to years of tireless lobbying by human rights activists such as Fran Hosken -- in 1989 again instructed its embassies to report the extent to which foreign governments tolerate or condone violence against women, including domestic or "private" violence. Although they have not been adequately enforced, the two Percy Amendments (1973 and 1974) mandate U.S. and international agencies to study the impact of development programs on women. By 1987, the Netherlands, Norway, Canada, Sweden, and Denmark had also adopted policy guidelines to try to ensure that development funds are used to protect and strengthen women's rights by requiring that appraisal reports of their foreign development aid include information about women (Hosken, personal communication, 1993).

These are important policy breakthroughs that have been sparked by social activists who want human rights applied equally to all. Further advances would be made if, for example,

¹⁴For instance, Women Living Under Muslim Laws International Solidarity Network and Terre des Femmes assiduously worked to obtain political asylum for Maryan Zerazi in Germany, on the grounds that women fleeing from "honor killings," widow burning, genital mutilation, and other gender-specific human rights violations should be recognized as political refugees. Zerazi is a Syrian woman who has fled halfway around the world to protect herself from a violent husband who threatened to kill her if she left him. (letter from Women Living Under Muslim Laws, November 11, 1992)

foreign aid policies imposed trade sanctions -- such as those proposed by former Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder (USA Today, 27 Mar 1990) -- against countries that violate women's human rights, just as there have been trade sanctions against South Africa's racist treatment of blacks. Conversely, inducements, such as being placed in favored nation trade categories could be provided for nations that enact and enforce legislation protecting women and children from domestic violence. Nations that provide evidence that such legislation is being enforced could also receive specific aid to support the enforcement of such laws, not only for humanitarian reasons but because family violence is a major impediment to successful economic development and a model for violence in all relations -- including international relations (Eisler, Loye, and Norgaard 1995).

As a major contributor to the United Nations, the United States could pressure U.N. agencies, such as the World Bank, to adopt equal employment policies and increase their hiring of women, especially for decision-making positions. If we are committed to supporting democracy in the world, redressing the undemocratic underrepresentation of women in policy-making positions in all nations (including the United States) and at the United Nations should be a top policy priority.¹⁵

Such proposals have a much better chance of being implemented if they are backed by non-governmental organizations, particularly human rights groups, which could forcefully lobby for them. These organizations could also launch an international human rights education campaign focusing on stopping violence and abuse in the family as the basis for a less violent, more peaceful, more democratic world.

As I write this, there rage in our world scores of armed conflicts, most of them civil wars where men, women, and children are being maimed, tortured, and killed, for example the carnage in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Violence against traditionally disempowered groups is growing, be it against foreigners in Germany, immigrants in the United States, or women in places where Muslim fundamentalists are trying to seize power -- for example, the gunning down in Algeria of two young female students for the "crime" of standing at a bus stop

without covering their heads, as is traditionally prescribed for Muslim women.¹⁶ Terrorism is

¹⁵To his credit, President Bill Clinton's appointments mark a major breakthrough in this respect. His own partnership with Hillary Rodham Clinton, two of whose major interests have long been advancing women's status and protecting children's rights, undoubtedly contributed to Clinton's commitment to policies to improve conditions for children and to advance the rights of women.

¹⁶Women Envision (June 1994) reported these murders. (Women Envision is published by Isis

becoming commonplace, even in the United States -- as tragically illustrated by the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the earlier bombing of the New York Trade Center.

Yet "heroic" male violence -- in service of what its perpetrators consider a just cause -- continues to be idealized, and we are daily bombarded with ever more brutal images of "entertaining" brutality. In the United States, movies are X-rated if they contain nudity or sex. Yet movies, comics, rock videos, and television programs that are watched by millions of young people constantly show men engaged in beatings, rapes, murders, and even dismemberment and torture -- with women frequently portrayed only in the role of victims.¹⁷ This effectively accustoms people to view domination and violence as normal, even "fun" -- thus further teaching us to be insensitive to people's human rights (Eisler 1995).

In terms of the conceptual framework proposed by cultural transformation theory -- of modern history as the tension between a powerful movement toward partnership and the strong, often violent, dominator systems resistance -- it is predictable that a social organization based on rankings backed by force and fear will promote violence to maintain its hold (Eisler 1995). While the contemporary escalation of violence in both reality and the mass media is not a conscious conspiracy, it serves a dominator systems maintenance function. As we are learning from scientists such as Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers (1984), it is a matter of systems dynamics: of how living systems seek to maintain themselves. In other words, it is a function of systems self-organization (Csanyi 1989; Jantsch 1980; Loye and Eisler 1987). Just as the system of organs that constitutes the human body functions to maintain itself, so do the various institutions of a particular type of social system.

However -- and this is of critical importance -- despite these systems-maintenance mechanisms, living systems can, and do, fundamentally change. This happens, as Prigogine and

International, P.O. Box 1837, Quezon City Main, Quezon City 1100, Philippines). The July 27, 1994 Alert for Action of Women Living Under Muslim Laws reports that more than 550 women have been murdered in Kurdistan, with the government remaining silent or even encouraging this through various laws directed against women (Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Boite Postale 23-34790, Grabels, Mont Pelier, France). Women's International Network (WIN) News, also has regular news on the global problem of violence against women, as well as on organizations all over the world working against it. (WIN News, 187 Grant Street, Lexington, Massachusetts 02173, USA).

¹⁷A bill introduced by Senator Paul Simon has paved the way for change. It allows heads of television networks to meet to establish rules governing the use of violence in programs without fear of anti-trust legislation for combining their efforts. It seems far-fetched that they would ever have been prosecuted under anti-trust laws for this reason, but it was through Senator Simon's efforts that ABC, CBS, and NBC officials met to discuss television violence.

Stengers describe, during times of extreme disequilibrium in the system (Prigogine and Stengers 1984). While they describe living systems on the chemical level, similar dynamics are observable on the level of human societies (Eisler 1987a; 1995). However, in human society, there is the added element of conscious choice: of making the commitment to alter not only belief systems but behaviors and social institutions.

People can -- and do -- decide to change both attitudes and behaviors. We see evidence of this around us every day -- from changes in millions of people's smoking behaviors to changes in attitudes, and policies, about child abuse, rape, and sexual harassment. As noted earlier, there have also during the past 300 years been important changes in our family, political, and economic institutions.

A creative campaign to use the mass media to model nonviolent and humane interpersonal and international relations could help accelerate these changes (Eisler in press). Such a campaign can raise consciousness to something we see by simple observation: that human relations based on fear of force and pain (the dominator model) are not the only alternative. It would teach us to recognize human rights violations in our intimate relations: the day-to-day relations between men and women and parents and children. And it would help people make sense of all the contemporary talk of "supporting and strengthening the family." For it would open the way to raising a fundamental, though still rarely articulated, issue: what kind of family do we want to support and strengthen?

If it is a dominator family where women and children have few if any rights, the prospects for human rights are grim indeed, as are the prospects for a less violent and more democratic world. If it is a partnership family where the rights of all members are fully recognized and implemented, there is reason for long-range hope.

It is on this note of hope for the future that I want to close. Completing the shift from a dominator to a partnership society is a long-range goal. But if we now begin to do the foundational work, we can begin to build a better future. And ultimately the only realistic way to break cycles of violence -- whether interpersonal or international -- is to help women and men and parents and children stop accepting the kinds of violent relations that in the international arena, through ever more deadly weapons, today threaten our very survival.

We can create a less violent and more humane world -- but only if we first lay the necessary foundations by taking into account the link between the private and public spheres and addressing not only the rights of "man" but the human rights of the neglected majority: women and children.

Table 1

**The Dominator and the Partnership Models:
Basic Interactive Configurations**

<i>Component</i>	<i>Dominator Model</i>	<i>Partnership Model</i>
<i>One:</i> Gender Relations	The ranking of the male over the female, as well as the higher valuing of the traits and social values stereotypically associated with "masculinity" rather than "femininity."*	Equal valuing of the sexes as well as of "femininity" and "masculinity," or a sexually equalitarian social and ideological structure, where "feminine" values can gain operational primacy.
<i>Two:</i> Violence	A high degree of institutionalized social violence and abuse, ranging from wife -- child -- beating, rape, and warfare to psychological abuse by "superiors" in the family, the workplace, and society at large.	A low degree of social violence, with violence and abuse not structural components of the system.
<i>Three:</i> Social Structure	A predominantly hierarchic** and authoritarian social organization, with the degree of authoritarianism and hierarchism roughly corresponding to the degree of male dominance.	A more generally equalitarian social structure, with difference (be it based on sex, race, religion, or belief system) not automatically associated with superior or inferior social and/or economic status.

* Please note that the terms "femininity" and "masculinity" as used here correspond to the gender stereotypes appropriate for a dominator society (where "masculinity" is equated with dominance and conquest) and not with any inherent female or male traits.

** As used here, the term hierarchic refers to what we may call a *domination* hierarchy, or the type of hierarchy inherent in a dominator model of social organization, based on fear and the threat of force. Such hierarchies should be distinguished from a second type of hierarchy, which for clarity may be called an *actualization* hierarchy, for example, of molecules, cells, and organs in the body: a

progression toward a higher and more complex level of function.

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