STRESS CULTURE AND AGGRESSION

ARNOLD S. LINSKY
RONET BACHMAN
& MURRAY A. STRAUS

Is life in the United States becoming more stressful? Are levels of stress related to residence in a particular state or region? Is stress in a society associated with aggression?

In this important book the authors report on a major research project that establishes a link between stress and aggression in the United States. They first update the standard State Stress Index, which evaluates statistics on business failure, unemployment, divorces, abortion, illegitimate births, disaster assistance, welfare, and school dropout rates for the fifty states. Using these current indexes, they are able to compare differences among states in the stressfulness of life. They then present new data on violence—both violence directed at others (homicide, intrafamily assault, and rape) and self-destructive violence (suicide and substance abuse). The authors make a compelling case that stress leads to widespread and often lethal aggression. In addition, they consider cultural norms of various groups within states relating to drinking, the use of violence for socially legitimate purposes, the status of women, and readership of pornography, in an effort to explain geographic differences in the manifestations of violence.

Linsky, Bachman, and Straus conclude by outlining the policy implications of their findings.

Arnold S. Linsky is professor of sociology and senior faculty fellow at the University of New Hampshire. Ronet Bachman is a researcher at the National Institute of Justice. Murray A. Straus is professor of sociology and co-director of the Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire. He is also co-author of Four Theories of Rape in America Society, published by Yale University Press.
CONTENTS

Acknowledgments vii

Part 1  The Stressfulness of Life in the United States
1. The Concepts of Stress and Aggression  3
2. Change in Social Stress  21

Part 2  Stress and Self-Destructive Behavior
3. Stress, Smoking, and Death  41
4. Stress, Drinking Culture, and Drinking Problems  54
5. The Relation of Objective and Subjective Stress to Suicide  70
6. Gender Differences in the Links between Stress, Suicide, and Homicide  79

Part 3  Assault, Rape, and Homicide
7. Culture, Stress, and the Drinking-Violence Connection  99
8. Stress and Homicide of Family Members, Acquaintances, and Strangers  113
9. Legitimate Violence, Gun Availability, and Methods of Homicide  130
10. Stress and Rape in the Context of American Society  143

Part 4  Summary and Conclusions
11. The Stress Process, Aggression, and Social Policy  157

Appendixes  175
References  187
Index  197