

Symposium on the Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis

N. Miller, R. R. Sears, S. Rosenzweig, G. Bateson, D. M. Levy, G. W. Hartmann & A. H. Maslow (1941)

Classics in the History of Psychology

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First published in *Psychological Review*, 48, 337-366.

I. ["The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis"](#) by Neal E. Miller

II. ["Non-Aggressive reactions to frustration"](#) by Robert R. Sears

III. ["Need-Persistent and Ego-Defensive Reactions to Frustration as Demonstrated by an Experiment in Repression"](#) by Saul Rosenzweig

IV. ["The Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis and Culture"](#) by Gregory Bateson

V. ["The Hostile Act"](#) by David M. Levy

VI. ["Frustration Phenomena in the Social and Political Sphere"](#) by George W. Hartmann

VII. ["Deprivation, Threat and Frustration"](#) by A. H. Maslow

I. THE FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION HYPOTHESIS [1]

Neal E. Miller (1941)

(with the collaboration of Robert R. Sears, O.H. Mowrer, Leonard W. Doob & John Dollard)

Institute of Human Relations, Yale University

First published in *Psychological Review*, 48, 337-342.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis is an attempt to state a relationship believed to be important in many different fields of research. It is intended to suggest to the student of human nature that when he sees aggression he should turn a suspicious eye on possibilities that the organism or group is confronted with frustration; and that when he views interference with individual or group habits, he should be on the look-out for, among other things, aggression.

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This hypothesis is induced from commonsense observation, from clinical case histories, from a few experimental investigations, from sociological studies and from the results of anthropological field work. The systematic formulation of this hypothesis enables one to call sharp attention to certain command characteristics in a number of observations from all of these historically distinct fields of knowledge and thus to take one modest first step toward the unification of these fields.

A number of tentative statements about the frustration-aggression hypothesis have recently been made by us in a book. [2] Unfortunately one of these statements, which was conspicuous because it appeared on the first page, was unclear and misleading as has been objectively demonstrated by the behavior of reviewers and other readers. In order to avoid any further confusion it seems advisable to rephrase this statement, changing it to one which conveys a truer impression of the authors' ideas. The objectionable phrase is the [p. 338] last half of the proposition: "that the occurrence of aggression always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression."

The first half of this statement, the assertion that the occurrence of aggression always presupposes frustration, is in our opinion defensible and useful as a first approximation, or working hypothesis. The second half of the statement, namely, the assertion "that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression" is unfortunate from two points of view. In the first place it suggests, though it by no means logically demands, that frustration has no consequences other than aggression. This suggestion seems to have been strong enough to override statements appearing later in the text which specifically rule out any such implication. [3] A second objection to the assertion in question is that it fails to distinguish between instigation to aggression and the actual occurrence of aggression. Thus it omits the possibility that other responses may be dominant and inhibit the occurrence of acts of aggression. In this respect it is *inconsistent* with later portions of the exposition which make a distinction between the instigation to a response and the actual presence of that response and state that punishment can inhibit the occurrence of acts of aggression. [4]

Both of these unfortunate aspects of the former statement may be avoided by the following rephrasing: Frustration produces investigations to a number of different types of response, one of which is an instigation to some form of aggression.

This rephrasing of the hypothesis states the assumption that was actually used throughout the main body of the text. Instigation to aggression may occupy any one of a number of positions in the hierarchy of instigations aroused by a specific situation which is frustrating. If the instigation [p. 339] to aggression is the strongest member of this hierarchy, then acts of aggression will be the first response to occur. If the instigations to other responses incompatible with aggression are stronger than the instigation to aggression, then these other responses will occur at first and prevent, at least temporarily, the occurrence of acts of aggression. This opens up two further possibilities. If these other responses lead to a reduction in the instigation to the originally frustrated response, then the strength of the instigation to aggression is also reduced so that acts of aggression may not occur at all in the situation in question. If, on the other hand, the first responses do not lead to a reduction in the original instigation, then the instigations to them will tend to become weakened through extinction so that the next most dominant responses, which may or may not be aggression, will tend to occur. From this analysis it follows that the more successive responses of non-aggression are extinguished by continued frustration, the greater is the probability that the instigation to aggression eventually fail become dominant so that some response of aggression actually will occur. Whether or not the successive extinction of responses of non-aggression must inevitably lead to the dominance of the instigation to aggression depends, as was clearly stated in later pages of the book, upon quantitative assumptions beyond the scope of our present knowledge. [5] [6]

Frustration produces instigation to aggression but this is not the only type of instigation that it may produce. Responses incompatible with aggression may, if sufficiently instigated, prevent the actual occurrence of acts of aggression. In our society punishment of acts of aggression is a frequent source of instigation to acts incompatible with aggression.

When the occurrence of acts of aggression is prevented by more strongly instigated incompatible responses, how is the existence of instigation to aggression to be determined? If only the more direct and overt acts of aggression have been [p. 340] inhibited, as is apt to be the case because such acts are the most likely to be punished, then the instigation to aggression may be detected by observing either indirect or less overt acts of aggression. If even such acts of aggression are inhibited, then a different procedure must be employed. Two such procedures are at least theoretically possible. One is to reduce the competing instigations, such as fear of punishment, and observe whether or not acts of aggression then occur. The other is to confront the subject with an additional frustration which previous experiments have demonstrated would by itself be too weak to arouse an instigation strong enough to override the competing responses inhibiting the aggression in question. If the instigation from this additional frustration now results in an act of aggression, then it must have gained its strength to do so by summing with an already present but inhibited instigation to aggression. The presence of the originally inhibited instigation to aggression would be demonstrated by the effects of such summation. Thus the fact that an instigation may be inhibited does not eliminate all possibility of experimentally demonstrating its presence.

At this point two important and related qualifications of the hypothesis may be repeated for emphasis though they have already been stated in the book. It is not certain how early in the infancy of the individual the frustration-aggression hypothesis is applicable, and no assumptions are made as to whether the frustration-aggression relationship is of innate or of learned origin.

Now that an attempt has been made to clarify and to qualify the hypothesis, four of the chief lines of investigation which it suggests may be briefly considered. [7]

1. An attempt may be made to apply the hypothesis to the integration and elucidation of clinical and social data. Here the fact that certain forms of aggression are spectacularly [p. 341] dangerous to society and to the individual is relevant. This means that acute personality conflicts are apt to arise from the problem of handling aggression and that the problem of aggression is apt to play an important rôle in shaping certain great social institutions such as the in-group as an organization against the out-group.

2. An attempt may be made to formulate more exactly the laws determining the different ways in which instigation to aggression will be expressed under specified circumstances. Some of the problems in this field are suggested by the phenomena of displacement of the object of aggression, change in the form of aggression, and catharsis of aggression.

3. An attempt may be made to secure more information concerning the other consequences which frustration may produce in addition to the instigation to aggression. Such an attempt would lead into studies of rational thought and problem solution as suggested in the classical work of John Dewey, and into studies of experimental extinction, trial-and-error learning, substitute response and regression. [8] Work along this line of investigation may deal either with the clinical and social significance of these other consequences of frustration or with the discovery of the laws governing them.

4. An attempt may be made to improve or to reformulate the basic frustration-aggression hypothesis itself. The determination of the laws which allow one to predict exactly under which circumstances instigation to aggression may be expected to occupy the dominant, the second, the third, or some other position in the hierarchy of instigations aroused by a frustrating situation is a most important problem of this type. Another problem is the reduction of the frustration-aggression hypothesis to more fundamental principles and the more accurate restatement of the hypothesis in terms of these more basic principles. One of the steps in this direction would be to scrutinize any exceptions to the hypothesis as now formulated. Another step would involve a careful study of the early stages of the socialization of the individual in an [p. 342] attempt to analyze the interlocking rôles of three factors: first, innate physiological reaction patterns; second, learning mechanisms; and third, the structure of the social maze which poses the learning dilemmas and contains the rewards and punishments. An empirical

and theoretical analysis along these lines might lead to a fundamental reformulation getting a closer approximation of the socially and scientifically useful truths imperfectly expressed in the present frustration-aggression hypothesis.

[1] This and the following six articles are revisions of the papers read at the Symposium on Effects of Frustration at the meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association at Atlantic City, April 5, 1940. A. H. Maslow's, the Chairman's, paper was not read at the meeting because of lack of time.

[2] J. Dollard, L. W. Doob, N. E. Miller, O. H. Mowrer, and R. R. Sears. *Frustration and aggression*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939.

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 8-9, 19, 58, 101-102.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-38 also 27, 39-50 75-87, III, 166. In this later exposition a distinction is made not only between instigation to aggression and acts of aggression but also between conspicuous acts of overt aggression and inconspicuous acts of non-overt aggression. It is assumed that the former are more apt to be culturally inhibited by strong punishments than the latter

[5] *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

[6] "The notions used here are similar to those employed by Professor Hull in describing trial-and-error learning. See Hull, C. L. Simple trial-and-error learning -- an empirical investigation. *J. comp. Psychol.*, 1939, 27, 233-258.

[7] Both of the first two of these chief lines of investigation have been developed at length in *Frustration and Aggression*. No attempt was made there to elaborate upon either the third or the fourth. Thus that first effort does not purport to be a complete systematization of all principles within a single field, but rather, an exploratory attempt to apply a strictly limited number of principles to several different fields. *Op. cit.*, pp. 18, 26.

[8] These problems are discussed in more detail by Dr. Sears in the next paper of this series, 'Non-aggressive responses to frustration.'

II. NON-AGGRESSIVE REACTIONS TO FRUSTRATION [1]

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First published in *Psychological Review*, 48, 343-346.

In order to analyze the nature of the non-aggressive reactions to frustration it is necessary first to consider the systematic setting in which the concept of frustration lies. Any on-going activity derives from some kind of instigation. The activity itself represents a sequence of acts which are instrumental to putting the organism and its environment into such context with each other that the final consummatory act, or goal-response, can be made.

There are two possible consequences in this situation: First, the sequence of actions may be carried through to completion and the organism make its goal-response. In accordance with the law of effect, then, the instrumental act sequence is reinforced. Likewise the instigation to the performance of those acts and the goal-response itself is at least momentarily reduced. An

alternative to this state of affairs is possible, however; the organism may not be able to make the necessary instrumental acts and there is interference with the occurrence of the final goal-response. This is frustration. As Miller [2] has emphasized, one (and *only* one) of the effects of this frustration is the production of a special secondary, frustration-induced instigation, the goal-response to which is aggression.

Such a statement says nothing about the effects on future behavior of the *primary* instigation, the goal-response to which has been frustrated. If one looks at this situation with reference to the instrumental acts and goal-responses concerned, it appears that there are at least three possible action sequences which may occur. [p. 344]

I. The organism may continue or repeat the *same* instrumental acts leading to the *same* goal response. This is the kind of behavior G. V. Hamilton [3] described as being persistent and non-adjustive; it was somewhat more characteristic of lower than of higher animals and of children than of adults.

2. A *different* set of instrumental acts may be *adopted* to put the organism in position to perform the *same* Goal-response. Thorndikian trial-and-error behavior appears to be largely of this kind, and various examples of what might be called instrumental act regression likewise represent simply a re-activation of earlier learned methods of reaching the goal. Children who are ill manifest this phenomenon quite frequently in their efforts to get attention and sympathy. Phantasy gratifications are occasionally of this order as well; in the Dembo problem subjects will frequently describe their imagined fantastic solutions with some defiance. If the experimenter tells them the proposed solution is absurd they may say, "Yes, but it would get the flower!"

3. A *different* set of instrumental acts may be instigated in order to put the organism in such position that it may perform a *different* goal-response from that which was originally frustrated. The Freudian concepts of regression and sublimation both represent this kind of reaction; regression total levels of gratification, for example, forces the adoption of different instrumental acts: in order that the shift may be made from genital to oral goal-responses. But perhaps the most frequent example of this consequence of frustration is the so-called substitute response, in which the new goal-response that is performed has certain of the properties of the original frustrated goal-response and in some degree reduces the strength of the primary instigation [4].

The relation of these substitute responses to the phenomenon called by Lewin 'going out of the field' requires comment on another consequence of frustration, namely, its inhibitory or extinctive influence. Under some circumstances, the conditions of which have not yet been determined, the frustration appears to inhibit further action toward the orig- [p. 345] inal goal-response and this inhibition generalizes to all the substitute responses. In such cases instigation to alternative responses unconnected with the original goal-response becomes relatively dominant and the organism either 'goes out of the field' or, if inhibition is complete, encysts itself. The degree to which these latter responses will occur appears to depend largely on the amount of generalized inhibition produced by frustration of the primary goal-response.

Examination of the clinical and theoretical literature will suggest many more varieties of response to frustration, of course, and, as anyone familiar with the work of Freud, Lewin, Murray and others is well aware, this systematic analysis of reactions to frustration in terms of instigation, instrumental acts and goal responses is not the only way in which they can be systematized. On the other hand, this analysis provides a behavioral and potentially experimentable basis for the understanding of such behavior.

From a research standpoint two problems become of im-mediate significance:

I. The exploratory problem of discovering the total repertory of frustration-reactions available to any individual. It is difficult to tell at present how much further the work in this direction must go before investigators can feel some confidence in the breadth of their perspective.

2. The determination of the specific factors which cause one kind of frustration-reaction rather than another to occur. Surprisingly few hypotheses have been suggested by psycho-analytic researchers to account for either individual differences in choice of reaction or the differences which occur from one occasion to another in the same person. Some little start has been made in this direction, however, by experimentalists. For example, Doob and Sears [5] have delimited certain of the conditions which differentiate between the occurrence of aggressive behavior and substitute responses; the factors which were shown to be of importance were the strength of instigation to the original (frustrated) goal response and the relative strength of anticipations of punishment for aggression. Dr. Helen Nowlis [6] has shown the influence of [p. 346] reinforcement on the frequency of occurrence of substitute responses, and Brown [7] has determined certain of the conditions eventuating in 'going out of the field.' The work of Barker, Dembo and Lewin [8] and of Mowrer [9] on regression likewise contribute to this problem. Various other studies might equally well be cited as examples.

The determination of these various principles is of primary importance for any predictive science that aims at an incorporation of the phenomena of frustration in its systematic structure. Insofar as a theoretical system promotes rather than hinders such an effort, the system is useful. At the present stage of investigation the analysis in terms of instigation, instrumental acts and goal-responses appears to be of definite assistance. But only by continued use in conjunction with laboratory experimentation and in the interpretation and prediction of actual social or individual behavioral events can it be decided whether this is the *most* useful way of collating and conceptualizing the data.

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III. NEED-PERSISTIVE AND EGO-DEFENSIVE REACTIONS TO FRUSTRATION AS DEMONSTRATED BY AN EXPERIMENT ON REPRESSION [1] [2]

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Reactions to frustration may be divided into two fundamental types. One of these looks to the fate of the frustrated segmental need, the other to the fate of the individual as a whole -- namely, the integrated and coordinated personality -- as a result of frustration. In other words, there is a type of reaction to frustration which serves to fulfill the frustrated need in spite of momentary obstructions; on the other hand are those reactions which serve to protect the integration of the personality if and when the latter is threatened by the frustrating situation. The former type of reaction may be designated 'need-persistent' and may be thought of as occurring invariably after frustration, whereas the latter, which may be designated 'ego-defensive,' is conceived as occurring only under special conditions of ego-threat. Most behavior incident to frustration entails both types of reaction but pure cases of each alone are found and the theoretical distinction thus appears justified as an aid to analysis.

The relationship of the present distinction to current *psychoanalytic* concepts is fairly obvious. One function of the present distinction is indeed to clarify the difference among psychoanalytic mechanisms and to assist in their experimental study. Thus, the concept of sublimation points chiefly to need-persistent reactions while that of projection concerns the defense of the ego. A fusion of need-persistent and ego- [p. 348] defensive reactions is found in the mechanism of reaction-formation since here an inhibited impulse gains indirect satisfaction (sublimation) while protecting the ego by a kind of displacement (projection). Most of the psychoanalytic mechanisms might be similarly allocated in the present framework.

A demonstration of the present distinction between need-persistent and ego-defensive reactions to frustration may be given by reporting an experiment designed to investigate the psychoanalytic concept of repression. Two groups of subjects were given a series of Jig-saw picture-puzzles to solve. To one of the groups the puzzles were presented informally, for the ostensible purpose of helping the experimenter classify the problems for future use. The other group was given the same puzzles to solve but as an intelligence test. In both cases the subjects were permitted to finish half of the puzzles but were stopped midway in each of the remaining half. They were then asked to name the puzzles which they had attempted.

It will be readily appreciated that the subjects in the informal group were expected to be working under conditions of comparatively little tension whereas those in the formal group were being considerably aroused. While, in the one case, interest was mainly centered on the task so that incompleteness could mean very little beyond residual tension related to the problem in hand, in the other case the pride of the participants: had been definitely evoked and incompleteness would almost inevitably be experienced as failure. In other words, in the informal group need-persistent reactions alone were presumably entailed while in the formal group ego-defensive ones were additionally brought into play. The hypothesis of the experiment was that under the informal conditions the unfinished tasks would be better recalled than the finished ones because need-persistent reactions alone would be operative and would make for the easier recall of tasks with which undischarged tension was associated. Conversely, subjects in the formal group were expected to recall finished tasks more frequently, the assumption being that with the arousal of pride and accompanying ego-defense in case of failure, the individual's needs for inviolacy would take [p. 349] precedence over the task-tension making for the recall of the unfinished tasks.

The experimental results substantiated the hypothesis. In the group with informal conditions, 7 of the subjects re-called a preponderance of finished tasks and 19 a preponderance of unfinished tasks (4 showed no preponderant tendency), while in the group with formal conditions 17 recalled a preponderance of finished tasks and 8 a preponderance of un-finished

tasks (5 showed no preponderant tendency).

It seems reasonable to conclude that while the present experimental results do not exhaust the possibilities of measuring the various aspects of need-persistence and ego-defense involved in repression, they at least demonstrate the basic distinction between the two reaction types. Theoretically this distinction proceeds from a psychobiological approach to the dynamics of behavior. It does not depend upon any special catalogues of drives or needs and hence falls outside the field of taxonomic *controversy*. It aids in the reformulation of psychoanalytic concepts along somewhat more precise and more experimental lines and, since it implicitly anticipates certain further differences in the reactions of individuals, it respects the uniqueness of the concrete personality.

[1] Read at the 1940 meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association in the Symposium on Effects of Frustration.

[2] A detailed account is to be published in the near future.

IV. THE FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION HYPOTHESIS AND CULTURE [1]

Gregory Bateson (1941)
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First published in *Psychological Review*, 48, 350-355.

I have been asked to examine the framework of *Frustration and Aggression* [2] from a specific point of view -- that which comes from the experience of studying contrasting cultures -- and for lack of space I shall confine myself rigidly to this point of view, at the risk of the reader assuming that I regard 'culture' as the answer to all our problems.

The greatest virtue of the book is that it is an attempt to *simplify* a great gamut of phenomena into a very condensed series of propositions. It attempts a formal picture, shaven as bare as possible with Occam's Razor. This simplification has this important virtue that while it makes the book easy to criticise, it also compels the critic to state his objections in terms of the simple formulations. Every such criticism must of necessity be constructive.

When we approach such a system of propositions, it is of no use to say something like this, "Your picture is in black and white, you make no mention of colour and I, the critic, am only interested in colour." [p. 351]

Rather, I think we should approach the formulations with the question "Can the sort of things which I, a student of culture, want to say, be said in terms of these given abstractions?" Let us, if we possibly can, avoid complicating the formulations, multiplying the entities beyond necessity.

It is true that the cultural matrix is not specifically mentioned in the basic definitions of the elements in the frustration-aggression sequence. The definitions are constructed almost as if the individual existed *in vacuo*. But, as a matter of fact, there are two places in the system in which culture, though not mentioned explicitly, is at least admitted by implication. Before we say therefore that the hypothesis makes no allowance for culture we must see how much latitude the formulations really allow us.

In the first place, culture is invoked by implication when the whole hypothesis is stated to refer specifically to observed *human* behaviour. This must necessarily mean 'cultural behaviour'

since we know of no human behaviour which is not modified in terms of the social milieu in which the subject lives.

There are a few exceptions to this sweeping statement -- spinal reflexes and intra-uterine reactions and perhaps some of the reactions of the new-born, but of these it may be said that we do not know enough about them to say that they are subject to cultural modification -- nor can we at present apply the frustration-aggression hypothesis to these reactions. I think it very important that these reactions should be investigated-but for the present, at any rate, we do not know whether (for example) the temper tantrum of a new born baby is an instance of 'aggression' as operationally defined -- a series of actions having as their reinforcing goal-reaction 'injury to some other organism or organism surrogate.' So, lacking more knowledge, we must leave aside these exceptions to the sweeping statement that all human behaviour is modified in relation to a cultural or social matrix, and assume that the frustration-aggression hypothesis refers simply to sequences of culturally *modified* acts. [p. 352]

The second point in the formulations, which implies that culture was in the minds of the authors, is the definition of aggression which I have just quoted -- the reinforcement by injury to *some other organism or organism surrogate*. And in general it is assumed in later chapters of the book that the aggression will be directed in the first instance against the agent who did the frustrating.

Thus we see that the hypothesis is essentially a statement about series of *cultural behaviours in interpersonal contexts*, and it is evident that the authors regard it as such though they are willing to regard such behaviour as an animistic assault on a typewriter which will not work, a murderous daydream, or a lonely suicide, as extensions from their central theme.

Let me now try to take this central thesis into two strange cultures and briefly state whether the thesis can be made to fit. If we look at the latmul of New Guinea, we find that the thesis fits them perfectly, so that I need not waste much time on the details of their behaviour. The latmul when engaged in some series of activities which will bring a future satisfaction, will constantly look forward to that satisfaction as a means of diminishing the pains of present effort. And when they reach the *satisfaction*, they will heighten its value by looking back to the pains which went into the achievement. If they are interrupted, they will exhibit definitely aggressive behaviour. The thesis fits them, but they have added one wrinkle which is not provided for in the formulation -- they have invested aggression with pleasure. For the latmul, aggression must be regarded as a self-rewarding action series, self-reinforcing regardless of whether it ends in injury to some other person.

And they go further than this -- they habitually convert their conative efforts into imaginary aggression. The man who is cutting down a tree will excite himself to greater efforts by seeing himself as engaged in active assault upon the tree -- or the child driving out the mosquitoes will smirch them with violent sexual abuse. On the whole, however, I think it would [p. 353] be fair to say that the thesis fits the latmul at least as clearly as it does Europe.

But when we try to apply the same thesis in Bali, we get into difficulties, since it is hard to find a series of acts with a clearly defined *reinforcing* goal response. It is not that the Balinese behaviour disagrees with the thesis, but rather that the contexts in which we might look for the thesis can hardly be said to occur in Bali. The latmul and we ourselves see life as divided *into* sequences of neutral or unpleasant conative acts ending in satisfactions, but the Balinese do not see lifelike this. They are a busy, active people -- but they are infinitely willing to suffer interruption. We never at any time saw a Balinese annoyed because he was interrupted in the course of some series of acts. They seem to take a very definite pleasure in mere activity in the present -- in the very instant -- either enjoying their own busy-ness or else ignoring what they are doing, letting their muscles run on automatically with the activity while their attention is given to some unreal world, singing the songs from the last opera which was performed in the village.

Now it is the assumption of ·the theory that the typical seriation of acts, punctuated by

climaxes of satisfaction is basically human and ought to occur in all cultures, and therefore we must refer to the Balinese children.

We find that by and large the thesis can be applied to the children although it cannot clearly -- at least not often -- be applied to the adults. The children, however, can be frustrated and have temper tantrums when they are frustrated. The problem remains as to how the children are modified so as to render them unfrustratable in these terms. The problem is something like this:

"How is a certain structuralisation of sequences of acts taught to the child?" "How does it learn to see life as composed of smooth series of enjoyable acts rather than as separate sequences of acts where each sequence leads up to some satisfying climax?"

I can offer a partial answer to this question, but to state this answer I must modify the formulations of the frustration- [p. 354] aggression hypothesis. The hypothesis invokes two types of switching from one sequence to another. The first type is called 'substitution' and here the reinforcing act is comparable to that of the original series. Substitution is defined in terms of partial satisfaction of the original instigators. The second type is the switch to aggression about which it is assumed that the reinforcing goal is fundamentally different from that of the original interrupted sequence.

In order to phrase the Phenomena of Balinese conditioning, that there is only one type of switching, I shall have to assume -- that, in fact, the aggression sequence (the temper tantrum) is fundamentally only another case of substitute response.

So far, I have only simplified the formulations by reducing the number of entities, but I must add one complication. In order to bring the aggression sequence under the heading of 'substitution' I must assume that human acts are primarily and essentially inter-personal acts. I would say that the common element between eating the ice cream cone and hitting the mother is that both are events in a behaviour sequence involving the child and the mother. I would say that the receiving and perhaps the eating of the ice cream is for the child a pleasant small love climax in his relationship with his mother, while the temper tantrum is a hate climax in the same relationship. Either way, he gets his climax, and there is this much to be said for equating the two phenomena that among male primates and men we find a pretty strong tendency to confuse love making with aggression.

Now in the Balinese mother-child relationship, we find that the mother constantly enjoys titillating the child's emotions -- giving it a taste of behaviour sequences which the child might expect to end in climax. The mother enjoys the sequence but the climax does not occur. At the moment when the child either flings his arms around her neck or bursts into tears, the mother's attention seems to have wandered; she is in a brown study or she is speaking to somebody else.

In this way, I believe the Balinese child is driven not to expect or look for climax in his acts, but to take his pleasure where his mother took it -- in preliminary steps with no de- [p. 355] fined goal -- and to live in the immediate present not in some distant goal. [3]

[1] Read at the 1940 meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association in the Symposium on Effects of Frustration. The fieldwork, on which this paper is based, was done by the author as a Research Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, 1936, and William Wyse Student in Social Anthropology, Cambridge, 1937-1939, in collaboration with Dr. Margaret Mead, of the American Museum of Natural History; with grants in aid from the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, through a grant from the Committee for Research in Dementia Præcox, founded by the Thirty-third Degree, Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, and the Social Science Research Council. For an account of the scope of this research see *Researches in Bali, 1936-1939. Trans. N. Y. Acad. Sci. Series ii, 2, No. 1, 1939.*

[2] J. Dollard, L. W. Doob, N. E. Miller, O. H. Mowrer, & R. R. Sears. *Frustration and aggression*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1939

[3] After writing this paper, I had a very interesting conversation with Dr. Mittelmann about the rare contexts for rage among adult Balinese. I mentioned the following contexts: (1) At cockfights it is common to see something like rage expressed verbally against any infringement of the rules of procedure or against a man who bar and who confesses (when he has lost his bet) that he had no money (2) A thief (especially a cattle rustler) is usually mobbed and killed if he is caught red-handed.

These contexts are interesting and I think that consideration of them will amplify the thesis of the paper. We may summarise that Balinese show rage whenever there is some sudden overt threat to the stability of that intricate series of conventions within which they live.

It is also interesting that cockfighting and gambling are, for the Balinese, in some sense *regressive* activities, to which men become addicted under stress of misfortune, and that cockfighting with its clearly marked climaxes of excitement between the cocks and among the spectators produces a psychological atmosphere a good deal different from that of daily life.

Among the Balinese, the common metaphor which is used to imply sexual attraction between boy and girl is "they stare at each other like two cocks with their feathers up."

V. THE HOSTILE ACT [1]

David M. Levy (1941)
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In *Frustration and Aggression* [2] the situations in which frustration occurs always call for aggression, in terms of an attack on a frustrating agent. If no frustrating agent is present, then some object must be created for the purpose of relieving aggressive tendencies that arise in the frustrating situations. The need varies according to the tolerance to frustration. If the tolerance is poor, then some aggressor must be fabricated. A thwarted individual would then displace the aggression onto a system or onto any group representing a constellation of ideas that evoked hostility, no matter how mild, in the previous experience of the individual. This is all a familiar type of psychodynamics, namely the release of tensions arising from frustration and the use of an available object for its expression. To say, however, that aggression arises as a result of any frustrating experience is a generalization that requires scrutiny. There are any number of frustrations that do not evoke aggressive response in the sense of discharging hostility against a social object or its surrogates.

There are for example, a number of experiments in which animals are frustrated and in which such aggression does not occur. In my own work on the sucking behavior of dogs, an experiment was made in which two puppies were given adequate milk from the bottle, but fed so quickly that their sucking needs were never satisfied. In contrast to the two 'control' puppies who were given adequate satisfactions both of feeding and of sucking, the experimental animals showed no problem in aggression that could be directly traced to the sucking frustration. The result was rather a type of perverted sucking. They sucked each other, [p. 357] their own paws, objects, and later on, after eating, they licked the plate interminably. In terms of general personality description, one of the experimental puppies could be described as more aggressive than the controls, the other less so. But these differences, it could be shown, were modes of reaction that occurred in the beginning of the experiment and were probably reinforced by the particular difficulty of the situation. I do not wish to elaborate this point, except to say that the puppy who was originally aggressive became more so, in certain respects, after

the sucking difficulty was established, whereas the other puppy became more submissive.

In chickens in which pecking frustrations were produced, there was also no evidence of increased aggression. In the experiment 100 chicks were fed from troughs in the usual way, but prevented from pecking off the ground by covering it with a raised wire mesh. The control group of 100 in the adjoining half of the same chicken house were fed from troughs, but not prevented from pecking from the ground. The chickens on the wire pecked each other's feathers but, as the experiment revealed, the pecking was not due to increased aggression but to increased pecking needs. This same type of situation has been shown for other animals and for human infants also. The sucking frustrations in infancy cause finger sucking or sucking of other objects, as in the case of the experimental puppies, rather than increased aggression. There is no proof that the so-called weaning traumas of infancy cause more aggression or even more phantasies of hostility and the like than in other children. The same maybe said of all those frustrations that have to do with bowel and bladder control.

A distinction may be made between the type of aggression described, especially in regard to sucking habits, and the situations of the type described by Dr. Dollard and his colleagues. The former may be called physiologic, the latter social types of frustration. However, Dr. Dollard has included the type of physiologic frustration I have mentioned as typically provocative of aggression. His generalization could be easily amended. It is a question, however, as to whether numerous situations in which the individual does not [p. 358] deal directly with frustration readily translatable into terms of an aggressor, typically stimulate the aggressive rejoinder, for example, frustrations arising out of one's own inability to solve a mathematical problem and the like. The fact that tension may arise in any such instance, and that this tension is released by some motor action, whether tapping a pencil or pacing the floor, does not mean it is an aggressive act in asocial sense. Furthermore, acts that typically call for aggressive behavior in certain individuals may affect others differently. To say that in such cases the aggression should follow but is repressed would require considerable study. Aggression is one of the ways of responding to frustration in a social situation. Presumably it varies in the strength of its impulse and its execution in different individuals. In the phantasies that occur during frustration, or in the choice of behavior to satisfy the particular tensions that arise, various possibilities occur. To state that only one possibility, namely the aggressive act, is the logical response to frustration, all others being forms of extemporizing, needs further proof.

The response of a child to the new baby is a very good example of a frustrating situation commonly evoking aggressive behavior in the form of an assault on the baby or mother, or both. However, though this pattern is seen most frequently, there are instances in which it does not occur. For example, a child may respond to the coming of the baby with, primarily, a desire to possess it, to have it for one's own. This is not an aggressive response in the form of an assault on a social object, yet the reaction may be a very strong one. The new baby may call forth a very strong maternal protective attitude, especially when the prior child is a girl, say, eight or ten years older than the new-born. In this situation there is a frustrating experience highly reduced as compared with one in which the age difference is only two or four years. Nevertheless, such situations may reveal frustration and yet show a maternal response as a primary determinant. It maybe argued that the maternal response represents jealousy of the mother and hence a concealed aggression against her. That is to say, one may always argue in favor of the theory of aggression as against any other form of behavior in a [p. 359] similar situation. As yet, are have no definite proof that that is always the case.

In regard to sibling rivalry, however, the aggressive response to the new baby is so typical that it is safe to say it is a common feature of family life. As seen in 'control situations' the aggressive act in its various forms is depicted so clearly that the dynamic process is worth describing. In the control situation dolls are used representing the baby at the mother's breast and an older child who stands for the patient. If it is a boy the question used to set off the behavior is: "And then the brother sees the new baby at the mother's breast. He never saw him before. What does he do?"

In reviewing the patterns of over too S-R experiments of children ranging from two to thirteen

years, it is most useful to conceive of the act as an ongoing social process, a dynamic unit of behavior, with various influences brought to bear upon it in every phase. The completed primitive performance is an act in which the child attacks the baby doll and destroys it by biting it, tearing it with his fingers, or crushing it with his feet. If the experiment is repeated, there is, in most of the instances at ages three, four and five, a fulfillment of hostile activity of this type. In others there are varying approaches to this end-point, easily observed and measured. In the beginning of the act when, presumably, the impulse to attack is felt, one observes, varying forms of inhibitions to the impulse, so that the act does not come out. These maybe in the form of pauses, of saying, "I don't know what to do," of attempting to change the play into some other form, to play with other objects, or even to get out of the playroom. Sometimes the first act is to slap the doll standing for the subject. When a three-year-old girl was asked, "Why did you do that!" she said, "Because she was bad. She wanted to hit the baby." This type of response indicates that the hostile impulse had to be dealt with before the act occurred, that the impulse itself was judged to be bad, that the thought of the act had to be dealt with by punishment as though it were already fulfilled. The inhibition of the impulse may take the form of assumed stupidity like, "I don't know what you mean. I don't know what you want." Such inferences are [p. 360] based on the fact that without any explanation, merely by saying "Go ahead" and repeating the experiment, the hostile act in such cases follows.

Without elaborating the meaning of the various kinds of inhibitions that take place before the act overtly occurs, it may be sufficient to say that we are dealing with repressions and, I believe, the equivalent of superego injunctions; that is to say, the child is in its impulse to act identifying itself with the attitude of a prohibiting parent.

Once the act goes into execution we see a number of efforts to deflect its aim so that the object of hostility will not be reached. At this point a common form of inhibition is a blocking of the act, as, for example, a slapping movement made at the doll which is held back. Another common form is displacement, whereby an object close to the doll is hit and the doll itself avoided. This may be seen also in the form of non-specific aggression, in which the child shoots at the ceiling, or at various objects in a direction entirely different from that of the baby doll.

So far we may say of the modifying influences that occur when the impulse to act is felt, the inhibiting influences tend to block the act when they occur at its initial point (the impulse) and, once the act goes into execution, to reduce it to a gesture or shunt it off.

Even when the object is directly hit, modifications of the attack at the target appear. For example, the hit may change into a touch. Instead of being struck at, the baby is just removed, or dropped. At this point, too, the attack may be disguised. The child takes the baby away and says, "It has to go to the hospital for an operation," and the like. As, presumably, the behavior of the child is released, the attack on the baby becomes free of all modifying forms and the object is destroyed in the manner described.

Even when the baby doll is attacked freely and crushed, the act is not necessarily completed. We are aware at this phase of a number of activities that prove its incompleteness. For example, a child after attacking the baby and crushing it, begins to defend itself for its behavior. The child says, "It was a bad baby." Another child says at this point, "We [p. 361] don't need two babies in one house." Commonly at this stage the doll standing for the brother or sister is attacked, usually with the same method used on the baby. Another common pattern is seen in attempts to restore the baby, to make it come to life again, to fix it up, to deny what happened, and say, "The baby fell apart. Now it's all together again." One child at this stage said it was all a dream, it didn't happen. We see in these various performances that take place in the completion of the hostile attack on the baby, restoring behavior, self-retaliatory behavior, attempts at self-justification, and attempts to wash out the act by attributing to it the aspect of a dream or just play. In several cases children had a kind of war dance after achieving their purpose. In line with other patterns it would be interesting to speculate on this type of war dance as a way of warding off anxiety described in psychoanalytic literature. Through these control situation experiments we see depicted the type of aggression of which Dr. Dollard and his colleagues have written in clear form, influenced in every stage of their study by the

emotional problems of the individual. [3]

[1] Read at the 1940 meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association in the Symposium on Effects of Aggression.

[2] J. Dollard, L. W. Doob, N. E. Miller, O. H. Mowrer & R. R. Sears. Frustration and aggression. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

[3] Certain applications of the dynamic pattern presented are being made to a number of problems in psychodynamics. In various anxiety symptoms, for example the phobias, we see inhibitions to the act at the impulse. In the ties of children we see inhibitions to the act while it is taking place, for example, ties of the eyelid representing inhibition of sex curiosity, mouth-opening ties representing an inhibition of biting tendencies, certain choreic-like ties of the hand representing incompleting masturbatory behavior. I think the application of this concept would solve a problem presented in Freud's *The Problem of Anxiety*. In Chapter IV of that book he deals with his correction of a theory of anxiety, to the effect that anxiety does not emanate from repressed libido, but from the attitude of the ego. Anxiety is caused by the ego's awareness of danger. This danger may come from without or from instinctive impulses within the organism, that is to say, from libido. Freud states that anxiety is not due to transformation of libidinous charges as he thought formerly, but the ego's awareness of the danger of these charges. The repression that follows is due, therefore, to the activity of the ego, not to a transformation of libido into anxiety which is then later repressed. However, Freud found his old theory quite adequate in its application to anxiety arising in sexual behavior, in which the sexual act is not completed in a true physiologic sense. In the latter instance he adhered to the view that the undischarged libido is converted into anxiety, recognizing a contradiction of the two viewpoints. The contradiction is solved if we consider the phase of the act from which the anxiety emanates. In the first set of circumstances, the phobias, it emanates when the impulse to act occurs. In the situation of frustrated sexual behavior the inhibition occurs at the close of the act or, at least, when the act has gone to a near degree of completion. Hence, anxiety may arise during the act at any phase, and the rule that it arises from the inhibition of the act at any given point may still be maintained.

VI. FRUSTRATION PHENOMENA IN THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SPHERE

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The 'thwarted' experience or condition resulting from the failure of an organism to reach some valued objective is a familiar aspect of everyday life. Nonetheless, surprisingly little consideration has been given to the manner in which different cultures make provisions for accommodating themselves to the post-frustration behavior of 'balked' individuals or for adjusting these persons to their own unsatisfying state.

A voter who casts his ballot for a given candidate or proposal is normally probably disappointed when the persons or programs he endorses are not supported by enough other voters to become effective in the life of the community. In America, we have established the tradition of the 'good loser,' *i.e.*, the defeated groups accommodate themselves with as good grace as they can to the victory of their opponents. Additional comfort is derived from such maxims as "Everydog has his day" and "Lose a battle to win a war." In a pluralistic society such as we

have in the United States, defeat on the political front is not as decisive or as all-inclusive in its effects as a similar occurrence in totalitarian cultures where the loss of the political struggle approximates a loss of all one's basic values. In other words, the contemporary American pattern of political frustration involves a partial but not a complete thwarting; similarly, the successful partisan enjoys a more limited triumph because less has been staked upon the outcome. The gap between winner and loser is plainly narrower than in the dictatorial states, where an all-or-none folkway rules.

The candidate for public or organizational office is in much the same psychological situation as the voter, save that his responses are more focalized and intense. How he will [p. 363] take his rejection by the electorate is a function of many things, but notably of those aspects of personality organization loosely labeled 'temperament.' If he is a minority party candidate, his frustration is not particularly acute because he knows in advance that he is not likely to win; however, a decline in balloting strength over that earlier exhibited by his group does have a disconcerting effect. He may become so angry and discouraged as never to run again, or he may study his 'failure' in order to discover the principles of successful tactics. It is hard to arouse much public sympathy for a program of mental hygiene for losers at the polls, largely because most candidates are extroverts who can take a licking and whose place in the community is such that compensatory satisfactions in other fields are readily available to them. However, high-level frustration which results in denying to the community the services of talented persons who have been impelled to go out of their field is a phenomenon that cannot be viewed with indifference.

Another acute type of frustration, commonly neglected in favor of more obvious forms, is the frustration which a sensitive 'reformer' experiences in the presence of the 'needless' frustrations that others undergo. Some persons are so constituted that they are profoundly distressed by their awareness of the thwartings of their fellows. This may be a secondary or higher-order category of frustration. If, in addition, one's efforts to help another out of the frustrating state of affairs in which he finds himself are rebuffed, something like a tertiary order of frustration is approached. Most attempts at social reconstruction may be viewed as efforts to reduce the amount of frustration in group life. Some may increase it while attempting to do the contrary techniques for minimizing, if not eliminating, thwarting are very few. Progressive education at its best seems to be one successful procedure; the personnel movement in industry may be another. Democracy, cooperative socialism, pacifism, etc., are all devices which may be tested empirically for their value in decreasing the frustration of contemporary man by re-arranging the field that embraces him.

VII. DEPRIVATION, THREAT AND FRUSTRATION [1]

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It is easy in the discussion of frustration to fall into the error of segmenting the human being. That is to say, there is still a tendency to speak of the mouth or stomach being frustrated, or of a need being frustrated. We must keep in mind constantly the truism that only a whole human being is frustrated, never a part of a human being.

With this in mind, an important distinction becomes apparent, namely the difference between deprivation and threat to the personality. The usual definitions of frustration are in terms simply of not getting what one desires, of interference with a wish, or with a gratification. Such a definition fails to make the distinction between a deprivation which is unimportant to the organism (easily substituted for, with few serious after-effects), and, on the other hand, a deprivation which is at the same time, a threat to the personality, that is, to the life goals of the individual, to his defensive system, to his self-esteem or to his feeling of security. It is our con-

tention that only a threatening deprivation has the multitude of effects (usually undesirable) which are commonly attributed to frustration in general.

A goal object may have two meanings for the individual. First it has its intrinsic meaning, and secondly, it may have also a secondary, symbolic value. Thus a certain child deprived of an ice-cream cone which he wanted may have lost simply an ice-cream cone. A second child, however, deprived of an ice-cream cone, may have lost not only a sensory gratification, but may also feel deprived of the love of his mother because she refused to buy it for him. For the second boy the ice-cream cone not only has an intrinsic value, but may [p. 365] also be the carrier of psychological values. Being deprived merely of ice-cream *qua* ice-cream probably means very little for a healthy individual, and it is questionable whether it should even be called by the same name, *i.e.*, frustration, which characterizes other more threatening deprivations. It is only when a goal object represents love, prestige, respect, or achievement that being deprived of it will have the bad effects ordinarily attributed to frustration in general.

It is possible to demonstrate very clearly this two fold meaning of an object in certain groups of animals and in certain situations. For instance, it has been shown that when two monkeys are in a dominance-subordination relationship a piece of food is (1) an appeaser of hunger and also (2) a symbol of dominance status. Thus if the subordinate animal attempts to pick up food, he will at once be attacked by the dominant animal. If, however, he can deprive the food of its symbolic dominance value, then his dominator allows him to eat it. This he can do very easily by a gesture of obeisance, *i.e.*, presentation as he approaches the food; this is as if to say, "I want this food only to still hunger, I do not want to challenge your dominance. I readily concede your dominance." In the same way we may take a criticism from a friend in two different ways. Ordinarily the average person will respond by feeling attacked and threatened (which is fair enough because so frequently criticism is an attack). He therefore bristles and becomes angry in response. But if he is assured that this criticism is not an attack or a rejection of himself, he will then not only listen to the criticism, but possibly even be grateful for it. Thus, if he has already had thousands of proofs that his friend loves him and respects him, the criticism represents only criticism; it does not also represent an attack or threat.

Neglect of this distinction has created a great deal of unnecessary turmoil in psychoanalytic circles. An ever-recurring question is: Does sexual deprivation inevitably give rise to all or any of the many effects of frustration, *e.g.*, aggression, sublimation, etc. It is now well known that many cases are found in which celibacy has no psychopathological [p. 366] effects. In many other cases, however, it has many bad effects. What factor determines which shall be the result? Clinical work with non-neurotic people gives the clear answer that sexual deprivation becomes pathogenic in a severe sense only when it is felt by the individual to represent rejection by the opposite sex, inferiority, lack of worth, lack of respect, or isolation. Sexual deprivation can be borne with relative ease by individuals for whom it has no such implications. (Of course, there will probably be what Rosenzweig calls need-persistent reactions, but these are not necessarily pathological.)

The unavoidable deprivations in childhood are also ordinarily thought of as frustrating. Weaning, elimination control, learning to walk, in fact every new level of adjustment is conceived to be achieved by forceable pushing of the child. Here, too, the differentiation between mere deprivation and threat to the personality enjoins caution upon us. Observations of children who are completely assured of the love and respect of their parents have shown that deprivations can sometimes be borne with astonishing ease. There are few frustration effects if these deprivations are not conceived by the child to be threatening to his fundamental personality to his main life goals, or needs.

From this point of view, it follows that the phenomenon of threatening frustration is closely allied to other threat situations much more than it is to mere deprivation. The classic effects of frustration are also found frequently to be a consequence of other types of threat-traumatization, conflict, rejection, severe illness, actual physical threat, imminence of death, humiliation, isolation, or loss of prestige.

This leads us to our final hypothesis, that perhaps frustration/ as a single concept is less useful than the two concepts which cross-cut it, (1) deprivation, and (2) threat to the personality. Deprivation implies much less than is ordinarily implied by the concept of frustration; threat implies much more.

[1] Prepared for the 1940 meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association in the Symposium of Effects of Frustration.

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