Aggression and Warfare

- Violence in prehistoric and non-state societies
- Male-male aggression and risk-taking
- Life expectancy, income inequality, and social capital
- Anger and aggression (no slides)
Prehistoric violence: Skull injuries

Club injury (healed)

Projectile injury (chert point tip embedded)

from Patricia Lambert, "Patterns of violence in prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies of southern california"
Prehistoric violence: skull injuries by age and sex

Prehistoric southern California coast mortuary data:

Healed cranial fractures

(From Lambert)

Projectile injuries
Prehistoric violence: causes of death

Evidence of resource stress at peak violence period, prehistoric California coast (from Lambert):

- paleoclimate: hotter, dryer, periodic droughts
- forensic: skeletal evidence of declining health
Warfare cross-culturally: Death rate

Figure 6.1 War fatality rates (percentage of population killed per annum) for various prestate and civilized societies (see Appendix, Table 6.1).

(from Keeley, War Before Civilization)
Warfare cross-culturally: Motives

Cross-cultural study of 186 mostly preindustrial societies found warfare associated with “fear of nature and fear of others”:

- More war strongly correlated with unpredictable natural disasters (no relationship with chronic scarcity)
- More war correlated with socialization for mistrust

Loss of social capital (interpersonal trust that facilitates cooperation) also features heavily in cross-national studies of violence

(cross-cultural study: Ember and Ember, 1992)
Do warriors have higher reproductive success?
Among the Yanomamo, maybe. Among the Waorani, no:

(from Beckerman et al. 2009)
The young male syndrome in the U.S.

U.S. Homicide victimization rates by age and sex, 1975 (from Daly and Wilson)
Homicide rates per 100,000 persons for Detroit in 1972, by age and sex
Trivial Altercations and affairs of honor

More than half of 214 homicides studied were over “trivial altercations” (insult, curse, jostling, etc.), including escalated showing off disputes.

(from Wilson and Daly, “The Young Male Syndrome”)
Sex differences in risk-taking

(from Daly and Wilson)
Causes of death, by age and sex

from Daly and Wilson

- total mortality
- all accidents, other external causes, suicides, homicide
- all other causes: disease etc.

(from Daly and Wilson)
Why be risk prone? Life expectancy, short time horizons, and homicide

Homicide rates by male life expectancy at birth, with effects of homicide mortality removed, for 77 Chicago neighborhoods, 1988-1993.

(data from Daly and Wilson 1997)
Income inequality, social capital, and homicide

US states, 1990s. Gini coefficient is a measure of income inequality

(Daly and Wilson, 2001)