

Family Violence

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the following topic of sociology, through the definition and discussion of:

1. Family Violence
 - a. Violence Against Significant Others
 - b. Violence Against Children

1. FAMILY VIOLENCE

In 1984, sociologist Richard Gelles said, "The family is the most violent group in society except the military and the police." This provocative statement makes very strong claims about violence in society and about an institution--the family--that is supposed to be loving, nurturing, and caring.

Family violence happens in many ways, and it doesn't always have to happen physically; it can also happen emotionally or sexually. Family violence is defined as when one family member enacts physical, emotional, or sexual violence against another member of the family. Violence is often against significant others, and it can also be against children. Variations of family violence include:

- Men can be violent towards women
- Women can be violent towards men
- Both/either men and women can be violent towards children



TERM TO KNOW

Family Violence

Physical, emotional, or sexual violence enacted by one family member against another.

1a. Violence Against Significant Others

Historically and in contemporary society, women are much more likely than men to be victims of family violence. Regrettably, family violence often goes unreported because it is difficult to track.

Women don't readily come forward and bring charges against their husband or partner, and children certainly don't readily come forward. Signs of violence have to be recognized by trained professionals in children because children don't often come forward with accounts of family violence.

Often, children don't actually know differently, assuming that family violence is a 'normal' family dynamic. Therefore, family violence is very difficult to track statistically in an accurate manner.

Historically, the family and the household has been viewed as a bastion of privacy. If abuse is occurring within a family, society has typically considered it a private family matter, not to be interfered with.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** If two spouses are fighting and a physical altercation breaks out, others will say, "They'll sort it out." There may be exceptions to this in cases of extreme violence, like murder or extreme abuse, but for the most part, society has deemed violence a private matter.

Also historically, women have been regarded as the property of men, which explains why there were no marital rape laws in the past, like there are now. Now, women can even bring a restraining order against their husbands, whereas in the past, this was impossible. Society is now validating the need to recognize and stop family violence. There are far more laws, and caution exercised, than in the past. Family violence is seen less as a private domestic matter and more of a broader social issue.

1b. Violence Against Children

In addition to spousal or partner family violence, there is also family violence against children.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** Children can be physically beaten or harshly punished. They can be locked away for six hours in a dark room. These are only a few examples of family violence against children.

Aside from physical violence, children can be emotionally neglected. This can have massive effects on personality development later on in life. Both physical and emotional violence can affect personality development.



DID YOU KNOW

Studies have shown that family violence is a learned behavior, meaning that family violence can beget more family violence. Abusing children makes them that much more likely to abuse their own children later on in life.

Family violence to children is extremely damaging, and children exposed to violence between their parents are more likely to replicate that violence in their own intimate relationships.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about **family violence**.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



TERMS TO KNOW

Family Violence

Physical, emotional, or sexual violence enacted by one family member against another.