

## Violence against Women

### Chapter 12




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### Chapter Outline

- Violence against Girls and Women: A Global Perspective
- Violence and the Media
- Violence and Social Media
- Violence against Children
- Violence in Intimate Relationships
- Violence in Later Life
- Making a Difference

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### Violence against Girls and Women, 1

An estimated 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced physical and slash or sexual violence in their lifetimes

- Pervasiveness of violence against women suggests that its origins and mechanisms lie at the sociocultural level of the gender system

#### Gender System and Violence

- Gender-linked violence is often justified, condoned, or overlooked
- Not every woman will experience violence directly but the *threat* of it is an important part of the fabric of life for all women
  - Seen as a culturally useful way of controlling girls and women

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**Violence against Girls and Women, 2**

**Rape-Prone Societies**

- Status of women is strongly correlated with rates of violence against women across cultures (Archer, 2006; Vandello and Cohen, 2006)
- Occurrence of rape is high in rape-prone societies and is connected to expressions of masculinity and is viewed as an acceptable tool for punishing and controlling women
  - Cultural views and social norms connect masculinity to the sexual domination and control of women

**'Honor'-based Violence**

- Encompasses any form of violence directed at women as a result of patriarchal family and social values that often tie 'honor' to the regulation and control of women's sexuality (Gill and Brah, 2014)

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**Violence against Girls and Women, 3**

- In many countries where honor killings occur, laws reduce or eliminate punishment for men who kill their wives
  - Other countries have laws that are designed to protect women from violence, but they are ignored (Parrot and Cummings, 2006)
- In countries engaged in armed conflict and war, mass rape has become a tool of war
  - *Honor rapes* are designed not only to shame the victim but to shame her tribe, clan, or ethnic group
  - If the women seek treatment at a hospital or tell the police, they can be thrown in jail for having sex outside of marriage (Kristoff and WuDunn, 2009)
  - Rape has only recently been acknowledged as a war crime

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**Violence against Girls and Women, 4**

**Sex Trafficking**

- Trafficking of girls and women takes place in virtually every country in the world, including the United States (Banks and Kyckelhahn, 2011; McCabe and Manian, 2010; United States Department of State, 2016)
- In Southeast Asia alone, UNICEF estimates that 1 million children are trafficked into commercial sex work each year (Meier, 2000)
- Global estimates of the profits associated with the sex trade range from 30 to 50 billion United States dollars (Belsler, 2005; Kara, 2009)
- Patterns of trafficking are shaped by gender-related inequities in material resources (Farr, 2005)
  - Countries that are less developed, less wealthy, and less politically stable serve as source countries, from which girls and women are trafficked

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**Violence against Girls and Women, 5**

- Women and children are vulnerable to trafficking for a variety of reasons
  - Globalization, social and political instability, war, gender inequality and oppression, and limited choices that make families vulnerable (A P A, 2014; Crawford, 2016, 2017)
- H I V or AIDS epidemic has increased the market value of very young girls in many parts of the world, as men seek virginal sex partners to avoid acquiring H I V
- Efforts to eliminate trafficking
  - Anti-trafficking legislation
  - Educational programs for those at risk and their communities
  - Rescue, shelter, and medical or psychological care for survivors
  - Prosecution of traffickers

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**Violence and the Media, 1**

Media *normalizes and condones violence* against women by de-emphasizing the perpetrator, the violence, or its consequences

**Gender Violence as Entertainment**

- Violence portrayed on television often presents an inaccurate picture of the real perpetrators and victims of violent crime
- Children’s exposure to violence in the media is a particular cause for concern
  - Majority of television programs and video games contain violence
  - Violent acts are usually portrayed as trivial, justified, or funny
- Media violence desensitizes people to real violence
  - Builds schemas of the world as a dangerous, scary place where a person must be aggressive in order to survive (Fanti et al., 2009; Larson, 2003)

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**Violence and the Media, 2**

- Meta-analyses demonstrate that exposure to violent video games is related to:
  - Increases in aggressive thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and behavior
  - Decreases in socially positive behavior such as helping others (Anderson et al., 2003; Greitemeyer and Mügge, 2014)
- Longitudinal studies of children and adolescents have found that habitual or sustained playing of violent video games is associated with increases in aggression months and even years later
- Female characters in video games are rare, but when they do appear, they are often portrayed as promiscuous sex objects or targets of aggression

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**PORNOGRAPHY, 1**

**Defining Pornography and its impact**

- Material that combines sexual themes with violence, dehumanization, degradation, or abuse
  - Material that is merely sexually arousing without these other themes is termed *erotica* (for example, Longino, 1980; Russell, 1993; Scott, 2008; Steinem, 1980)

**Pornography Is Pervasive**

- Pornographic images of women have become much more available to all citizens in the United States in the past three decades
  - The pornography industry has had a tangible influence on popular culture in the United States

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**PORNOGRAPHY, 2**

**Is Pornography a Form of Violence against Women?**

- Many of the blatantly violent pornographic images of women from recent years are not merely “images” but are documentation of actual sexual violence or humiliation
  - Women in the pictures may have volunteered for such treatment in exchange for money or other rewards, but some may have been coerced
- Pornography, more so than erotica, has temporary negative effects on men’s attitudes and behaviors toward women
  - Reflects and perpetuates how our society views women: as objects for men to sexually dominate
- Some feminists argue that censoring pornography could lead to the censorship of women in general

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**Violence and Social Media, 1**

***Sexting*: sending sexually explicit photos or videos of oneself via text message or email**

- Has become increasingly common among teens and adults
- Sext messages can easily be forwarded to a much larger audience than originally intended
  - In some cases, the photos or videos are posted online as a form of ***non-consensual pornography***
  - Because material on the Internet spreads quickly, it can be extremely difficult to have non-consensual pornography fully removed

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### Violence and Social Media, 2

#### Laws against non-consensual pornography

- In 2013, only three states had laws against non-consensual pornography
- In 2016, 34 states and the District of Columbia now have revenge porn laws
- The Intimate Privacy Protection Act was recently introduced to Congress
  - Would make it a federal offense to distribute revenge porn and would be punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison (Franks, 2016)

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### Violence against Children, 1



Photo courtesy of Kealy Fine/COBIS.

#### Child Sexual Abuse

- Coercive sexual interaction between a child and an adult
  - According to 2014 data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, 8.3 percent of suspected abuse reports involved the sexual abuse of a child
  - National and international studies have shown that girls are more likely to be abused than boys (Barth et al., 2013; White et al., 2001)
- It is likely that over one-quarter of women in the United States have experienced sexual abuse during childhood (Gazmarian et al., 2000)
  - Most often abused by someone they know and trust

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### Violence against Children, 2

- Family members and acquaintances are responsible for about 90 percent of child rapes
  - Older relatives, brothers, child's own father or stepfather are the leading abusers of girls within the family (Laumann et al., 1994)
- Sexual abuse may negatively affect many aspects of a child's emotional, cognitive, and social development
- A research review found that survivors of childhood sexual abuse are more at risk of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, sexual dysfunction, personality disorders, and substance abuse (Mangiolio, 2009)
  - They are also at increased risk of suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and completed suicide (Devries et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2013)

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**Violence against Children, 3**

**How Can Abuse of Children Be Ended?**

- In the United States, many schools now sponsor programs to teach children that they have the right not to be touched inappropriately and encourage them to tell an adult if someone acts in a sexual way toward them (Wurtele, 2002)
  - Effectiveness may be limited because they place the responsibility for prevention largely on the child
- The Child Abuse Prevention Association ([www.capacares.org](http://www.capacares.org)) operates a national child abuse or neglect hotline and promotes a variety of family support and counseling services
- As children progress through the school system, teachers and school officials need to be attuned to signs and symptoms of potential abuse

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 1**

**Intimate partner violence** or I P V: physical aggression and violence occurring in a relationship

- Occurs in all types of intimate relationships, including those in which the partners are dating or married

**Dating Violence**

- Violence is an all-too-common means of exerting control in sexual encounters and romantic relationships
- Some studies have shown that women are more likely to initiate aggression against their partners than vice versa
  - There was a lot of variability in how women defined "initiation"
  - For example, getting angry or upset, bringing up a conflict, or trying to get their partner to talk about something repeatedly (Olson and Lloyd, 2005)

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 2**

- Women and men report similar rates of aggression, but their motives tend to be different
  - For men, staying in control is often an important relationship goal
  - Men are more likely to say that they aggress in order to intimidate and frighten the partner and control the relationship
  - Women say that they aggress in self-defense or because they lost control of themselves
    - Sensitization to the possibility of harm can also cause aggression in women
  - For both women and men, the single biggest predictor of aggressive behavior is having an aggressive partner
- Consequences of dating violence are more severe for women than for men

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 3**

**Stalking**

- Repeated, unwanted harassing behaviors where the victim feels threatened or fearful (Sptizberg and Cupach, 2014)
- Approximately 80 percent of stalking cases involve perpetrators and victims with past romantic relationships
  - **Unwanted pursuit behaviors** or **U P Bs**: stalking behaviors when relationship motives are present
- **Cyberstalking**: repeated, unwanted and unwelcome pursuit behaviors that take place virtually with the use of computers and other electronic devices like cell phones
- Women who have been stalked may experience anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress, headaches, or difficulties with sleeping and eating

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 4**

**Sexual Coercion and Acquaintance Rape**

- **Rape**: sexual *penetration* without the person's consent, obtained through force or threat of harm, or when the person is incapable of giving consent
- **Sexual assault** or **sexual coercion**: unwanted sexual contact, such as groping and fondling
- According to data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey:
  - Nearly 20 percent of women are estimated to have been raped during their lifetimes
  - Almost 44 percent of women have experienced other forms of sexual violence, such as sexual coercion or unwanted sexual contact
- **Acquaintance rape**: sexual assault by a dating partner or someone known to the victim
  - Occurs far more often than stranger rape

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 5**

- Women also commonly reported giving in to unwanted sex because a partner would not stop begging, whining, and pleading
- Some women are less likely to call certain forms of sexual incidents rape
  - Feminists argue that using the label *rape* is important because without it, the incident is not recognized as a crime, and goes unreported and unpunished
  - Others point out that a woman's choice of label may be part of how she copes with sexual assault, and she has the right to define her own experience (Kahn et al., 2003)
- Victims of sexual coercion, like victims of other kinds of violence, suffer psychological consequences in such areas as emotional functioning, social relations, and identity

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 6**

- Rape myths play an important role in coercive sex
  - **Rape myths:** widely held, stereotypical, false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists that perpetuate and normalize male sexual violence against women (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994)
  - Justify male sexual aggression as natural, minimize sexual assault, and encourage victim blaming
  - Men tend to endorse rape myths more than women, and men who endorse rape myths are more likely to endorse a proclivity to rape
  - Rape myth endorsement is associated with higher levels of oppressive and intolerant attitudes, including hostile sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism, classism, conservatism, and right-wing authoritarianism
  - Women’s endorsement of rape myths might provide a sense of control, but there is no evidence that it would reduce their risk

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 7**

**Violence in Long-Term Relationships**

- The number of women who had ever been physically or sexually assaulted by a partner ranged from 6 percent in Comoros to 64 percent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (United Nations World’s Women, 2015)
- Abuse by a partner is one of the most frequent causes of physical injury for women across cultures (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2000)
- In the United States, researchers estimate the lifetime prevalence of physical violence by an intimate partner is 31.5 percent
  - 22.3 percent of women experience at least one act of severe physical violence in their lifetimes (C D C, 2014)

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 8**

- One study found that 68 percent of the disabled women who were sampled reported at least one instance of abuse, whether physical, emotional, or sexual, in the past year (Curry et al., 2009)
- Physical violence against a partner is almost always accompanied by psychological abuse
  - Psychological abuse may be equally as traumatic as physical abuse (Walker, 2000)

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 9**

**Domestic violence**

- Wife-beating may be viewed as a morally acceptable means of control in countries where patriarchal ideology is strong (Crawford, 2010; Nordberg, 2014)
- **Common couples violence:** Gender-neutral violence
  - Results from a breakdown in the couple's ability to handle a conflict constructively
- **Patriarchal terrorism or intimate terrorism:** pattern of severe, escalating male violence in which women rarely fight back and almost never initiate aggression
  - Motives are rooted in patriarchal tradition: the male perpetrator feels that he owns his woman and is entitled to control her by any means necessary

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 10**

**Why Don't Abused Women Leave?**

- Women face many practical obstacles to leaving an abusive partner
  - She may have no money, no job, no safe place to go, and no car to leave in
  - There may be issues regarding the children, their lives, and their custody
  - Research shows that a woman is more likely to be seriously injured or killed by her partner after she leaves him than when they are living together (Jacobson and Gottman, 1998)
- Much of partner abuse is **cyclical**: perpetrator goes through a period of increasing tension, a violent episode, and then a loving phase (Frieze, 2005; Walker, 2000)
  - **Battered women's syndrome:** type of post-traumatic stress disorder in which a woman may become incapable of taking action on her own behalf

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 11**

- **Feminist therapy** helps women in abusive relationships understand the patriarchal basis of wife abuse

**Ending Relationship Violence**

- As long as society accepts men's right to dominate women and women's second-class status, violence in heterosexual relationships is inevitable (Bograd, 1988)
- **Battered women's movement:** international movement educating the public about domestic violence, reforming legal systems, and providing direct aid to women with violent partners
- **Battered women's shelters:** refuges where women can find temporary safety, emotional support, information about legal rights, and sometimes counseling

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**Violence in Intimate Relationships, 12**

- An important feminist initiative for preventing dating violence and rape is to focus on the perpetrators
  - Studies suggest that programs run *by men for men* are most effective in changing men's behavior
  - Research on perpetrators in domestic abuse is difficult because most abusive men deny and minimize their violence and blame their wives or girlfriends for it
  - Few violent men volunteer to participate in programs aimed at changing them, and of those who do, many drop out
  - Research suggests that arrest and conviction effectively deter a man from perpetrating future abuse
- Abuse of women in relationships is a complex problem demanding intervention on many fronts
  - Changing patriarchal social structures, helping the victims, and stopping the perpetrators

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**Violence in Later Life, 1**

**Elder abuse**

- Violence against elderly involving physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual violence, neglect, and misappropriating the victim's possessions or money (Carp, 1997; Lachs and Pillemer, 2015)
  - More often borne by women
  - Old people are reluctant to complain about abuse as it could mean losing their homes
- Reflects patriarchal power imbalances
- Takes place in private settings, and it is fostered by secrecy and the isolation of its victims




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**Violence in Later Life, 2**

- Incidences of elder abuse are likely to continue to increase as the percentage of people over age 65 in the population increases
- Older women can face violence at the hands of husbands and boyfriends
  - Not likely to report the abuse and prefer to protect their family members or spouses from going to jail
  - Generational values prohibited divorce as an option and encouraged secrecy with respect to family matters
- Sexual abuse of old people
  - One study in the United Kingdom reported that the victims were female by a 6:1 ratio
  - Perpetrators were usually family members, more often sons than husbands
  - Elderly women in nursing homes may be raped and sexually abused

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**Violence in Later Life, 3**

- Victims of elder abuse may experience depression, P T S D, chronic stress, or other psychological distress

**Widow Abuse**

- In many countries across the world, the loss of a husband is compounded by experiences of ostracism, homelessness, poverty, neglect, and physical or sexual abuse
- United Nations Women, 2013, estimates there are more than 115 million widows currently living in poverty and 81 million who have been physically abused
- In some cultures, widows are thought to be evil and may be referred to as whores or beggars
  - Seen as a burden for their families and may be cast out of their homes

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**Violence in Later Life, 4**

**Ending Elder Abuse**

- In order to reduce and eliminate elder abuse, healthcare professionals who attend to older adults on either a regular or emergency basis must be educated on the risk factors associated with abuse (Baker, 2007; Lachs and Pillemer, 2015)
  - Accurate assessments are needed to determine if someone is being victimized
- Collaboration between community providers appears to be one way of increasing the quantity and quality of services for those experiencing sexual abuse in developed countries
  - The Pennsylvania Elder Sexual Abuse Project: conducted to encourage the collaboration of rape crisis centers and adult protective services to better address the issue of elder sexual abuse (Vierthaler, 2008)

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**MAKING A DIFFERENCE, 1**

**Multifaceted Approach to Interventions**

- Interventions designed to prevent, reduce, or eliminate violence against women occur at the individual level of the gender system
  - Schools and colleges in the United States educate girls and women in ways they can avoid being assaulted
  - Women are often told never to walk alone at night and to avoid drinking excessively
  - Children are taught to tell an adult if anyone ever touches them inappropriately
- Self-protective strategies can be useful but can also be problematic
  - Place the responsibility for prevention on the individual
  - By addressing potential victims rather than potential perpetrators, the likelihood of victim blaming may be increased

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**MAKING A DIFFERENCE, 2**

- Colleges and universities across the United States are beginning to implement rape prevention programs that are primarily directed at men and women separately
- At the sociocultural level, movements such as the battered women's movement help address the structural barriers to ending violence against women

**Women's Rights Are Human Rights**

- Violence against women occurs in every country and is one of the most widespread human rights violations across the world
- Gender-based violence can be ended by encouraging women's economic empowerment
- Existing views of gender, power, and inequality should be challenged

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