

Hoffman, Kristi, Jill Kiecolt, and John Edwards. 2005. "Physical Violence among Siblings: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis." *Journal of Family Issues* 26:1103-1130.

PRIMARY ARGUMENT: The author argues that social learning theory, conflict theory and feminist theory are all theoretical models that provide explanations as to what causes sibling violence, but in different ways.

IMPORTANT DEFINED CONCEPTS:

- Sibling Violence: Siblings engaging in actions such as shoving, slapping, hitting or punching, which typically escalate due to retaliation.
- Social Learning Theory: A theory that claims siblings model violent behaviors that they have been exposed to by their parents, outside sources and violent video games.
- Conflict Theory: A theory that believes family members employ violence behaviors to resolve conflicts caused by competing interests.
- Feminist Theory: A theory that explains how oppression and patriarchal behaviors displayed in families can influence sibling relationships.

PRIMARY FINDINGS:

1. Social Learning theory had the biggest effect related to sibling violence. This theory directs attention to the behavioral consequences of interaction patterns in families, which emphasizes that children tend to adopt behaviors they learn from their parents. In this case, witnessing arguments between parents is related to higher levels of sibling violence.
2. Conflict theory was supported by their research revealing that parental comparisons of siblings tended to lead to more sibling violence. Actions such as holding one child up as the standard—which cause conflict over “love” and “attention” as a resources—led to violence due to resentment.
3. Feminist theory was supported by revealing the impact of the respondent’s gender and sibling gender played in sibling violence. Males are more violent in all kinds of ways. They commit more acts of violence against their siblings, especially against their brothers. Their violence is also more physically aggressive, even when assaulting their sisters (e.g., pushing against walls).
4. Contrary to feminist theory’s expectations about male violence, the sisters in this study were also quite violent, but the violence took a different form. They were more likely to scratch, bite, or scratch their siblings.

KEY QUOTE: “Sibling violence has been linked to poor peer relationships between school-age children, negative behavior in childhood and adolescence, and violence in adulthood. Thus, sibling violence may presage violence in dating relationships, family violence in adulthood, and nonfamily adult violence.” (1103)

QUESTION: If social learning theory is the biggest driver of sibling violence, how does sibling violence begin in cases where they have absent parents (e.g. if they are always at work)? What is the model for violence in those families?