

Violence against women and social stratification essay



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Domestic violence is a problem that besets societies all over the world.

Women, regardless of culture or race, are the most common victims of violence. In the United States, the National Clearinghouse on Domestic Violence has noted that the men in the country batter three to four million women each year. (Richmond) Moreover, men, specifically, the husbands or partners of the women are usually the aggressors or committers of the crime. Violence against women is a gender issue that has been given much attention. There have been multiple theories that have attempted to explain why domestic violence occurs. However, there has yet to be one concrete and definite explanation as to why violence against women exists.

Violence against women has been attributed to various reasons. One commonly cited reason is socio-economic status. Many studies and researches have been conducted in an attempt to prove that domestic violence is associated with socio-economic status. Basically, it has been suggested that violence against women is more prevalent among people who belong to the lower socio-economic classes.

This paper will discuss such theory by using information available on the Worldwide Web. The goal of this discussion is to show the relationship between socio-economic status and violence against women. By doing so, this paper will show that domestic violence is a product of social stratification. Socio-economic classes exist because of social stratification. Social stratification is defined as, " The unequal distribution around the world of the three Ps: property, power, and prestige.

” (Cliffnotes. com) Basically, the inequality of people in terms of property, power, and prestige lead to the formation of categories of social classes. These classes are arranged hierarchically. The most wealthy and subsequently most powerful hold the highest social class while the poorest and least powerful belong to the class found at the bottom of society. According to the website of Men’s Health and Information Center of the University of Western Sydney, the incidence of domestic violence is associated with social class. The website suggests that women who come from the lower social classes or women who live in poverty are more likely to become victims of domestic violence.

The website acknowledges that domestic violence runs across cultural, social, and economic barriers, it stated that violence against women are more prevalent among those with low SES or low socio-economic status. This finding is shared by many other researchers. Richmond stated that, “ In reality, a disproportionate number of victims of domestic violence lack financial security. ” The absence of financial security points to poverty. Subsequently, poverty is the product of the unequal distribution of wealth in society.

In other words, poverty can be traced back to social stratification. Richmond further stated, “ Several studies have shown that domestic violence is extremely prevalent among welfare recipients. Research shows that 15-30% of welfare recipients are current victims of domestic violence, and 50-60% have experienced domestic violence previously in their adult lives. ”

Basically, the author asserts the prevailing fact that domestic violence is

associated with social class or wealth. People in welfare are those who cannot fend for themselves.

At the same time, they are the most likely victims of domestic violence. Low economic status as a cause of violence against women can be better explained if one considers the 3 Ps of social stratification, property, power, and prestige. In poverty stricken families, the women have very little, if any, financial power. They rarely have economic control over their lives since their husbands are often times the ones that work and earn. As such, the men have the property or the power to purchase.

At the same time, the economic dependence of women on men is a valuable element that allows men to maintain power and control over women.

According to Richmond: Financial abuse in a relationship can directly prevent women from obtaining and/or maintaining economic self-sufficiency...

Economic control is an important component of the batterer's system of maintaining power over the victim. Abusers prefer their victims to be economically dependent because such dependence gives the abuser complete power in the relationship. " With men owning all the power in a relationship, women are left with no other choice but to take in the abuse from their partners.

In low SES families, leaving one's partner is not an option for most women. This is because leaving their husbands or partners would usually mean losing their financial support or simply their means of living. Also, women also have to think of their children. Without the financial and material support of their

husbands, women feel that they cannot care for their children. This is the dilemma that most women from the lower social classes face.

Without economic and financial dependence, women have no power to make choices for themselves. Canada's National Clearinghouse on Family Violence raised the same concerns over the relationship between poverty and domestic violence. It stated: " Violence against women knows no geographical, cultural or linguistic boundaries and it affects all women without regard to their level of income. However, for many women, poverty adds another dimension to the pain and suffering they experience as a result of violence. Poverty limits choices and access to the means to protect and free oneself from violence. " (National Clearinghouse for Family Violence) Also, the same website identified that in 1987, 57 percent of poor Canadian adults were women.

More importantly, a large proportion of these women were victims, at one time or another, of domestic violence. It must be remembered that domestic violence is not just physical violence. The website states that there are, " Many forms of gender-based violence affecting women, including physical and sexual assault, psychological and emotional abuse, neglect, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and financial abuse. " The National Clearinghouse for Family Violence explained how poverty and violence against women are inter-related. Because of poverty, the independence of women is hindered.

The lack of self-sufficiency forces many women to continue to live with their abusive partners because it is in their partners that they find economic or financial support. This is the common reason why women living in poverty or

women in the lower socio-economic classes are more prone to violence or domestic abuse. Domestic violence or violence against women is a clear demonstration of the inequality between men and women. This inequality between men and women leads disadvantages for women in term of the economic and political aspects of life. In a way, the inequality between men and women can be seen as social stratification as well.

Men own greater property, power, and prestige. Women cannot enjoy the same life that men do. They are limited in terms of the opportunities that are available to them. According to the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, “ The discrimination faced by women in society limits their opportunities and options, creating additional barriers for low-income women to leaving an abusive situation. They simply do not have the options that women with more money have.

Women are almost always less well off financially after they leave a marriage. Those who already live on a low income can expect to live in even more dire poverty. ” Social stratification between men and women can be seen from two perspectives, patriarchy and sexism. Patriarchy refers to male dominance in society. (Cliffnotes. com) Basically, patriarchy suggests that males hold a greater or higher place in society.

They have more access to power, prestige, and property. Men have more political power. They receive higher salaries which mean more prestige and more opportunities to acquire property. In a way, women find themselves in a lower social class than their male counterparts. This place makes women more vulnerable to abuse and violence. As it has been shown, women with

low SES are more prone to violence and abuse than those women with higher SES.

Sexism, on the other hand, refers to prejudice and discrimination because of gender. Sexism in society commonly asserts that men are superior over women. In both cases, men occupy a higher social class than women which creates disadvantages for women on several fronts. This paper has shown how violence against women is associated with socio-economic status.

More importantly, it has been shown that women with low SES are more likely to experience domestic violence or abuse from their partners. By showing how poverty creates greater chances for domestic violence, this paper has likewise shown how social stratification affects violence against women. The lack of power, property, and prestige, the 3 Ps of social stratification, among women in poverty makes them more vulnerable to abuse and violence. Quality of Sources This paper utilized information derived and gathered solely from the Worldwide Web. A number of online sources were used. A study guide on social stratification was used for basic definitions of some key terminologies.

This study guide is very useful for basic information. However, it cannot be used for more critical analysis as it only provides an overview on the topic of social stratification. Since this website only provided a basic discussion of social stratification, there is no bias in the information it provides. Another website used is a fact sheet from one of the departments of an Australian University. The information from the said fact sheet is highly credible for it was based on academic sources.

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The webpage contained a list of references that were utilized to come up with the fact sheet. There is no biased information from this source since it is well-documented and based on academic sources. An online copy of a law journal was likewise utilized. As with the earlier source discussed, this source contains information that is backed up by various references.

Richmond, the author of the article, made use of multiple sources for his writing. His writing is very factual since he cited various studies on the topic. This source is very credible and unbiased. The last source used for this research is a Canadian governmental agency. The article is actually a resource guide on how poverty and domestic violence among women can be addressed and solved.

This source is accurate and unbiased. It describes the real-life experience of abused women living in poverty since it uses personal statements of the women who have such experiences.