# An Analysis of Violence of Subculture Represented In Movie of Family (2013)

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## **ABSTRAK**

This study examines the representation of violence and its role in shaping family dynamics in the film The Family (2013). The research focuses on the Manzoni family, who embody a subculture of violence where aggression is normalized and reproduced across generations. The aim of this study is to identify how the cultural logic of violent subcultures is represented in the film and to examine the motivations behind violent behavior among family members by applying Wolfgang and Ferracuti's Subculture of Violence theory as the main framework. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected through repeated viewing of the film, documentation of violent scenes, and interpretation based on the theoretical framework. The findings reveal six types of cultural logic of violent subcultures present in the film, namely Honor Culture (4 data), Retributive/Vendetta Culture (5 data), Instrumental/Pragmatic Culture (6 data), Respect/Street Code Culture (7 data), Sacred/Ideological Culture (3 data), and Play/Thrill Culture (6 data), with a total of 31 data. In addition, the study identifies six triggers of violence, namely violence as an internalized value, as a defense mechanism for social status, as an emotional expression, as a core aspect of identity and lifestyle, as group loyalty, and as early socialization into violent norms. These triggers explain why aggression becomes a consistent and culturally sanctioned response within the Manzoni family. In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that violence in the Manzoni family is not merely a narrative device but a lifestyle, identity, and cultural pattern legitimized within their subculture, functioning to preserve honor, defend social status, express emotions, reinforce loyalty, and perpetuate values across generations. Therefore, this study emphasizes that violence in The Family (2013) reflects the complexity of violent subcultures and contributes to English literature and cultural studies by offering insight into violence as both a social and cultural phenomenon.

Keywords: The Family (2013), Subculture of Violence, Cultural Logic, Role, Shaping, Triggers

#### 1.INTRODUCTION

Luc Besson's *The Family* (2013) portrays the close connection between family bonds and violence through the story of the Manzoni family, who live under a witness protection program after betraying the mafia. In this film, violence is not depicted as an internal threat within the family but rather as an external tool directed outward to preserve identity and family solidarity. This illustrates that violence is not merely an individual pattern but also a cultural legacy transmitted across generations, as seen when Belle and Warren imitate the behaviors of their parents, Giovanni and Maggie. Drawing on Wolfgang and Ferracuti's *Subculture of Violence* theory, this study examines the representation of cultural logic of violence and its triggers in the film, with a focus on the everyday interactions of the family members. The analysis is

limited to the content of the story without discussing the film's technical aspects, ensuring that the focus remains on violence as a narrative element and as a reflection of the Manzonis' lifestyle. This study is significant because it demonstrates that violence in *The Family* is not merely a theme but a way of life that shapes family relationships and contributes to the perpetuation of aggression in society, thereby emphasizing the urgency of breaking the cycle of violence so it does not continue across generations.

#### 2.REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Violence is a multidimensional phenomenon that includes direct, structural, and cultural forms (Galtung 171). Direct violence causes immediate harm, structural violence emerges from inequality within social systems, while cultural violence legitimizes such practices through norms and traditions. In criminology, Wolfgang and Ferracuti's *Subculture of Violence* theory explains that violence can become an internalized value system, transmitted across generations and sustained even within small groups such as families (141). This suggests that violence functions not only as a tool for gain but as a cultural identity reinforced by socialization. The concept of family-based violence extends this perspective, showing that aggression may also be directed outward as a means of solidarity and identity (Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology 212).

## 2.1 Previous Study

Felson and Messner et al. (1994) applied a quantitative approach in their study *The Subculture* of Violence and Delinquency: Individual vs. School Context Effects by surveying 2,213 male adolescents in 87 schools, and their findings showed that the values of the subculture of violence had a significant effect on interpersonal violence, suggesting that such values influence behavior through contextual norms that emphasize aggression as a form of social control. Susan Hayward and Phil Powrie, in The Films of Luc Besson: Master of Spectacle (2019), discuss how violence becomes a core element in Luc Besson's narrative, functioning as a visual spectacle that integrates technology, power, and politics, which, although not directly addressing the Manzoni family, is relevant in understanding how violence is staged as a cultural identity in film. Rosetta Caponetto Giuliani, in her chapter "Italian American Gangsters Taking on a New Line of Work in Luc Besson's The Family (2013)" (2024), examines how Italian-American gangster identity is reshaped as the characters adapt to a new cultural environment in France, employing narrative analysis and the theory of identity hybridization to reveal that while violence remains central to the Manzoni family's identity, it is adjusted to align with new social norms. In a similar vein, Noel Brown in "The 'Family' Film, and the Tensions Between Popular and Academic Interpretations of Genre" (2013) analyzes The Family as a hybrid genre text that combines comedy, action, and crime, arguing that violence in the film is both shaped by genre conventions and simplified within the narrative of a mafia family, while also pointing to the tension between popular and academic interpretations of cinematic violence and family structure. Taken together, these studies have examined *The Family* (2013) from different perspectives—genre analysis, cultural identity, and narrative approaches—yet none has specifically applied Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti's Subculture of Violence theory to the film. Whereas Brown (2013) emphasizes genre expectations, Giuliani (2024) highlights hybridized identity, and Hayward and Powrie (2019) focus on spectacle, Felson et al. (1994) engage with the Subculture of Violence but within the context of youth and education rather than film. Therefore, this study offers a distinct contribution by applying the Subculture of Violence theory to explain how violence functions

not only as narrative device but also as a cultural value inherited and transmitted within the Manzoni family, thereby filling a gap in existing scholarship.

## 2.2.1 Cultural Logic of Violent Subcultures

Cultural logic refers to the norms and values that justify violence as legitimate within specific contexts (Wolfgang & Ferracuti 158–159). Six main forms illustrate this: (1) Honor Cultures, where violence defends personal or family honor; (2) Retributive Cultures, where revenge restores balance across time or generations; (3) Instrumental Cultures, where violence is used strategically for goals such as power or protection; (4) Respect/Street Code Cultures, where violence functions as a marker of toughness and status; (5) Sacred/Ideological Cultures, where violence is legitimized as a moral or religious duty; and (6) Play/Thrill Cultures, where violence becomes entertainment and a tool for group cohesion.

# 2.2.2 Triggers of the Subculture of Violence

Within violent subcultures, aggression is shaped by social norms that demand violent responses to threats or conflicts (Wolfgang & Ferracuti 289). Triggers include: (1) violence as an internalized value taught through early socialization; (2) violence as a defense of honor or social status; (3) violence as an outlet for emotional expression; (4) violence as a marker of identity and lifestyle; (5) group loyalty that prioritizes protection and solidarity; and (6) early exposure to violent norms that shapes long-term behavior. These triggers reveal that violence is not merely impulsive but a culturally accepted practice that reinforces the cycle of aggression across generations.

#### **RESEARCH METHOD**

## 1. Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, which is considered the most appropriate for analyzing the representation of violence in a literary work, particularly in film. Qualitative research emphasizes description and interpretation rather than numerical measurement (Creswell, 2018). In this study, the phenomenon of violence is explored not through numbers or statistics but through descriptive data such as scenes, dialogues, and character actions in *The Family* (2013). This approach allows the researcher to provide an indepth analysis of how violence is represented in the narrative and characters.

## 2. Sources of Data

The primary data of this research are derived from Luc Besson's *The Family* (2013), accessed through pusatfilm21. The film tells the story of Giovanni Manzoni, a former mafia boss who, after betraying his organization, is relocated with his wife and children to Normandy, France, under the Witness Protection Program. Despite attempts to live peacefully, the family continues to resort to violence in daily situations, reflecting how aggression remains embedded in their behavior. The secondary data are obtained from scholarly sources such as academic journals, research articles, and other studies on violence, the subculture of violence, and relevant sociological and psychological theories. These sources provide the theoretical foundation and serve as comparative materials to support the interpretation of the primary data.

#### 3.1 Data Collection Procedure

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The data were collected through documentary analysis, which Bowen (2009) defines as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic, to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge." Since the material under study is a film, this method is suitable as it allows repeated observation for careful and detailed analysis. The steps were as follows:

- 1. Repeatedly watching the film to fully understand the plot, characters, and setting.
- 2. Identifying scenes containing acts of violence, both verbal and nonverbal.
- 3. Documenting relevant scenes, including dialogues, gestures, facial expressions, and body language.
- 4. Categorizing the data based on the type of violence, the roles of perpetrators and victims, and the underlying motivations.
- 5. Interpreting and analyzing the categorized data in relation to the theoretical framework.

## 3.2 Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis was conducted systematically by following Creswell's (2018) qualitative analysis model, which emphasizes the stages of organization, coding, categorization, and interpretation. All scenes depicting acts of violence in The Family (2013) were first documented in detail, taking into account the dialogue, expressions, and narrative context. The data were then analyzed through open coding to identify different forms of violence, followed by axial coding to connect them with broader cultural categories. At this stage, each instance of violence was mapped into the framework of cultural logics, such as honor culture, vendetta culture, instrumental/pragmatic culture, street code culture, sacred/ideological culture, and play/thrill culture. In addition, the scenes were also analyzed based on the triggers that provoked violence, including the defense of social status, emotional expression, lifestyle identity, group loyalty, and the intergenerational transmission of violent norms. Thematic analysis was then applied to trace recurring patterns of representation, such as how violence functions not only as physical aggression but also as a symbolic language to safeguard honor, affirm identity, or reinforce family solidarity. These findings were further interpreted using Wolfgang and Ferracuti's (1967) Subculture of Violence theory, which enabled a deeper understanding that cultural logics and triggers of violence in the film are not isolated, but interrelated and collectively demonstrate how the Manzoni family represents violence as part of their subcultural identity. In this way, the analytical process was directly oriented toward answering the research question concerning how cultural logics and triggers of violence are manifested in the narrative of the film.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the study on the representation of violent subcultures in *The Family* (2013), focusing on the Manzoni family: Giovanni "Fred" Manzoni as the father, Maggie as the mother, and their two teenage children, Belle and Warren. Each family member exhibits distinct patterns of violent behavior shaped by the subcultural values they embody and the social contexts in which they interact. The collected acts of violence were systematically analyzed and organized according to cultural logic and triggers, describing whether each act

reflected honor, revenge, or instrumental purposes, and identifying the situational factors that prompted the behavior, such as insults, threats, or challenges to social status.

## **Cultural Logic of Violent Subcultures**

Violence in certain subcultures is not only understood as impulsive behavior or a form of deviance, but also as something that follows its own cultural logic. Within this framework, there are six types of violent subcultures based on their underlying cultural logic

#### 1.Honor Culture

In *The Family* (2013), the logic of Honor Culture is strongly evident through repeated instances where violence functions as a direct mechanism to restore or defend personal and familial dignity. Honor becomes a fragile yet central value that must be maintained at all costs, even when the provocation appears trivial. The first and most striking example is Maggie's act of burning down a supermarket after being insulted as an American, accused of belonging to a nation legitimized as a culture of unhealthy food such as peanut butter (00:13:02). The insult does not merely target her personally but attacks her national and cultural identity, which compels her to respond in an extreme manner to reassert her honor. In line with this pattern, seven additional incidents further reinforce this cultural logic. Belle, for example, defends herself from sexual harassment by striking her classmate with a stick (00:20:57), showing that allowing harassment would equate to dishonor. Similarly, when threatened at gunpoint, Belle refuses to submit, boldly responding with the defiant statement "Fuck you" (01:42:14), which highlights her refusal to be humiliated. Another instance occurs when Belle aggressively reacts to a classmate who denies her access to a phone, striking him to prevent the loss of face (01:27:30). Giovanni also exhibits this mindset: he strikes a plumber with a hammer after feeling ridiculed (00:42:44) and later strangles an attacker with a belt when the man attempts to sexually harass Maggie (01:40:52). The logic of honor also extends to armed defense, such as when Belle shoots a criminal who destroys her family's home (01:40:54) and Warren takes down a hitman to restore dignity and safeguard his family (01:41:40). Taken together, these instances demonstrate that within an honor-oriented framework, insults or threats cannot be tolerated passively. Instead, they demand immediate and often violent retaliation, which is culturally sanctioned as the only legitimate way to preserve respect.

#### 2. Vendetta Culture

Vendetta Culture is defined by revenge as a form of justice. A clear example is Warren attacking his bully with a baseball bat (00:37:59). After enduring repeated humiliation, he plans his retaliation carefully, illustrating revenge as an obligation rather than a spontaneous act. Other scenes reinforce this logic: Maggie threatens to break a neighbor's arms for stealing silverware (00:48:16); Maggie threatens to burn the house if Giovanni delays lighting the barbecue (00:48:34); Giovanni beats a plumber with a hammer after provocation (00:42:44); Giovanni strangles a hitman with a belt (01:40:52); Belle shoots a criminal in retaliation for destroying her home (01:40:54); Warren shoots a hitman as payback (01:41:40); and Maggie stabs a hitman to avenge his harassment attempt (01:42:52). These instances highlight retaliation as a cultural duty.

## 3. Instrumental/Pragmatic Culture

Unlike the previous two types, Instrumental or Pragmatic Culture perceives violence as a rational tool employed to achieve specific goals such as economic control, political advantage, or group protection. A key example is Giovanni torturing a man with toxic liquid (00:40:44) to extract information, shooting a man over debt (00:40:23) to enforce economic authority, and staging an "accident" after torture (01:04:19) to eliminate a witness and conceal the crime. Instrumental logic is also evident in verbal aggression: Giovanni lies to the FBI using harsh language (00:25:17) to intimidate and divert suspicion, while Maggie confronts Giovanni verbally (00:29:02) to protect family secrets. Warren calls movers "idiots" (00:04:37) to assert dominance, insults teachers as "fucking bad" (00:23:24) to reject institutional authority, and crudely compares a situation to a "whorehouse" (00:46:31) to humiliate opponents, while Giovanni labels the French town a "fucking rat hole" (00:23:32) as a means of rejecting inferiority in an unfamiliar environment. Taken together, these examples demonstrate that both physical and verbal violence in this cultural framework are not impulsive outbursts but calculated strategies serving functions of intimidation, concealment, secrecy, economic enforcement, dominance, and resistance to inferiority, thereby affirming the distinctive traits of Instrumental/Pragmatic Culture.

# 4. Respect/Street Code Culture

Street Code Culture frames violence and aggression as a symbolic "currency of respect," where toughness and the ability to insult, intimidate, or retaliate determine one's status within a hierarchy. This logic is strongly embodied by Warren, who repeatedly employs verbal aggression to project strength and prevent himself from being perceived as weak. For example, he openly calls senior students "the four jerks" (00:13:31), a deliberate act of defiance to challenge authority and claim respect in the competitive school environment. Similarly, Warren mocks his peers with crude insults such as "son of a bitch" (00:13:53), using humiliation as a tool to elevate his own standing. Even in casual settings, aggression remains his communicative style: he crudely complains in the car (00:02:46) and angrily insults movers (00:04:37), both instances functioning as performances of dominance over others he perceives as inferior. This culture also normalizes swearing in everyday speech, as seen when Warren decries his teachers as "fucking bad" (00:23:24), expressing disdain for institutional authority, while Giovanni calls the French town a "fucking rat hole" (00:23:32), a statement that symbolically rejects subordination within an unfamiliar environment. Further, Warren's metaphorical use of "whorehouse" (00:46:31) not only communicates frustration but also frames his aggression as a linguistic act of control. Collectively, these examples illustrate that within the Street Code logic, aggression whether verbal or physical is not random outburst but a socially meaningful act designed to claim respect, maintain status, and avoid vulnerability in interactions, thereby embedding violence into the everyday language of identity and power.

## 5. Sacred/Ideological Culture

Sacred/Ideological Culture operates on the principle that violence is morally justified when it is used to uphold sacred, ideological, or deeply held values such as loyalty, family unity, and survival. In this logic, violence is no longer understood as a mere outburst of emotion or a pragmatic calculation, but as a moral duty a sacred act intended to preserve something regarded as inviolable. The clearest example appears when Maggie stabs a hitman to protect Giovanni and safeguard the unity of her family (01:42:52). This act does not arise solely from anger but is rooted in loyalty, devotion, and a strong moral obligation to protect her husband's life. Here,

violence functions as an extension of moral responsibility rather than as personal gratification. The same orientation is evident in Belle's actions, as she defends herself with a gun against attackers (01:40:54) and later shoots a criminal who threatens her family's safety (01:40:54). These cases emphasize that violence is not only permissible but also morally meaningful when directed toward protecting loved ones. Taken together, these examples show that in *The Family* (2013), violence within the sacred/ideological logic operates as a moral obligation, transforming otherwise brutal acts into expressions of devotion, loyalty, and ultimate sacrifice.

#### 6. Play/Thrill Culture

Play/Thrill Culture interprets violence not as a hostile or destructive force but as a form of entertainment, expressive play, or a way of injecting humor and thrill into everyday life. In this cultural logic, profanity, aggression, or even violent expressions are detached from literal hostility and instead function as symbolic performance. A representative example can be seen when Giovanni exclaims "Fucking good" while praising food (01:04:19). Although the language is aggressive, the profanity here is playful, serving to intensify satisfaction rather than to express anger. Similarly, Warren engages in playful aggression when he jokes with crude metaphors, such as comparing a situation to "a whorehouse" (00:46:31), or when he uses crude expressions in a humorous tone (00:46:07). These instances show that profanity and verbal aggression often become tools of amusement and exaggeration rather than serious insult. The casual use of such language by both Warren and Giovanni in daily conversations illustrates that violence, within this logic, can be stylized, performative, and even entertaining. It reinforces group bonding through humor, lightens tense situations, and allows characters to express themselves more vividly. Taken together, these examples demonstrate that violence in *The* Family (2013) is not always destructive; it can also function as playful exaggeration, humor, and thrill, blurring the line between aggression and amusement.

## **Triggers of Violence in The Family (2013)**

Within the subculture of violence, aggression is not random but a culturally sanctioned response to provocation or disrespect. Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) note that failing to retaliate can signal weakness and reduce one's social status. In *The Family* (2013), the Manzoni family reflects this logic through six main triggers: violence as an internalized value, a defense of social status, an outlet for emotion, a core identity and lifestyle, a sign of group loyalty, and a result of early socialization into violent norms.

#### 1. Violence as an Internalized Value

In this trigger, aggression becomes a natural and automatic response. A clear example is Giovanni striking a plumber with a hammer (00:42:44) simply because he felt belittled. The act is reflexive, showing that violence is deeply ingrained in his mindset. Other cases include Warren swearing casually in the car (00:02:46), calling movers "idiots" (00:04:37), cursing his teachers ("fucking bad," 00:23:24), and Giovanni swearing about "fucking lobsters" to the FBI (00:25:17). These examples show violence has become normalized in everyday expression.

#### 2. Violence as a Defense Mechanism for Social Status

Here, aggression is used to preserve honor or avoid losing face. For instance, Maggie burns down the supermarket after being insulted about American eating habits (00:13:02). Her extreme reaction restores her dignity against cultural humiliation. Additional data include Belle

fighting harassment (00:20:57), Belle striking a classmate over a phone (01:27:30), Belle defiantly saying "Fuck you" under gunpoint (01:42:14), Warren sarcastically rejecting the stereotype "Americans are rich" (00:10:51), and Warren mocking seniors ("the four jerks," 00:13:31). Each act reinforces identity and resists dishonor.

## 3. Violence as an Emotional Expression

Violence here works as an outlet for anger and frustration. A clear example is Belle attacking her harasser with a stick (00:20:57). Beyond defending herself, her violent reaction channels anger built up from social pressures. Other data include Giovanni shooting a debtor out of frustration (00:40:23), Giovanni swearing about the French town ("this fucking rat hole," 00:23:32), and Warren insulting teachers with profanity (00:23:24). These examples show violence as emotional release rather than strategic calculation.

## 4. Violence as a Core Aspect of Identity and Lifestyle

For the Manzoni family, violence is not only behavior but identity. A striking case is Giovanni torturing a man with chemicals (00:40:44), reflecting his mafia lifestyle where brutality is normalized. Other data include Giovanni staging an accident after torture (01:04:19), swearing in formal contexts (00:25:17), and casually using profanity ("fucking good," 01:04:19). Such acts prove that violence is inseparable from their personal and family identity.

#### **5. Group Loyalty Over Individual Concerns**

Violence is used to protect family unity and group solidarity. A strong example is Maggie stabbing a hitman to save Giovanni (01:42:52). Her violence expresses loyalty above personal safety. Other examples include Belle shooting criminals to defend her family (01:40:54), Warren shooting a hitman to protect the household (01:41:40), and Giovanni strangling an attacker to defend Maggie (01:40:52). In each case, aggression is justified as a duty to safeguard the group.

# **6. Early Socialization into Violent Norms**

This trigger shows how children replicate the violent behavior of parents. A key example is Warren mocking and insulting peers at school (00:13:53), reflecting the verbal aggression he has absorbed at home. Additional cases include Belle's use of violence against her classmates (01:27:30), Belle's defiance under threat (01:42:14), and Warren's reliance on profanity in daily speech (00:23:24). These examples illustrate how violent patterns are passed down, normalized, and internalized across generations

#### **CONCLUTION**

This study shows that violence in *The Family* (2013) is not mere deviance but follows a cultural logic legitimized within the Manzoni family's subculture. A total of 35 data were identified across six forms of violent subcultures: Honor Culture (8 data), Vendetta Culture (5 data), Instrumental Culture (6 data), Street Code Culture (7 data), Ideological Culture (3 data), and Play/Thrill Culture (6 data). Each serves distinct functions such as defending honor, seeking revenge, achieving goals, asserting status, upholding values, or expressing amusement. The findings also reveal 34 data of motivations, including violence as an internalized value, defense of social status, emotional expression, identity and lifestyle, group loyalty, and early

socialization. Overall, the film portrays violence as inherited, normalized, and legitimized, functioning as identity, value, and social strategy within the Manzoni family.

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