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## Raiding



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## Synonyms

[Intergroup Violence](#); [Tribal Warfare](#)

## Definition

A sudden, often violent, display of force by members of a group against one or more individuals from another group, with the goal of inflicting injury, taking resources, or capturing females.

In anthropology and biology, raiding commonly refers to a spontaneous display of force, enacted by one group against a separate group or individual. Raids may be violent, resulting in injury or death for the targeted individuals, and are often biased in favor of the attacking group. The goal of a raid might be to inflict injury or death on members of the target group, to kidnap females or to steal resources such as food.

## Nonhuman Primates

Raiding is present in both chimpanzees and humans, but not in bonobos (Pandit et al. 2016). Watts et al. (2006) provided anecdotal examples of lethal intergroup aggression in chimpanzees and argue that these observations are consistent with an evolved function of lethal, intergroup aggression in chimpanzees. (The proposed fitness benefits of chimpanzee raids include that killing rival group members reduces competition for limited resources). This hypothesis is further supported by Mitani et al.' (2010) study which observed territorial expansion of chimpanzees who fatally wounded rival group members. In an investigation of patrolling behavior (which typically precedes intergroup attacks), Watts and Mitani (2001) observed that chimpanzees who patrolled more frequently and who were more likely to join an existing patrol experience greater mating success. Taken together, the literature on chimpanzee raiding behavior evidences strong empirical support for the fitness benefit of lethal, intergroup aggression.

## Humans

Raiding has also been observed in human tribal societies. In these contexts, tribal warfare is often used interchangeably with raiding and is characterized by highly organized sneak attacks by the men of one tribe against a rival tribe. Often, these

raids involve taking resources or capturing women from the rival group; however, raiding may have reproductive benefits, even when women are not captured and taken as wives. Glowacki and Wrangham (2015) observed that men from a tribe of nomadic pastoralists who participated in more raids during their youth have more wives and children later in life. The authors suggest that, because Nyangatom men trade livestock in exchange for wives, and because raids often involve the taking of livestock, Nyangatom men may enhance their reproductive success as an indirect result of performing raids.

In a meta-analysis comparing patterns of raiding behaviors across species, Manson et al. (1991) noted several similarities and differences between chimpanzees and tribal humans. Manson et al. noted that human and chimpanzee raiding are similar in that intergroup aggression is largely displayed by males, with females rarely taking an active role in the hostilities. The authors suggest that this sex difference may be due to males being the philopatric sex, meaning that, as opposed to females, males do not leave the group into which they are born. As a result, males are unlikely to injure or kill genetically related kin during a raid. The authors also provide evidence that, for humans in particular, raids are likely intended to capture females from rival groups when there are few material resources (e.g., food, land) that can be taken instead. Additionally, Manson and colleagues found that accumulation of material resources was associated with polygyny, which suggests that raiding to take material resources and raiding to kidnap women may both have consequences for men's reproductive success.

Overall, empirical data on raiding in tribal societies of humans suggests that, for them raiding does and for ancestral humans, raiding did generate reproductive benefits. Further, the apparent

similarities in raiding behaviors between humans and chimpanzees suggests the possibility that raiding has been a feature of hominid life since the most recent common ancestor between humans and chimpanzees, 5–6 million years ago. Still, further investigation is needed to determine whether raiding in humans is best understood as a phylogenetically conserved behavior whether human raiding might reflect specialized adaptation in humans that is not present in chimpanzees.

## Cross-References

- ▶ [Aggression](#)
- ▶ [Chimpanzee Raiding](#)
- ▶ [Hunting](#)

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