

Are Family Divisions Contributing to National Disunity?

Ever had a painful rift in your family?

If a [new study](#) from the University of Cambridge is any indication, there's a good chance you have. Of the over 1,629 invitees in the University's survey on family estrangement, roughly half admitted to being "estranged from their family or a key family member."

Unfortunately, such estrangement isn't a minor, short-term affair. For many, the estrangement period lasts upwards of five years:



So what causes the painful rifts that so many families seem to experience? According to the study's participants, a majority of estrangements center around the fact that parents, children, or siblings were perceived as unloving and distant in their interactions with one another. When it comes to relationships with parents, many adult children are angry with their mothers for being over-controlling and harsh, and angry with their fathers for being controlled by a spouse or other family member.

When it comes to reconciliation, many respondents express a desire to reunite with their estranged family member, but seem unwilling to initiate or even envision having a functional relationship in the future:



There's no denying that family tension and rifts are hard to repair. In fact, repair is so hard that many of us simply

avoid it all together.

But before we avoid seeking reconciliation with our families, perhaps we would do well to consider that such estrangement can negatively affect other areas of our lives such as our neighborhoods, schools, cities, and even nation. As Edmund Burke [once said](#):

"We begin our public affections in our families. No cold relation is a zealous citizen. We pass on to our neighborhoods and our habitual provincial connections. These are inns and resting places. Such divisions of our country as have been formed by habit, and not by a sudden jerk of authority, were so many little images of the great country in which the heart found something which it could fill."

Many today complain that our country is perilously divided. Judging by Burke's statement, is it possible that striving for greater unity in our families would give us the national unity so many desire?

Image Credit: GeoCities.ws