

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT THE MARGINS

Readings on Race, Class,
Gender, and Culture

Edited by

NATALIE J. SOKOLOFF

with CHRISTINA PRATT

Foreword by Beth E. Richie

*Rutgers University Press
New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London*

This collection copyright © 2005 by Natalie J. Sokoloff
For copyrights to individual pieces please see first page of each essay.

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher.

Please contact Rutgers University Press, 100 Joyce Kilmer Avenue,
Piscataway, NJ 08854-8099.

The only exception to this prohibition is "fair use" as defined by U.S. copyright law.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Domestic violence at the margins : readings on race, class, gender, and culture /
edited by Natalie J. Sokoloff ; with Christina Pratt ;
foreword by Beth E. Richie.

p. cm. Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-8135-3569-7 (hardcover : alk. paper) — ISBN 0-8135-3570-0 (pbk. :
alk. paper)

1. Abused women—United States. 2. Wife abuse—United States.
3. Marginality, Social—United States. I. Sokoloff, Natalie J. II. Pratt,
Christina, 1951-

HV6626.2.D663 2005 362.82'92'0973—dc22 2004018894

A British Cataloging-in-Publication record for this book is available from the
British Library.

CHAPTER 11

CAROLYN M. WEST

Domestic Violence in Ethnically and Racially Diverse Families

The "Political Gag Order" Has Been Lifted

ABSTRACT

Previous chapters set the stage for Carolyn M. West's discussion of a self-imposed rule of silence—in the name of solidarity—that historically has weighed upon communities of color regarding domestic violence. To speak out on violence in families of color too often invited excessive state surveillance and the stigma of community betrayal, not safety.

Consistent with the cautions of Hampton (chapter 9) and Websdale (chapter 10), Carolyn West urges the reader to be a critical consumer of social science research on race and culture. In her analysis of studies of prevalence that measure violence in ethnically diverse families, the author reveals measurement issues in domestic violence research that have produced either inconclusive or contradictory outcomes. A summary of past research findings provides a context for the oft-repeated question: Are ethnic minority families more violent than Anglo Americans?

Carolyn West helps the reader understand the structural—or as she calls it "demographic"—factors that trump race and culture in the measurement of domestic violence prevalence. These factors are chiefly poverty, unemployment, and to some extent recency of migration. In line with Hampton's and Websdale's analyses, the author demonstrates how structural explanations are necessary to understand differing rates of violence across ethnic groups.

When race and ethnicity influence and determine access to economic resources, as is the case in the United States, an understanding of abiding histories of exclusion and disadvantage is key to any inquiry on racial and ethnic diversity and domestic violence. Without a structural context for prevalence studies, there is a tendency to consider sociodemographic "variables" in a vacuum. If the analysis of the data disregards social structural context, issues of patriarchy, colonialism, racism, and inequality go unchallenged and social research colludes with these persistent stereotypes.

The author reviews the strengths and protective factors of communities of color and concludes that in fact the self-censoring gag order has been lifted. However, as discussed by Traci West in chapter 20 and Lisa Sun-Hee Park in chapter 21, this is only partly true. As you read this chapter, consider the following questions. What are the benefits and drawbacks of studying racial and ethnic group differences in the prevalence of domestic violence? How might findings from such studies perpetuate or reinforce negative images of some racial and ethnic groups? How might findings benefit the racial and ethnic groups that are studied?

To protect themselves and their communities from stereotypes and oppressive social policies, some people of color have imposed a "political gag order,"¹ which is a form of community pressure to suppress information about partner or domestic violence. As a result, some survivors have been discouraged from revealing their victimization and some community members and leaders have been reluctant to participate in the research process (West, 1998). Fortunately, more researchers, activists, and survivors have broken the silence around violence in ethnically and racially diverse families. As evidence, intimate violence in communities of color has been the subject of more books (de Anda and Becerra, 2000; West, 2002), special editions of journals (Dasgupta, 1999; Williams and Griffin, 2000), and literature reviews (Hampton, et al., 1998; Oates, 1998).

Although the political gag order has been lifted, researchers should continue this important work for several reasons. First, the United States is undergoing a major demographic transformation in racial and ethnic group composition (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). As a result, investigators assert, "given the range of cultures represented here in the United States today, research on spouse abuse should take into account the ethnicity of respondents" (Gabler et al., 1998, p. 591). Second, to consider new directions for research, we must review the findings of previous research. Finally, researchers face a new challenge. Cultural sensitivity requires them to articulate racial similarities in intimate partner violence; simultaneously they must highlight racial differences without perpetuating the stereotype that ethnic groups are inherently more violent than White Americans. This intricate balance can best be accomplished by considering how the intersection of various forms of oppression (race, class, and gender) converge to create demographic inequalities and cultural factors that may increase the probability of violence in ethnic families (West, 2002).

Accordingly, the first section of the chapter describes the four largest racial groups in the United States: African Americans, Hispanic/Latino/

Latina Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. In the second section I review the literature and discuss recent developments. The final section discusses how the intersection of oppressions may create demographic and cultural factors that increase the risk of violence in families of color.

DESCRIPTION OF ETHNIC AND RACIAL GROUPS

Partner violence occurs in a larger historical and cultural context. I establish this context by reviewing the demographic characteristics of the four largest ethnic groups, highlighting significant historical events, identifying contemporary challenges faced by each group, and emphasizing cultural strengths that may act as protective factors.

African Americans

Approximately 12 percent of the U.S. population, or 34 million people, identify themselves as African American. The Black population is increasing in diversity as greater numbers of immigrants arrive from Africa and Caribbean countries. Many African Americans trace their ancestry to the African slave trade. Their enslavement was characterized by forced separation of families, beatings, sexual assault, and loss of language and culture. As late as 1910, a majority of Blacks continued to be impoverished in the Deep South. Social and economic advancement came with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited legal segregation in public accommodations and discrimination in education and employment.

Although African Americans now span all socioeconomic classes and professions, the legacy of slavery and discrimination continues to influence their social and economic standing. For example, in 1999 almost 25 percent of Black families had incomes below the poverty line. Many of these impoverished families reside in urban areas, which are plagued with high rates of community violence (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Despite these challenges, African Americans have developed adaptive beliefs, traditions, and practices. For instance, religious commitment and prayer are common among this group. The family, both immediate and extended, has been and remains a source of comfort and strength. African Americans, by developing a capacity to disregard negative stereotypes about their group, have acquired some protection from low self-esteem (Oates, 1998).

Hispanic Americans

According to Census 2000, 35 million people, or approximately 13 percent of the U.S. population are categorized as Hispanic/Latino/Latina Americans. Almost two-thirds are persons of Mexican origin, followed by Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central Americans. Although the majority of Hispanics (64 percent) were born in the United States it is important to consider the historical

events that brought Latinos to the United States. Mexicans have been U.S. residents longer than any other Hispanic ethnic group. After the Mexican War (1846–1848), when the United States took over large territories from Texas to California, the country gained many Mexican citizens. More recently, economic hardships in Mexico and the need for laborers have increased the flow of Mexicans to the United States. After World War II, large numbers of Puerto Ricans began arriving to the U.S. mainland. In the 1980s, the migration patterns became more circular as Puerto Ricans chose to return to the island; however, Puerto Ricans have been granted U.S. citizenship. Between 1959 and 1965, the first wave of Cuban immigrants, who were predominately educated professionals, arrived in the United States. As political refugees, they received economic assistance from the federal government. However, subsequent waves of Cuban immigrants, often less educated and nonwhite, received less economic support. Central Americans, the newest Hispanic ethnic group, arrived in the United States between 1980 and 1990. Many immigrants were fleeing political terror and atrocities in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Different migration histories contribute to demographic variations among Hispanic ethnic groups. For example, Cuban Americans, tend to be older, more educated, and economically advantaged, followed by Puerto Ricans, and Mexican Americans. Furthermore, Hispanic groups vary in their level of acculturation. Some, fourth- or fifth-generation Americans, are very acculturated, but newly arrived immigrants continue to embrace their culture and customs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Despite their diversity, many Hispanics value familism or family unity, respect, and loyalty. In addition, religion plays an important role in the lives of Hispanics (Oates, 1998).

Asian Americans

Asian Americans make up a diverse group that originates from three major geographic locations: (1) East Asia, which includes China, Japan, and Korea; (2) Southeast Asia, which includes Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam; and (3) South Asia, which includes India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (Oates, 1998). Between 1990 and 2000, the number of people identifying as Asian American reached 10 million people, or 3.6 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

The Chinese were among the first Asian groups to come to the United States. Between 1848 and 1882, the discovery of gold in California and work in the railroad industry drew large numbers of Chinese immigrants. However, the government passed laws, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which limited Asian immigration. Migration to the United States grew following the 1965 Immigration Act, which supported family reunification and discouraged discrimination against Asians. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. government, for political and humanitarian reasons, accepted large numbers of Southeast Asian refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Asian Americans reflect diversity in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion (Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism). This group is also linguistically diverse, with more than one hundred languages and dialects spoken. On average, Asian Americans have completed more formal education than other ethnic groups. However, there are ethnic group differences. Descendants from the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) tend to be more educated than Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians. The rates of poverty also vary across ethnic groups. Japanese Americans (7 percent) were least impoverished; followed by Chinese, Korean, and Thai Americans who reported poverty rates of 14 percent. Southeast Asians, such as Cambodians (43 percent) and Hmong (64 percent), reported the highest poverty rates (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Despite their diversity, Asians value family relationships, respect for authority, and elders as well as responsibility, self-control, discipline, and educational achievement (Oates, 1998).

Native Americans

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 4.1 million people, or 1.5 percent of the U.S. population, identify as Native Americans and Alaska Natives (Eskimos and Aleuts). Despite increased willingness to acknowledge Indian ancestry and increased birth rates, this ethnic group remains small. Native Americans and Alaska Natives were self-governing people who thrived in North America. This began to change when Europeans "discovered" and colonized North America. In the seventeenth century, European contact exposed Native people to infectious diseases. Over time, almost every tribe was subjected to forced removal from their ancestral homelands, brutal colonization, and confinement to reservations. As a result, the population began to decline. During the 1970s, Native Americans and Alaska Natives began to demand greater authority in their communities, which led to the reemergence of tribal courts and councils (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

There are hundreds of different native peoples and languages across North America. Limited educational opportunities and high unemployment rates are common community problems. As a result, approximately 25 percent of Native Americans live in poverty. Alcohol-related problems, diabetes, and inadequate health care contribute to premature death; consequently, this relatively young population has an average age of twenty-eight (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). In spite of these social and economic challenges, many Native American families value respect for elders, cooperation, group cohesion, and respect for religion (Oates, 1998).

In conclusion, despite economic and social advances, ethnic groups are disproportionately more likely to be young, impoverished, and less educated (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). All these demographic factors are associated with increased levels of partner violence. However, each ethnic group has developed cultural strengths, which have enabled them to deal with violence in their families (Oates, 1998; West, 1998).

INCIDENCE OF PARTNER VIOLENCE

The earlier research on domestic violence presents a complex, and at times contradictory, picture of racial differences in the rates of partner violence (see review by West, 1998). To summarize, African American, Hispanic, and White American battered women reported similar rates of partner violence in nonrepresentative samples, such as shelter residents. However, when compared to White Americans, African Americans and Native Americans reported higher rates of partner violence in community samples and large nationally representative samples. In national studies, Latino couples reported both higher and lower rates of partner violence when compared to White couples. "Ethnic lumping," which is the failure to consider ethnic group differences, may explain these conflicting results. When Latino ethnic group differences were taken into account, Puerto Rican husbands reported the highest rate of wife assault and Cuban husbands reported the lowest rate. Methodological problems, including small sample size and ethnic lumping, have made it difficult to draw conclusions about the lifetime prevalence rates of partner violence among Asian Americans and American Indians (West, 1998).

A growing body of research has focused on violence in ethnically diverse families (Hampton et al., 1998; Oates, 1998). Similar to previous studies, investigators found few ethnic differences in nonrepresentative samples. For example, in a community sample of more than seven hundred low-income women, African American, Mexican American, and European American women reported comparable rates of intimate partner violence (Marshall et al., 2000). However, in nationally representative studies, women of color, particularly Black, Hispanic, and Native American women, generally reported higher rates of domestic violence (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000).

In this section I review the research on ethnic differences in intimate partner violence. Many of these findings are based on four national studies: (1) The National Alcohol and Family Violence Survey (NAFVS) is comprised of face-to-face interviews conducted with a national probability sample of 1,970 persons who were living as couples with a member of the opposite sex. Hispanics were oversampled ($n = 846$). Respondents had the choice of being interviewed in English or Spanish (Jasinski, 1998). (2) The National Alcohol Survey (NAS) was comprised of interviews conducted in forty-eight states with participants who were eighteen years of age or older. Blacks and Hispanics were oversampled (Cunradi et al., 1999). (3) The National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAW) consisted of telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of eight thousand women and eight thousand men. Participants were queried about their experiences as victims of violence, including intimate partner violence (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). (4) The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which is administered by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Household members are interviewed annually concerning their criminal victimization during the six months preceding their interview (Rennison and Welchans, 2000).

African Americans

Intimate partner violence among African Americans has been well documented (West, 2002; Williams and Griffin, 2000). Consistent with previous research, African Americans women were somewhat more likely than White women to be assaulted by an intimate partner (26 percent vs. 21 percent, respectively) (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). Both Black men and women sustained and inflicted abuse. According to the NCVS, between 1993 and 1998 Blacks were victimized by intimate partners at significantly higher rates than persons of other races. More specifically, Black women experienced intimate partner victimization at a rate 35 percent higher than that of White women. Black husbands were also abused, with rates approximately 62 percent higher than that of White husbands (Rennison and Welchans, 2000). The NAS provided further evidence of this racial pattern. Black couples reported the highest rate (23 percent) of male-to-female partner violence, followed by Hispanic couples (17 percent), and White couples (11 percent). Female-to-male partner violence followed a similar pattern. Black couples reported a higher rate (30 percent) than their Hispanic (21 percent) and White (15 percent) counterparts (Cunradi et al., 1999). Caution should be used when interpreting these gender differences. When rates of severe violence were considered, Black women were frequent victims of wife battering (Kessler et al., 2001). In fact, homicide by intimate partners is the leading cause of death for African American women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four (National Center for Health Statistics, 1997). Black women may be using aggression as a form of self-defense in retaliation for the abuse perpetrated against them.

Hispanic Americans

According to previous research, when compared to White Americans, Hispanic Americans reported both higher and lower rates of partner violence (West, 1998). More recently, higher rates were reported by Latinos. For example, Hispanic couples reported both male-to-female (17 percent) and female-to-male (21 percent) partner violence, which are higher than the rates for White couples (11 percent and 15 percent, respectively) (Cunradi et al., 1999). Similarly, based on the NAFVS, Hispanic husbands were more likely than White husbands to inflict wife assaults that were both minor (16 percent vs. 12 percent) and severe (5.2 percent vs. 2.7 percent) (Jasinski and Kaufman Kantor, 2001). However, when researchers considered the experiences of battered women, Latinas (37 percent) and White women (34 percent) reported comparable rates of severe violence, defined as beatings or threats with weapons (West et al., 1998).

When ethnic group differences were investigated, researchers discovered important differences. In a large sample ($n = 1,000$) of ethnically diverse women who were recruited from community hospitals, Central American (7 percent) and Cuban American women (7 percent) were least likely to be abused, followed by Mexican American women (14 percent). Puerto Rican

women (23 percent) reported the highest rates of partner abuse (Torres et al., 2000). A similar pattern was discovered when researchers used the NAFVS. When severe violence was considered, Mexican American husbands born in the United States (11 percent) were more likely to admit to wife assault than either Puerto Rican (7 percent) or Mexican husbands born in Mexico (2.5 percent). No Cuban husbands reported wife battering. Although not statistically significant, these patterns illustrate the importance of investigating ethnic group differences (Jasinski, 1998).

Asian Americans

Although domestic violence researchers have been criticized for neglecting the experiences of Asian Americans (West, 1998), more recently this population has been the focus of literature reviews (Lee, 2000; Lum, 1998) and special journal editions (Dasgupta, 1999). According to the NVAW survey, physical assault was reported by 12 percent of women who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander ($n = 133$). This is significantly lower than the rate for Native American (30 percent), mixed race (27 percent), and Black women (26 percent). The researchers concluded, "the lower intimate partner victimization rates found among Asian/Pacific Islander women may be, at least in part, an artifact of underreporting" (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000, pp. 26–27). This political gag order has been attributed to traditional Asian values that emphasize close family ties and harmony. In addition, stereotypes, which characterize Asians as "model minorities," make some survivors and community members reluctant to discuss this problem (Yick, 2000).

Past research has been limited by ethnic lumping and small sample size (West, 1998). Although both these methodological problems continue to exist, researchers have begun to use larger samples to investigate intimate violence in Asian groups. For example, violence in South Asian families (Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani) has come to the attention of investigators. Dasgupta (2000) cited a study conducted in Boston with 160 highly educated, professional South Asian women between the ages of eighteen and sixty-two. Nearly one-third had experienced physical abuse in their present relationship. Yoshihama (1999) discovered similarly high rates of abuse when she conducted face-to-face interviews with 211 women of Japanese descent. Approximately 50 percent of the respondents had experienced some form of physical partner violence during their lifetimes. Other researchers used telephone directories to identify and interview approximately 250 Chinese American (Yick, 2000) and Korean American families (Kim and Sung, 2000). In both ethnic groups, almost 20 percent reported minor violence (for example, slapped, pushed, shoved) and 8 percent experienced severe violence.

Native Americans

Previous research on this population also has been limited by ethnic lumping and small sample size (West, 1998). These methodological problems continue to exist; however, the few available studies indicate that partner violence is

a serious problem in this population. Based on the NVAW survey, 30 percent of Native American/Alaska Native women ($n = 88$) had been physically assaulted by a male partner. Although not significantly higher, these women reported more victimization than their African American (26 percent) and White women counterparts (21 percent) (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000).

Considering tribal and regional differences has enhanced our understanding of domestic violence among Native Americans. For example, severe victimization has been found among Native women in rural Alaska (Shepherd, 2001) and Native American women on the Apache and Hualapai reservations (Hamby, 2000). A larger study was conducted at an Indian Health Service comprehensive health care facility. Among the 341 Navajo women who completed the survey, 52 percent had reported at least one episode of domestic violence, with verbal (40 percent) and physical abuse (41 percent) most frequently reported. Almost one-third of the physical abuse was categorized as severe violence (Fairchild et al., 1998).

In summary, using nonrepresentative samples, researchers discovered comparable rates of domestic violence across racial groups (Marshall et al., 2000). However, in national studies, researchers discovered important racial differences, which have been consistent over time. When compared to White Americans and other racial groups, African Americans reported substantially higher rates of partner violence (Rennison and Welchans, 2000). In general, Hispanic couples reported more spousal assault than their White counterparts; when ethnic group differences were considered, Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans reported more marital violence than Cubans (Jasinski, 1998). More researchers have investigated violence in Asian American families. In a national study, Asian/Pacific Islanders reported less victimization than other ethnic groups, which may be due to underreporting (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). Although racial comparisons were not made, based on self-report studies, domestic violence is a serious problem among various Asian American groups, including South Asians, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese families (Lum, 1998). Finally, the research on domestic violence among Native Americans continues to be limited by small sample size and failure to consider tribal and regional differences. Nevertheless, researchers have documented substantial rates of partner abuse among Alaska Native women (Shepherd, 2001) and Native American women (Fairchild et al., 1998).

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

After several decades of research, a consistent demographic profile of the most likely victims and perpetrators has emerged: young, impoverished, and unemployed African American or Hispanic couples (Holtzman-Munroe, et al., 1997; Rennison and Welchans, 2000). However, it would be inappropriate to conclude that ethnically diverse families are inherently more violent. As previously discussed, families of color are disproportionately more likely

to be young, impoverished, and less educated (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001), the very demographic categories at the greatest risk for violence. Although each ethnic group has developed cultural strengths that may act as protective factors, economic marginalization continues to influence the culture of their families. For example, less acculturated individuals are more likely to be impoverished because they lack access to education and job opportunities. Poverty has also been linked to heavy drinking (West, 1998). This section reviews how demographic and cultural factors converge to increase the probability of violence in ethnically diverse families.

Demographic Factors

Similar to previous research (West, 1998), investigators continue to find links between domestic violence and youthfulness (Jasinski, 2000), poverty (Torres et al., 2000), and husband's occupational and employment status (Jasinski et al., 1997). More recently complex associations have been discovered between these demographic categories and partner assault. For example, researchers have begun to investigate stressful events in the lives of young couples, such as pregnancy (Jasinski and Kaufman Kantor, 2001). In addition, the most impoverished families, such as the welfare dependent, are at increased risk for violence (Tolman and Raphael, 2000). Finally, more violence occurs in families when additional factors, such as work stress, occur in conjunction with unemployment and low occupational status (Jasinski et al., 1997).

PREGNANCY. Researchers have discovered associations between ethnicity and battering among pregnant women. According to research based on the NAFVS, pregnancy was associated with severe wife assault among White women. In contrast, when compared to Hispanic women who were not pregnant, pregnant Hispanic women were more likely to be victims of minor wife assault and to be victimized for the first time during the survey year (Jasinski and Kaufman Kantor, 2001). Using an ethnically diverse sample of women recruited from community hospitals in Florida and Massachusetts, researchers discovered important ethnic group differences. Puerto Rican women were most likely to report abuse during pregnancy, followed by White and Black women. Pregnant Mexican American, Cuban American, and Central American women were less likely to report victimization (Torres et al., 2000). Despite these ethnic differences, pregnancy was not a predictor of wife assault in either study after the researchers controlled for socioeconomic status, stressful life events, and age.

WELFARE DEPENDENCY. As previously noted, poverty has consistently been associated with higher rates of domestic violence (Torres et al., 2000). However, poor, welfare dependent women are especially vulnerable (Tolman and Raphael, 2000). Although this link has been found across ethnic groups, there are some important differences. Previous relationship violence was

associated with lower rates of employment for White women. In contrast, Black and Mexican American women who received public assistance were more likely to report victimization in previous relationships (Honeycutt et al., 2001). Furthermore, battered women of color may face additional challenges while making the transition from welfare to the workforce. For instance, in one study although Black women had more education and work experience than their White counterparts, racial discrimination made it difficult for them to find employment after completing a job-readiness program (Brush, 2001).

HUSBAND'S OCCUPATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS. Unemployment and employment in blue-collar professions has been linked to increased levels of wife assault (West, 1998). Researchers have discovered a more complex association between employment status and domestic violence. Based on the NAFVS, Hispanic husbands were more likely to face extended unemployment in the year prior to the survey, but White husbands were more likely to experience trouble with their supervisors. Although all these men experienced work-related stress, their reaction varied based on ethnicity. Specifically, work stress was associated with increased drinking and wife assault among Hispanic men. In contrast, work stress among White men was associated with elevated levels of drinking, but not violence (Jasinski et al., 1997). Furthermore, Jasinski (2001) suggested that a curvilinear relationship may exist between employment patterns and violence in ethnically diverse families. For example, working overtime may be stressful and thus increases the risk of violence; conversely, working fewer weeks is related to lower income, which may also increase both stress and domestic violence.

Cultural Factors

In some cases, racial differences remained after demographic factors were taken into account. For example, after controlling for sociodemographic factors, severe violence continued to be elevated in a nationally representative sample of Blacks and Hispanics (Kessler et al., 2001). Consistent with previous research, cultural factors, such as level of acculturation and heavy alcohol use, may account for some of these ethnic differences (West, 1998). With additional research, investigators have discovered more complex associations between partner violence and these cultural factors.

LEVEL OF ACCULTURATION. Intimate partner violence has been associated with the couple's level of acculturation, which is "the process whereby immigrants come to adopt the values and behaviors of the host country" (Jasinski, 1998, p. 173). However, the results have been contradictory. Depending on the ethnic group, both high and low levels of acculturation have been linked to violence. Moreover, inconsistent definitions of acculturation and the failure to consider the confounding effects of socioeconomic status may partially account for these conflicting results (West, 1998). All these methodological

problems continue to exist, which may explain why researchers continue to find both high and low levels of acculturation linked to increased rates of partner violence. More recently, researchers have discovered that couples who reported medium levels of acculturation are also at risk.

High Acculturation Level. Based on the NAFVS, highly acculturated Hispanic American husbands were more likely to assault their wives. More specifically, after controlling for age, poverty, and education, third-generation Hispanic husbands were almost three times as likely to beat their wives compared to Hispanic husbands who were born outside the United States (Jasinski, 1998). Similarly, abused Latinas reported higher levels of acculturation, as measured by preference for the English language (Torres et al., 2000).

Researchers suggest that acculturation may present some new challenges. Embracing the cultural values of U.S. society does not protect against racial discrimination. In fact, perceptions of discrimination may increase with longer residence in the United States. As a result, some Latinos may feel alienated from the larger society, which may contribute to frustration and stress; and ultimately conflict and violence (Jasinski, 1998).

Low Acculturation Level. Partner violence is also a common occurrence among less acculturated couples, particularly if they are recent immigrants. Several factors may contribute, as well as complicate, intimate violence in these families (for a review, see Raj and Silverman, 2002). Initially, immigrants may be optimistic about moving to the United States, a "land of opportunity." However, upon arriving they may find themselves economically and socially marginalized. Many recent arrivals, particularly if they come from rural areas, may lack education and job skills that are transferable to the U.S. economy. Consequently, they are often impoverished, which is a risk factor for abuse. Second, isolation can create an environment that both fosters and conceals family violence. Recent immigrants must often adapt to a new country without support from family members and friends. The absence of this support network can increase family stress and decrease the likelihood of intervention in cases of abuse. Battered immigrant women may be further silenced by fear of deportation, especially if they or their partners are undocumented workers, have limited access to social services, lack English language skills, and are faced with oppressive legal policies, which require extensive documentation of abuse.

Medium Acculturation Level. The NAS included a broader measure of acculturation. For example, participants' were asked about their ease of social relationships with Anglos and Hispanics, preference for Hispanic media and music, and their proportion of Hispanic friends, church members, and neighbors. Based on their score, Latino participants' were categorized as low, medium, or high in acculturation level. Overall rates of male-to-female Hispanic partner violence were highest among men in the medium acculturation group followed by those in the low and high acculturation group. Similarly,

when compared to the high and low acculturated groups, the overall rate of female-to-male Hispanic abuse was almost twice as high among medium acculturated women. The authors speculated that individuals in the medium range had lost connection with their country of origin and had not yet adopted the values associated with the U.S. culture. Without a strong identification to either culture, these couples may be vulnerable to anxiety, stress, conflict, and potentially violence (Caetano et al., 2000).

To summarize, consistent with previous research, various levels of acculturation have been linked with domestic violence (West, 1998). More recently, increased rates of intimate violence have been linked to high (Jasinski, 1998), low (Raj and Silverman, 2002), and now medium levels of acculturation (Caetano et al., 2000). A variety of factors, such as inconsistent definitions of acculturation, may explain the wide range of results. More empirical research should be conducted before drawing conclusions.

ALCOHOL ABUSE. By using large nationally representative samples, more research has begun to investigate the link between drinking and domestic violence. Although substance abusers were not oversampled, these studies are valuable because they oversampled ethnic groups (African Americans and Hispanics) where they asked detailed questions on alcohol use and abuse. As a result, complex associations have been discovered among partner violence, substance abuse, and ethnicity. Based on the NAFVS, a large study designed to measure the links between alcohol and family violence, the association between wife abuse and drinking was influenced by work stress, related to being laid off, fired, or unemployed. Among Hispanic men, work stress was linked to increased levels of both drinking and wife abuse. In contrast, White men who experienced work stress were more likely to drink, but not batter their wives (Jasinski et al., 1997).

Intricate associations also were discovered when researchers used the National Alcohol Survey (NAS). Ethnic differences in the links between alcohol-related problems and intimate partner violence remained after controlling for sociodemographic factors, psychosocial variables (childhood victimization, impulsivity), and alcohol consumption. When compared to Black couples without drinking problems, Black couples with either male or female alcohol problems were substantially more likely (ten and five times, respectively) to report wife abuse. Conversely, although White couples with either male or female alcohol problems were at a twofold risk of wife battering, these associations were not significant. Similarly, male and female alcohol problems were not predictive of wife beating among Hispanics (Cunradi et al., 1999). However, when the level of acculturation was considered, the association between alcohol use and partner violence became more complex. For example, medium and highly acculturated Hispanic women who drank report the highest occurrences of intimate partner abuse (Caetano et al., 2000). Taken together, the association between alcohol and intimate partner violence among various ethnic groups is complex and sometimes difficult to interpret. Caetano and colleagues (2000) summarize the literature well: "alcohol's role

in partner violence becomes a moving target interacting differently with such factors as couple members' personalities, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity" (p. 42). Clearly more research is required.

SUMMARY AND NEW RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The first section of this chapter was devoted to describing the cultural, linguistic, economic, historic, and geographic diversity among the four largest racial groups in the United States. Given the major demographic transformation in racial and ethnic group composition (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001), domestic violence researchers must continue to focus on ethnic and racial differences. In the future, researchers should consider partner violence among individuals who identify as "mixed race" and couples who are in interracial relationships. In addition, researchers should explore the diversity among White or European Americans; for example, those who identify as Polish, Italian, or German American. Moreover, much more work needs to be done to study how social class and geography intersect with race, ethnicity, and domestic violence.

The second section reviewed and discussed recent developments in the research. Consistent with previous findings, nationally representative studies revealed higher rates of partner violence among Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans when compared to White Americans. Asian Americans reported the lowest rate of domestic violence, possibly due to underreporting (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000). Much of this research has focused on violence in heterosexual or cohabiting relationships. There is a need to investigate ethnic differences in dating relationships (Watson et al., 2001) and same sex relationships (Turrell, 2000).

Although ethnically diverse families reported alarmingly high rates of partner violence, it would be a mistake to conclude that these families are inherently violent. Consequently, the third section focused on demographic and cultural factors that may contribute to ethnic differences in partner violence. Consistent with previous research, people of color are overrepresented in demographic categories that are at greater risk for violence, such as couples who experience pregnancy, welfare dependency, or unemployment. Further, the rates of abuse may be influenced by both level of acculturation and alcohol abuse. As the research continues to grow, investigators have discovered a complex association between demographic and cultural factors.

The violence in ethnically diverse families is both very similar and vastly different from the violence experienced by their White counterparts. The next research challenge is to investigate racial similarities without negating the experiences of people of color and to simultaneously highlight racial differences without perpetuating stereotypes about the inherent violence of ethnic groups (West, 2002). This intricate balance can best be achieved by considering how partner violence is influenced by living at the intersection of various forms of oppressions (for example, race, class, gender, sexual orientation, immigration

status), as presented in this anthology. Alternatively stated, "a middle-class, African American heterosexual Christian woman is not just African American, not just middle-class, not just Christian, and not just female. Instead, her life is located at the intersection of these dimensions" (Hassouneh Phillips, 1998, p. 682). The victim's location in this system of oppression determines her vulnerability to violence (for example, poor women are more likely to be victimized), societal perceptions toward the victim (for example, ethnic groups are said to be more violent and interventions are said to not be successful), and the victim's access to help (for example, less acculturated women receive less assistance). Further, the legacy of historical violence and trauma, such as forced migration and slavery, as well as contemporary challenges, including poverty, inadequate educational opportunities, and violence both against and within a community can influence how ethnic families experience abuse (Sanchez-Hucles and Dutton, 1999). Despite the substantial rates of intimate violence, most families of color have developed cultural strengths that act as protective factors, which reduce the likelihood of abuse.

In conclusion, the political gag order has been lifted. Consequently, survivors are more willing to reveal the abuse in their lives. In addition, scholars and practitioners are often collaborative partners on research projects pertaining to violence in diverse populations. This is an important beginning; however, much work remains. To advance the research, investigators, community members, activists, and survivors must develop culturally sensitive models that address the complexity of violence in ethnically and racially diverse families.

NOTE

1. The terms *people of color* and *ethnically diverse* are used to refer collectively to the four ethnic groups discussed in this chapter (African Americans, Hispanics/Latino/Latina Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans). Also, the terms *African Americans* and *Hispanics* are used interchangeably with *Blacks* and *Latinos/Latinas*, respectively. Where possible, the ethnic group is identified (e.g., Mexican American, Chinese American). The terminology used to refer to racial/ethnic groups may vary based on regional, political, and personal preferences.

REFERENCES

- Brush, L. D. 2001. Poverty, battering, race, and welfare reform: Black-White differences in women's welfare-to-work transitions. *Journal of Poverty* 5: 67-89.
- Caetano, R., J. Schafer, C. L. Clark, C. B. Cunradi, and K. Raspberry. 2000. Intimate partner violence, acculturation, and alcohol consumption among Hispanic couples in the United States. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 15: 30-45.
- Cunradi, C. B., R. Caetano, C. L. Clark, and J. Schafer. 1999. Alcohol-related problems and intimate partner violence among White, Black, and Hispanic couples in the U.S. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 23: 1492-1501.
- Dasgupta, S. D., ed. 1999. Violence against South Asian women. [Special issue] *Violence Against Women* 5(6).

- . 2000. Charting the course: An overview of domestic violence in the South Asian community in the United States. *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless* 9: 173–185.
- de Anda, D., and R. M. Becerra. 2000. *Violence: Diverse Populations and Communities*. Binghamton, N.Y.: Haworth Press.
- Fairchild, D. G., M. W. Fairchild, and S. Stoner. 1998. Prevalence of adult domestic violence among women seeking routine care in a Native American health care facility. *American Journal of Public Health* 88: 1515–1517.
- Hamby, S. L. 2000. The importance of community in a feminist analysis of domestic violence among American Indians. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28: 649–669.
- Gabler, M., S. E. Stern, and M. Miserandino. 1998. Latin American, Asian, and American cultural differences in perceptions of spousal abuse. *Psychological Reports* 83: 587–592.
- Hampton, R., R. Carrillo, and J. Kim. 1998. Violence in communities of color. In R. Carrillo and J. Tello, eds., *Family Violence and Men of Color: Healing the Wounded Male Spirit*. New York: Springer, 1–30.
- Hassouneh-Phillips, Dena Sadat. 1998. Culture and systems of oppression in abused women's lives. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing* 27(6): 678–683.
- Holtzman-Munroe, A., N. Smutzler, and L. Bates. 1997. A brief review of research on husband violence: Sociodemographic factors, relationships factors, and differing consequences of husband and wife violence. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 2: 207–222.
- Honeycutt, T. C., L. L. Marshall, and R. Weston. 2001. Toward ethnically specific models of employment, public assistance, and victimization. *Violence Against Women* 7: 126–140.
- Jasinski, J. L. 1998. The role of acculturation in wife assault. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 20: 175–191.
- . 2001. Physical violence among Anglo, African American, and Hispanic couples: Ethnic differences in persistence and cessation. *Violence and Victims* 16: 479–490.
- Jasinski, J. L., N. L. Asdigian, and G. Kaufman Kantor. 1997. Ethnic adaptations to occupational strain: Work-related stress, drinking, and wife assault among Anglo and Hispanic husbands. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 12: 814–831.
- Jasinski, J. L., and G. Kaufman Kantor. 2001. Pregnancy, stress, and wife assault: Ethnic differences in prevalence, severity, and onset in a national sample. *Violence and Victims* 16: 219–232.
- Kessler, R. C., B. E. Molnar, I. D. Feurer, and M. Applebaum. 2001. Patterns and mental health predictors of domestic violence in the United States: Results from the National Comorbidity Survey. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 24: 487–508.
- Kim, J. Y., and K. Sung. 2000. Conjugal violence in Korean American families: A residue of the cultural tradition. *Journal of Family Violence* 15: 331–345.
- Lee, M. 2000. Understanding Chinese battered women in North America: A review of the literature and practice implications. In Diane DeAndea and Rosina Becerra, eds. *Violence: Diverse Populations and Communities*. Binghamton, N.Y.: Haworth Press, 215–242.
- Lum, J. L. 1998. Family violence. In L. C. Lee and N. W. Zane, eds., *Handbook of Asian American Psychology*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 505–525.
- Marshall, L. L., R. Weston, and T. C. Honeycutt. 2000. Does men's positivity moderate or mediate the effects of their abuse on women's relationship quality? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 17: 660–675.
- Oates, G. C. 1998. Cultural perspectives on intimate violence. In N. A. Jackson and G. C. Oates, eds., *Violence in Intimate Relationships: Examining Sociological and Psychological Issues*. Woburn, Mass.: Butterworth-Heinemann, 225–243.
- Raj, A., and J. Silverman. 2002. Violence against immigrant women: The roles of culture, context, and legal immigrant status on intimate partner violence. *Violence Against Women* 8: 367–398.
- Rennison, C. M., and S. Welchans. 2000. *Criminal Victimization 1999: Changes 1998–1999 with Trends 1993–1999* (NCJ 178247). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. August.

- Sanchez-Hucles, J., and M. A. Dutton. 1999. The interaction between societal violence and domestic violence: Racial and cultural factors. In M. Harway and J. O'Neil, eds., *What Causes Men's Violence against Women?* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 183-203.
- Shepherd, J. 2001. Where do you go when it's 40 below? Domestic violence among rural Alaska Native women. *Affilia* 16: 488-510.
- Tjaden, P., and N. Thoennes. 2000. *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey* (NCJ 181867). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Tolman, R. M., and J. Raphael. 2000. A review of research on welfare and domestic violence. *Journal of Social Issues* 56(4): 655-682.
- Torres, S., J. Campbell, D. W. Campbell, J. Ryan, C. King, P. Price, R. Y. Stallings, S. C. Fuchs, and M. Laude. 2000. Abuse during and before pregnancy: Prevalence and cultural correlates. *Violence and Victims* 15: 303-321.
- Turrell, S. C. 2000. A descriptive analysis of same-sex relationship violence for a diverse sample. *Journal of Family Violence* 15(3): 281-293.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2001. *Overview of race and Hispanic origin: Census 2000 brief*. Retrieved February 9, 2002, from <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race.html>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2001. *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity—A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report to the Surgeon General*. Rockville, Md.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services.
- West, C. M. 1998. Lifting the "political gag order": Breaking the silence around partner violence in ethnic minority families. In J. L. Jasinski and L. M. Williams, eds., *Partner Violence: A Comprehensive Review of 20 Years of Research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 184-209.
- . 2002. Black battered women: New directions for research and Black feminist theory. In L. H. Collins, M. R. Dunlap, and J. C. Chrisler, eds., *Charting a New Course for Feminist Psychology*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 216-237.
- , ed. 2002. *Violence in the Lives of Black Women: Battered, Black, and Blue*. Binghamton, N.Y.: Haworth Press.
- West, C. M., G. Kaufman Kantor, and J. L. Jasinski. 1998. Sociodemographic predictors and cultural barriers to help-seeking behavior by Latina and Anglo American battered women. *Violence and Victims* 13: 470-494.
- Williams, O. J., and L. W. Griffin. 2000. Domestic violence in the African American community. [Special Edition] *Violence Against Women* 6(5).
- Yick, A. G. 2000. Predictors of physical spousal/intimate violence in Chinese American families. *Journal of Family Violence* 15: 249-267.
- Yoshihama, M. 1999. Domestic violence against women of Japanese descent in Los Angeles: Two methods of estimating prevalence. *Violence Against Women* 5: 869-897.