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Domestic Violence Across Race and Ethnicity

Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy

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Domestic violence occurs across all ethnic and racial groups, profoundly affecting women, who are most frequently the victims. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2050, 50% of the population will be minorities. To contribute to the growing literature on race and domestic violence, this article uses data derived from domestic violence programs in a large Midwestern state between 1990 and 1995 to focus on the experiences of victims who sought services and examine how they vary by race and ethnicity. The limitations as well as practice and policy implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: *American Indian victims of domestic violence; Asian American victims of domestic violence; domestic violence, race, ethnicity, and culture; Hispanic American victims of domestic violence*

The U.S. Bureau of the Census projects that by 2050, 50% of the U.S. population will become what are currently referred to as *ethnic minorities* (West, 1998). Because domestic violence occurs across all ethnic and racial groups, profoundly affecting the women and children who are the most frequent victims, research has increasingly focused on determining the prevalence and nature of violence among various racial and ethnic groups (see, e.g., Greenfield et al., 1998; Jasinski, 2001; Rennison, 2001; Rennison & Planty, 2003; Rennison & Welchans, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). However, there is still much that we do not know about some racial and ethnic groups, particularly related to their use of domestic violence services and programs.

Until recently, studies examining the experience of victims of domestic violence focused primarily on White women. Yet more current works have begun exploring the realities of victims from other ethnic and racial minorities (see, e.g., Bonilla-Santiago,

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1996, 2002; Hass, Dutton, & Orloff, 2000; Henning & Klesges, 2002; Kantor, Jasinski, & Aldarondo, 1994; Lee, 2002; Lee & Au, 1998; Marsh, 1993; Pearlman, Zierler, Gjelsvik, & Verhoek-Oftedahl, 2003; Preisser, 1999; Sen, 1999; Sullivan & Rumptz, 1994; Weisz, 2002; West, 1998). Much of the work that has been done, however, focuses on the sociocultural context of violence and does not provide a lot of information about specific experiences (see, e.g., Bonilla-Santiago, 2002; Huang & Gunn, 2001; Perilla, 2000; Preisser, 1999; Sen, 1999; Weil & Lee, 2004; West, 1998). Many of the limited empirical studies that do exist focus on African Americans, who comprise 12% of the national population (Lee, 2002), and Hispanic Americans (12.5% of the population) and, as such, are the two largest of the racial minority and ethnic groups (Bureau of the Census, 2005). The realities of violence for smaller groups such as Asian Americans (3.6% population) and American Indians (0.9% of the population, with more than 500 different tribes; Bureau of the Census, 2005) remain less known.

To expand the knowledge base of the practice and policy literature, and thereby the services provided to women of color, this article, though including information about White victims, also examines the experiences and service needs of African, Hispanic, and Asian Americans as well as American Indians who received services from domestic violence programs in a Midwestern state during a 5-year period. We describe these groups for the purpose of identifying some of the distinctions and similarities among them and highlighting their demographic characteristics, relationship with the abuser, types of abuse inflicted, referral source to the domestic violence program, and the special as well as service needs of the victim, including language difficulties. We conclude with a discussion of the implications that may be derived from this descriptive analysis. What is unique about these data are that they focus on victims of violence who sought services, providing suggestions that may be useful to service providers, especially if the needs of these various groups differ in important ways.

Literature Review

We begin our literature review by examining some of the larger, national studies that have looked at rates of abuse by race, ethnicity, and culture. Following this, we focus on works discussing the sociocultural context of abuse for the racial and ethnic groups of interest here.

Prevalence of Violence by Race and Ethnicity

As Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) have noted, reports of the prevalence of violence among persons of color vary from study to study. In part, they argue, this is a by-product of the way in which studies are conducted, with all minority groups frequently being combined and compared to Whites. They caution that such practices

may exaggerate differences between Whites and non-Whites and also obscure large variations among diverse minorities (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Another problem that makes it hard to generalize from one work to another is that different studies focus on different ethnic groups, overlooking some groups, such as persons of mixed race (for a discussion of the lack of information specifically about immigrant women who experience violence, also see Raj & Silverman, 2002).

Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) themselves, using data from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS), looked at the prevalence of intimate partner violence among White, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and mixed-race persons as well as persons in any of these groups who defined themselves as Hispanic versus non-Hispanic. Their findings indicate that American Indian/Alaskan Native women experienced the highest rates of lifetime victimization related to rape, physical assault, and stalking, followed by women of mixed race. Asian/Pacific Islander women generally had lower rates of rape and physical assault than any of the other groups examined. White and African American women were similar, with rates of victimization only slightly higher for African American compared to White women (see Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). They also looked at differences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic women related to lifetime victimization by an intimate partner and found little difference between reports of women in either group.

Rennison and Welchans (2000) found comparable rates of intimate partner violence among Hispanics and non-Hispanics during a 5-year period by analyzing data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). Black female victims, on the other hand, experienced intimate partner violence at a rate 35% higher than White women and about 2.5 times the rate of women of "other" races (Rennison & Welchans, 2000). In this instance, "other" races included Asians, Native Hawaiians, other Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Natives and American Indians, all of whom were combined so that differences among them could not be determined. However, further analysis by Rennison (2001), using the same data and comparing American Indians and Asian/Pacific Islanders to White and Black victims, showed that American Indian females were actually victimized at rates higher than females in these other racial groups.

In addition to the methodological problems created by combining distinct ethnic and racial groups, there is also the problem caused when differences that may exist within subgroups are ignored. For example, it is not unusual for "Hispanic" and "Asian" to be the pan-ethnic labels for a variety of groups that do not receive clearer distinction; for example, Hispanic often is intended to include Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and other Spanish-speaking groups, and Asian includes Vietnamese, Japanese, Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, and Asian Indian. Yet the few studies that have examined differences within these groups suggest that there are variations related to rates of violence. For example, in a study comparing Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Mexican American men and their rates of wife assault, Kantor et al. (1994) found that Puerto Rican men had the highest reported rates of wife

assault and Cuban men the lowest. Furthermore, Mexican American men displayed a higher risk for wife assault than men who were Mexican born (see also Caetano, Schafer, Cunradi, & Raspberry, 2000; and Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994, related to acculturation and violence among Mexican American men).

Given the relationship between poverty and race/ethnicity and the fact that women of color are disproportionately likely to be poor compared to White women (Browne & Bassuk, 1997), it is also important to consider that SES may be, if not a more critical predictor, at least a significant contributor to differences between groups than is race/ethnicity (Lyon, 2000). Indeed, some research indicates that ethnic differences in rates of partner violence often disappear when social class, husband's occupation, and employment status are taken into account (Caetano et al., 2000; for a discussion, see also Lambert & Firestone, 2000; and West, 1998). Indeed, in a re-analysis of NCVS data controlling for income and gender, Rennison and Planty (2003) found that differences in the incidence of victimization related to race disappeared, suggesting that SES accounts for variations between groups more than race and ethnicity alone.

However, in some studies, rates of partner violence remained higher for African Americans than for White persons, even taking into account occupational status and social class (Neff, Holamon, & Schulter, 1995; West, 1998). Clearly, the variables of poverty, immigration status, and ethnic values as well as a personal history of violence are critical contributors to violence that need further study. In such instances, sociocultural as well as smaller qualitative studies are especially useful.

Sociocultural Factors and Resultant Attitudes

Although little is known about the experience of intimate partner violence for several groups, the limited literature that we do have suggests that attitudes toward violence vary across race and ethnicity, are dependent on such factors as acculturation and SES and that, as noted, there are differences between subcultures within a particular race or ethnicity. For Hispanics, the situation of abuse often takes place within a context of poverty and underemployment, cultural isolation, undereducation, language barriers, and undocumented status, making access to resources extremely difficult and reliance on familial relationships prominent (Bonilla-Santiago, 2002; see also Hass et al., 2000).

One might expect greater tolerance for partner violence within the Hispanic American household because of the patriarchal conceptualizations of *machismo* and *marianismo*, but some research suggests that this is not the case (Jasinski, 1998; Perilla, 2000; Perilla et al., 1994; West, 1998). Nor is this necessarily the situation for Asian Americans, another racial group with a primarily patriarchal family structure, although the higher status of men and the underlying philosophy toward harmony makes it very difficult for Asian women to speak out about partner violence (Huisman, 1996). Studies regarding responses of Asian women to domestic violence have repeatedly cited "tolerance," "endurance," and "being silent" as the most common

coping mechanisms by victims and survivors (see discussion in Lee, 2002). When Asian women seek help, they often have to overcome language, communication style, culture, and other barriers to gain access to services; they also have to somehow overcome the stigma and resulting shame that reporting domestic violence brings to their families, a shame that is considered highly disrespectful (Das Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996; Huisman, 1996; Preisser, 1999; Yoshioka, n.d.). Almeida and Dolan-Delvecchio (1999) have suggested that there also may be barriers to reporting related to the religious imperative that suffering and self-discipline in this life will be rewarded in the next. It is important to note that these implications from the literature may not apply to all subgroups, as once again there has been little emphasis on clarifying the differences among the various Asian groups. Furthermore, the literature does not specify the religious groups being referenced.

Other studies conducted in Chicago and Los Angeles indicate that the problem of Asian American domestic violence is "an ignored, invisible, but significant problem in Asian communities across all socioeconomic strata, making it difficult to discern the types of violence that occur" (for additional sources and discussion, see Lee, 2002, p. 473). This suggests that the reportedly low prevalence rates among Asian Americans may be because of their reluctance to admit that violence has happened. Yet Ho's work (1990, cited by West, 1998) indicates that there are variations within the Asian American community itself related to the willingness to accept violence, with Vietnamese, Khmer, and Laotians displaying a higher tolerance than Chinese families.

Bonilla-Santiago (1996, 2002) reported the findings of her research indicating that Hispanics are more tolerant of abuse. For example, in her work she found that hitting and verbal abuse had to occur frequently to be considered abuse. Some Hispanics did not consider failure to provide adequate food and shelter abusive; indeed, for some Hispanics, an act was not considered to be abusive until there was a weapon. These anecdotal data point out the need for more precise definitions and ensuing descriptions of violence in research investigations.

Contact With Police and the Service System

Studies generally note that the enduring discrimination against Black men places a responsibility and a burden on African American women related to their decision to call the police (Sen, 1999). African American women need to consider that their calls for help to the police may result in the incarceration of the batterer and/or their own incarceration as well as further stigmatization of Black men as inherently violent (Sen, 1999). Sen (1999) also has explicitly discussed the division of loyalties for women of color, noting their "deep, race-based ambivalence about the causes of and solutions to, domestic violence" (p. 2).

For immigrant women, particularly those who are undocumented, fear of deportation may act as a disincentive to contacting the legal system or police. Currently, there are legal safeguards against deportation for immigrant women who are battered, but

many do not know about the laws and those who may know do not always trust that the laws will be enforced (Sen, 1999; for a discussion of this issue, also see Hass et al., 2000; and Raj & Silverman, 2002). Furthermore, many Asian and Hispanic women have left countries in which government authorities have not been resources for the populace but rather have been oppressive and violent forces to distrust and to avoid. Immigrant women of color may also be affected by their level of acculturation. Although the research to date suggests that acculturation is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon, it is intuitive that women who do not speak the language, do not know the available resources, and have few social supports other than the batterer would be reluctant to call the police.[1] This also may be the circumstance for Asians. As a group, Asians have a plethora of dialects, which further complicates locating services. Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, and many other ethnic subgroups have great difficulty with English and do not have access to resources because of language barriers (Huisman, 1996).

Indeed, being able to speak English can make the difference between getting help and suffering the abuse alone. According to Bonilla-Santiago (2002), because of language and cultural barriers, many Latinas do not receive assistance from local agencies and organizations, nor do they receive protection from the police. Also, immigrant women who do not speak English are much less likely to know that they cannot be deported if they report domestic violence. This is crucially important to the safety of women and children because the batterer often threatens deportation as a consequence of reporting the abuse to the authorities (see Raj & Silverman, 2002).

American Indians may decide not to call the police because of the 500-year difficulties that native peoples have had with European American government institutions that have, and continue to have, poor working relations with tribal governments, ranging from issues of religion, land and mineral rights, human remains, gaming, sovereignty, health, housing, and human rights (J. A. Ferguson, personal communication, August 30, 2003). Also, according to activist Maggie Escovita Steele, "They take forever to come, and nothing's going to happen" (quoted in Sen, 1999, p. 3). In addition, for American Indians and other ethnic groups, calling the police adds to the level of discrimination and stigmatization that they already endure from the majority population.

Method

The data for the present study were obtained from the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV), a not-for-profit organization whose primary purpose is to advocate for and assist service providers with domestic violence policy issues and education and training at local, program, and state levels (Humm, 1996). As described more fully elsewhere (Grossman & Lundy, 2000), the Coalition required all domestic service agencies that it funded to provide data on their clients, using a variety of standardized forms that were eventually computerized. The analysis presented here focuses on data from the Adult Client Intake/Eligibility Form. This form included

information about client demographics, the type of abuse experienced, the relationship between the client and the abuser, referral sources, and service needs. Data were collected at intake based on both client input and worker assessment.[2]

The present study includes only individuals who entered the service system for the first time between July 1990 and June 1995. Computerized data were most complete for these years and the intake form did not change substantially. Previous analysis of the data for the whole population of service users indicated very little variation in relevant client characteristics by year for that time period (see Grossman & Lundy, 2000). Because there were clients who entered services during multiple years (15.1% of all clients, counting unique cases only), we will focus on the first service episode. We believe that this allows us to control for the influence of previous contacts on later ones.

It is important to note several limitations of the data related to the analysis presented here. First, this is a sample of victims of violence who sought services, and as such, it may not represent victims of violence in general. It is likely that individuals who seek services differ in some ways from all victims. Straus and Gelles (1995), for example, suggest that those who seek help may differ from other victims of violence to the extent that they may experience more abuse. Of particular importance to the present study is Henning and Klesges's (2002) finding that victims of violence who used services in their study were more likely to be from higher SES areas, even controlling for race. This implies that our population may be better off economically than other victims of violence, particularly those who do not seek help from programs. Because questions regarding income, education, and employment included on the intake form were missing for most of the clients and therefore were not reliable, we have no way to confirm this. It does suggest, though, that income may not vary greatly across groups in this sample, despite the disparities between Whites and persons of color that exist in general. Second, given the relationship noted above between SES and incidence of violence, and the fact that some research suggests that it is income that accounts for variations in rates by race and ethnicity, this lack of information about economic status is a limitation. However, we were not trying to look at rates of violence by group in this analysis. Rather, we were trying to look at the varying experiences and service needs of those who sought assistance. Third, the data were not collected for research purposes. Rather, they were part of a system that was used to monitor services for purposes of funding and advocacy. As such, many of the questions on the forms were quite broad, and more subtle information was not available. We only know about the services that were included on the intake form, for instance. Similarly, several variables that might have been helpful in terms of contextualizing the experience of clients were either unavailable or unreliable.

Sample

The data in Table 1 present information on the number and proportion of clients from the total population of service users in each racial and ethnic group examined.

Table 1
Race and Ethnicity: Illinois Coalition Against Domestic
Violence (ICADV) and Census Data

Variable	White	African American	Hispanic American	American Indian	Asian American
ICADV data	62,775	25,996	9,972	284	993
ICADV data (%)	62.3	25.8	9.9	0.3	1.0
Census data (%)	73.8	15.1	8.0	0.2	2.8

Note: Census data on Illinois were derived from the Illinois State University (2000).

Population census data on the percentage of individuals in Illinois who comprised each of these groups during the same time period is included, as is information on race and ethnicity, for a total of 100,020 clients. About two thirds, or 62.3%, were White, 25.8% were African American, 9.9% were Hispanic American, 0.3% were American Indian, and 1% were Asian American. Population census data for these same groups indicate that among this group of victims who sought services, Whites were somewhat underrepresented and African American victims were somewhat overrepresented. To a lesser extent, Asian American victims were slightly underrepresented and Hispanic Americans slightly overrepresented. American Indian victims were represented among those seeking services to a proportion similar to their representation in the state population.

Analysis

The analysis presented here focuses on describing the demographic characteristics, circumstances of abuse, referral sources, and special and social service needs of clients for each of the selected racial and ethnic groups. Each group is discussed individually, and comparisons between groups are largely reserved for the discussion section. Although most victims were female, small percentages (between 0.5% and 2.5% depending on group) were male. Male victims were included in the present analysis because we wanted to look at all victims. Because most victims were female, however, the findings have more relevance for them. We note that offender data indicate a small proportion of offenders who were female. Because the number of female offenders overall was so small, we did not break this information down by specific category in the present analysis. In some instances, the offender may have been a female partner of a male victim. It is also possible that because there was no specific category for it, some same-sex relationships were represented in the designation of current or former wives or girlfriends as the abuser when victims were female. All female abusers were not partners, however (i.e., current or former spouses or girlfriends). Some were mothers or female relatives who may have abused either male or female victims as well.

When we look at special service needs, we focus on eight items that pertained to medical/physical disabilities and limitations. These included hearing impairments, assistance with activities of daily living, medication administration, vision impairment, use of a wheelchair, immobility, developmental disability, and special dietary requirements. The original list of items included under "special needs" also contained limited English proficiency, but we included this as a separate item because it seemed distinct from the other more medical and physical limitations. Service needs included 10 distinct services: shelter/emergency housing, housing assistance, medical/physical assistance, personal/emotional support, child/family assistance, financial assistance, legal assistance, transportation, employment, and education or training.

As noted in other works (Grossman, Hinkley, Kawalski, & Margrave, 2005; Grossman & Lundy, 2003), because this study essentially focuses on all individuals receiving service during the 5-year period, we have more of a population than a sample, albeit a population that is limited to one state. As such, statistical tests are less relevant as they are typically conducted to predict from a sample to a population and determine the extent to which differences in the sample represent "true" differences in the population. We further note that when we did run statistical tests, all comparisons between the groups for all variables were statistically significant at the .0001 level or lower. This is perhaps to be expected given the large number of cases included in the analysis and the sensitivity of tests such as chi-square, which is typically used to assess the differences between groups on categorical variables, to large sample sizes. Therefore, the critical question that the reader should ask is whether differences between groups are meaningful in a practical manner.

Results

White Clients

Demographic information on White clients is presented in the first column of Table 2. Almost all White clients (97.5%) were female and their average age was almost 32 years. Approximately 5% were older persons aged 50 and older. Slightly more than half were currently married (56.5%), and about one fifth (21.9%) were never married.

Data on the relationship between the client and abuser (see Table 3) indicate that 59.9% of White clients were abused by a current or former husband and 29.9% were abused by a current or former male friend. Smaller percentages were reportedly abused by fathers or male relatives (4.6%) or "other" males (2.0%). Abuse by female persons, including current and former wives or female friends, mothers or other female relatives, and "other" females was quite limited, totaling 3.7% of all White clients. Emotional abuse was clearly the most common type of abuse reported by victims who were White (97.2%). Eighty-five percent were reportedly physically abused, and 16.5% were sexually abused.

Table 2
Demographic Data by Race or Ethnicity

Variable	White	African American	Hispanic American	American Indian	Asian American
Total clients	62,775	25,996	9,972	284	993
Gender					
n	61,694	21,220	8,490	265	944
Female (%)	97.5	98.4	99.9	97.7	99.5
Age					
n	61,734	25,647	9,823	282	966
Average age	31.7	30.6	30.2	31.3	33.2
Range	3-92	3-93	13-85	16-74	16-79
50-plus (%)	5.5	3.2	2.8	3.5	4.3
Marital status					
n	61,853	25,327	9,801	280	972
Never married (%)	21.9	46.7	28.7	25.4	16.1
Currently married (%)	56.5	39.2	61.2	55.4	70.9

Table 3
Relationship of Abuser to Client and Type of Abuse by Race or Ethnicity

Variable	White	African American	Hispanic American	American Indian	Asian American
Relationship of client to abuser					
n	62,737	25,977	9,958	284	992
Husband/Ex-husband (%)	59.9	39.6	62.8	59.1	76.2
Male friend/Ex-male friend (%)	29.9	49.4	30.2	31.3	13.9
Father or male relative (%)	4.6	4.9	3.2	2.1	5.9
Female abuser[a] (%)	3.7	3.3	1.8	4.6	1.9
Type of abuse					
n	62,775	25,996	9972	284	993
Physical abuse (%)	85.2	89.0	89.9	91.5	85.1
Emotional abuse (%)	97.2	94.2	95.7	95.1	96.9
Sexual abuse (%)	16.5	13.2	17.2	20.8	17.3

a. Female abusers include the following categories combined: current or former wives, current or former women friends, mother or other female relatives, and "other" females.

Information on referral sources, presented in Table 4, indicates that almost one third of all White clients were referred to programs by police (32.1%). The next most common referral sources, in descending order, were social service programs (14.7%); friends (12.6%); legal service providers, including the State's Attorney's office (11.6%); and self-referrals (11.4%). Only small percentages of White clients were referred by sources such as relatives (5.2%) or hospitals or doctors (3.5%).

Table 4
Referral Sources by Race or Ethnicity

Variable	White	African American	Hispanic American	American Indian	Asian American
n	62,367	25,842	9,919	282	986
Police (%)	32.1	43.1	36.8	33.3	27.8
Hospital or doctor (%)	3.5	4.2	4.2	3.2	6.3
Friend (%)	12.6	6.8	12.8	11.3	17.0
Self (%)	11.4	8.2	7.2	11.0	11.9
Social service program (%)	14.7	18.7	18.5	23.8	18.8
Relative (%)	5.2	2.6	3.9	2.8	3.1
Legal service provider[a] (%)	11.6	6.9	4.4	3.9	4.9
Other DV program or crisis line (%)	2.7	3.9	3.0	4.3	3.0

Note: DV = domestic violence.
a. Legal service providers include the categories of State's Attorney's office as well as other attorneys and legal aid.

Table 5 indicates that a very small proportion of White clients had special needs or disabilities of some kind (2.6%), and only 0.2% had a language-proficiency problem. Data on social and supportive service needs at the time of intake, also presented in Table 5, indicate that a very large percentage of White clients needed two services: personal/emotional support (87.9%) and legal assistance (65.2%). Approximately 30% needed shelter, emergency housing, or housing assistance, and 17.3% needed child or family assistance. The percentage of White clients with needs such as financial assistance, transportation, education or training, and medical/physical assistance was less than 10% in each of these categories.

African American Clients

The second column in Table 2 presents demographic information about African American clients. As was true of White clients, almost all African American clients were female (98.4%). The average age of African American clients was 30.6 years, and 3.2% were 50 or older at the time of their first service encounter. In contrast to the other groups, a greater proportion of African American clients was never married compared to the proportion who were currently married (46.7% versus 39.2%).

Probably related to this difference in marital status, African American clients were more likely to report that their alleged abusers were current or former male friends (49.4%) than they were to report that their abusers were current or former husbands (39.6%; see Table 3). Almost 5.0% were abused by a father or male relative (4.9%), and 2.9% were reportedly abused by an "other" male. Slightly more than 3% reported that their abuser was a female, including current and former wives and female friends, mothers and female relatives, or "other" females.

Table 5
Special Client and Service Needs at Intake by Race or Ethnicity

Variable	White	African American	Hispanic American	American Indian	Asian American
n	62,775	25,996	9,972	284	993
Any special needs/disabilities[a] (%)	2.6	0.5	1.2	5.3	3.0
Language-proficiency needs (%)	0.2	0.1	32.1	2.5	16.9
Service needs					
Personal/emotional support (%)	87.9	66.9	72.9	82.0	86.0
Legal assistance (%)	65.2	53.9	64.0	57.0	61.2
Shelter/emergency housing (%)	19.7	31.9	20.2	38.0	31.7
Housing assistance (%)	11.1	18.8	9.0	19.0	16.1
Child/family assistance (%)	17.3	17.5	13.7	21.1	16.6
Financial assistance (%)	8.1	9.8	6.9	13.4	12.9
Transportation (%)	6.1	8.5	4.8	10.9	9.7
Employment (%)	4.3	6.4	2.9	10.2	11.6
Education/training (%)	6.5	6.2	2.6	7.0	10.2
Medical/physical assistance (%)	4.4	9.9	5.5	9.5	7.1
Average no. of service needs at intake	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.8	2.7
Range	0-11	0-11	0-11	0-11	0-11

a. Disabilities include hearing impairments, assistance with activities of daily living, need to have medication administered, visual impairment, use of a wheelchair, immobility, developmental disability, and special dietary requirements.

Similar to White clients, almost all African American clients reportedly experienced emotional abuse (94.2%), and a very large proportion (89.0%) were allegedly victims of physical abuse. In addition, 13% of clients who were African American experienced sexual abuse.

Information on referral sources, presented in Table 4, indicates that African American clients were similar to White victims in that the largest group of African American clients (43.1%) was referred to programs by police. Social service agencies were the next most common referral source (18.7%). Only small percentages of African American clients were self-referred (8.2%), referred by a friend (6.8%), or referred by a legal service provider (6.9%). Fewer than 5% of clients in this racial group were referred to programs by hospitals or doctors or by a relative.

Only a very small proportion (0.5%) of African American clients had a special need or disability of some kind or a language-proficiency need (0.1%). The data in Table 5 reflect that, similar to the White clients, the area in which the largest proportion of African American clients had a service need related to their need for personal/emotional support, but compared to White victims as well as to the other groups, the proportion of clients in need of this service was small (66.9%). More

than half (53.9%) of African American clients needed legal assistance. Similar to other groups of color, African American clients also had a fairly large need for housing-related services, either shelter/emergency housing (31.9%) or housing assistance (18.8%). Seventeen percent (17.5%) needed child/family assistance, and almost 10% needed medical/physical assistance or financial assistance. Fewer than 10% needed the remaining services listed, including transportation (8.5%), employment (6.4%), and education or training (6.2%).

Hispanic American Clients

Demographic data on Hispanic American clients are presented in the third column of Table 2. Ninety-nine percent of the clients were female, similar to but larger than the percentage for White and African American clients, and slightly younger, with an average age of 30.2 years. Only a very small percentage (2.8%) were 50 or older. Similar to White clients, the majority of Hispanic American clients (61.2%) were currently married and 28.7% were never married.

Hispanic American clients were reportedly most likely to have been abused by a current or former husband (62.8%) or a current or previous male friend (30.2%; see Table 3). Only very small percentages reported that they were abused by fathers or male relatives (3.2%), "other" males (2.0%), or a female abuser such as a current or former wife, girlfriend, female relative, or "other" female (1.8%). Similar to White and African American clients, emotional abuse was the most common type of abuse reported by Hispanic American clients (95.7%), followed by physical abuse (89.9%) and sexual abuse (17.2%).

Police were the most common referral source for Hispanic American clients (36.8%; see Table 4). The second most common source was social service programs (18.5%). Roughly 13% of Hispanic American clients were referred to programs by friends (12.8%), but in contrast to White clients, a somewhat smaller percentage, 7.2%, were self-referred, and a legal service provider referred only 4.4%. About 4% each were referred by hospitals or doctors (4.2%) or by relatives (3.9%).

Information on special and service needs, presented in Table 5, indicates that although only 1.2% of all Hispanic American clients had a special need or disability, 32.1% had language-proficiency difficulties. Data on social and supportive services indicate that Hispanic American clients were quite similar to White clients regarding such needs. Although the percentage that needed personal/emotional support was lower than the percentage of White clients, still the majority (72.9%) had a need for this assistance at intake. Sixty-four percent needed legal assistance, and roughly 29% needed shelter, emergency housing, or housing assistance. Almost 14% needed child/family assistance (13.7%), but similar to White clients, fewer than 10% of all Hispanic American clients needed other services such as financial assistance, medical/physical assistance, transportation, employment, or education or training.

American Indian Clients

The fourth column of Table 2 contains demographic data on American Indian clients. The data indicate that 97.7% of all American Indian clients were female and the average age of clients in this ethnic group was 31.3 years. Three and a half percent of American Indian clients were 50 or older when they entered the service system for the first time. More than half (55.4%) were currently married and 25.4% were never married.

Similar to the White and Hispanic American victims, current or former husbands were the abuser in most instances (59.1%), followed by 31.1% who were abused by current or former male friends (see Table 3). Only small percentages of American Indian clients were reportedly abused by fathers or male relatives (2.1%), or "other" males (2.8%). Almost 5% of all American Indian clients were allegedly abused by a female abuser (4.6%). Further analysis indicates that the largest group of clients in this category among American Indians was abused by a mother or "other" female relative (2.1%), and 1.4% were reportedly abused by a current or former wife. The data in Table 3 also indicate that American Indians reported almost similar percentages of emotional and/or physical abuse (95.1% and 91.5%, respectively), and one fifth (20.8%) were alleged victims of sexual abuse.

American Indians were similar to White, African, and Hispanic American clients to the extent that police (33.3%) and social service programs (23.8%) were the two most frequently reported sources of referral (see Table 4). About 11% of all American Indian clients were referred by friends or were self-referred. Again, only a very small percentage (3.9%) were referred to programs by legal service providers, hospitals or doctors (3.2%), or relatives (2.8%).

Information presented in Table 5 on the percentage of American Indian clients with special needs or disabilities indicates that 5.3% had such needs. This is still a very small percentage, but it is larger than that of White, African, or Hispanic American clients with such needs. Only 2.5% had language-proficiency needs.

Similar to the other ethnic and racial groups, the largest percentage of American Indian clients needed personal/emotional support at the time of intake (82.0%) as well as legal assistance (57.0%). In contrast to White and Hispanic American victims, but similar to African American clients, 57% of American Indian clients also needed some type of help with housing, either shelter or emergency housing (38.0%) or housing assistance (19.0%). More than one fifth of all American Indian clients needed child/family assistance (21.1%), and 13.4% needed financial assistance. In addition, roughly 10% to 11% needed either transportation or employment. The percentage that needed education or training, while limited, was similar to the percentage of White and African American victims in these categories, but greater than the percentage of Hispanic victims with such needs. About 10% of American Indian victims also needed medical/physical assistance.

Asian American Clients

Asian American clients, like Hispanic American clients, were almost exclusively female (99.5%; see column 5, Table 2). They were older compared to the other four groups, with an average age of 33.2 years. Just 4.3% were 50 or older. Compared to the other groups discussed here, they had the highest percentage of currently married clients (70.9%) and the smallest percentage of never-married persons (16.1%).

Similar to the experience of all the other groups, with the exception of African Americans, the majority of Asian American clients were reportedly abused by current or former husbands (76.2%), followed by a smaller percentage who were abused by current or former male friends (13.9%; see Table 3). Almost 6% of Asian American clients were abused by a father or male relative (5.9%). Only small percentages were reportedly abused by other males or a female who was a current or former wife, woman friend, mother or other female relative, or "other" female. Emotional abuse was the most commonly reported abuse, at 96.9%. Eighty-five percent reported physical abuse, and 17.3% reported sexual abuse.

Slightly more than one quarter of Asian American clients were referred by police to the domestic violence program (27.8%; see Table 4). Similar to the other minority groups included here, referrals from social service programs were somewhat more common for this group compared to White clients; 18.8% of all Asian American clients were in this category. Asian American clients were also more likely to be referred by a friend compared to the other four groups (17%). Roughly 12% were self-referred (11.9%). Again, only small percentages of Asian American clients were referred by legal service providers (4.9%), relatives (3.1%), or medical sources (6.3%).

The data in Table 5 indicate that 3.0% of all Asian American clients had a special service need or disability of some kind, and 16.9% had a language-proficiency need. Once again, the area of greatest need was personal/emotional support, with 86% reporting need for this service at the time of intake. The second area of greatest need was legal assistance; 61.2% needed legal help. Asian American clients were also a group that had a fairly large need for help with housing. Almost 32% needed shelter/emergency housing (31.7%), and 16.1% needed housing assistance. Child/family assistance was needed by 16.6% of Asian American clients. In addition, 12.9% needed financial assistance, 11.6% needed employment, and 10.2% needed education or training services. Almost 10% needed transportation (9.7%), and 7.1% needed medical/physical assistance.

Discussion

The present study was intended to examine the experiences of victims of violence among racial and ethnic groups. Some of these groups are ones about which there is

generally less empirical information. Before elaborating on the findings, however, it is important to delineate some of the limitations of the current study.

First, although a primary strength of this study is that it includes all victims using services in the state and, as such, is a good representation of their characteristics, the data are only from one state. To the extent that Illinois is similar to or different from other states or regions of the country, the findings may be somewhat limited. Second, and related to this, is that like many other studies, because of the way data were collected by the agencies, we were also unable to clearly identify differences within ethnic groups because subgroups were included under one ethnic or racial category. Third, although other analyses have indicated variables, such as geographic location, may matter as much as race and ethnicity in terms of service provision (see Grossman et al., 2005), most clients of color resided in urban settings, making it difficult to look at locale in relation to some of the findings on service needs. Fourth, information on service needs came from both worker assessment and client request, but we do not know which was operating when. Thus, as noted elsewhere (Grossman et al., 2005; Grossman & Lundy, 2003; Lundy & Grossman, 2005), it is not clear whether underassessment of need was related to worker bias, a tendency to downplay needs among certain groups, the client's tendency to deny needs, or accurate assessment. This issue is discussed further below. Despite these limitations, the following discussion of the data suggests some trends on which we elaborate and some directions for future research.

Comparison of clients in each racial and ethnic group in the ICADV data to population census data suggests that White and Asian American persons are somewhat underrepresented relative to their representation in the population, whereas African American and, to a lesser extent, Hispanic American clients are somewhat overrepresented. We note that Henning and Klesges (2002) found that African American victims of domestic violence tended to underuse services, but their study was looking at rates of service use among all victims; our comparison is somewhat different. It is not clear, but we suspect that, to some degree, underrepresentation of some groups may reflect a lack of service providers in areas where certain groups reside, rather than a lower likelihood of using services. For example, in Chicago, an area with a larger Asian American population than other parts of the state, only three programs exist that are geared specifically to meet the needs of Asian women. However, similar limitations exist related to programs for Hispanic American clients, and they do not appear to be underrepresented among the service population. It is likely that cultural imperatives against seeking help also play a role (Almeida & Dolan-Delvecchio, 1999; Huisman, 1996; Sen, 1999; Yoshioka, n.d.). Service referral patterns may also explain some of the variation, as discussed further below.

The data presented here suggest that despite some slight differences, victims who seek services are fairly similar in terms of their demographic profiles and experiences of abuse. They tend to be in their late 20s to early 30s, currently married, and abused by current or former husbands. Asian American clients appear to be at the extreme end of this profile to the extent that they seem to be exclusively female and older, they are most

likely to be currently married, and they are most often victims of abuse by current or former husbands. African American victims, although also mostly female and about 30 years old, present the one exception to this profile in that they are more likely to be never married compared to victims in the other four groups. Perhaps as a consequence of their different marital status, they are also less likely to be abused by a current or former spouse but more likely to be abused by a current or former male friend. Few clients in any ethnic or racial group are abused by persons in other than these two categories. Differences among the groups in relation to the percentages who are emotionally, physically, and sexually abused are also not very large. Yet one fifth of American Indians seeking services are victims of sexual abuse compared to only about 13% of African American victims. The other groups fall somewhere between these two.

Data on referral sources suggest that police were the most common referral source among all the groups, followed by social service programs. Friends and self-referral were generally the next most common sources across groups, but some distinct differences by race and ethnicity were evident. First, African American clients were unique in terms of the greater percentage of clients who were referred by police. To some degree, this supports those who have found that African American clients are more likely to use police in instances of domestic violence (Greenfeld et al., 1998). But it may also indicate that even if other groups do not call the police as often, once involved, police may be more likely to refer African American women to services than other groups. Second, clients of color were generally more likely to be referred by social service programs compared to White clients, especially American Indian clients. It is possible that persons of color, who are more likely to be poor, may also be more likely to have contact with social service programs, which might explain the greater likelihood of referral. However, because we have no income information, it is not possible to determine the exact mechanisms at work. Furthermore, as noted, Henning and Klesges's (2002) work suggests that the poorest clients may not seek out domestic violence services, implying that our sample may not include these very poor persons. These findings do suggest, though, that social service agencies are an important gateway into the domestic-violence service system for clients of color.

White clients, on the other hand, were more likely to be referred by a legal service provider. Perhaps White clients are more likely to come into contact with legal service providers prior to contact with the domestic violence system, whereas women of color experience a different pathway into the system. Whether this reflects some institutional racism or distrust on the part of minority groups for legal service providers is unclear, but it is a trend that warrants further investigation.

Of the victims referred by friends, it is notable that a substantial percentage of Asian American clients had this type of referral. Asian American clients also had the smallest percentage of clients referred to service from police compared to the other groups. In addition, Asian Americans were among the groups more likely to be self-referred. Perhaps the Asian American community is somewhat insulated in terms of information and assistance related to domestic violence. Certainly, much of the literature on the

Asian American community suggests that this is the case. They may be less likely to turn to outside sources and more likely to rely on friends or service providers who may already be serving their community. If so, this is an important finding as it suggests that information about services and assistance should be aimed at the broader Asian American community so that informal networks are aware of resources.

Data on service needs are perhaps the most revealing of differences related to race and ethnicity. Certain similarities are clearly apparent in that the greatest proportion of all groups was seen as needing or requesting emotional support of some kind and legal assistance. Housing is also an important need, particularly for clients of color. At the same time, some notable differences do exist.

One key difference relates to the smaller proportion of African American clients among those seen as needing personal/emotional support. As Weisz (2002) pointed out, the literature suggests that the Black community is typically close-knit and that members often rely heavily on one another for support and guidance, particularly related to domestic abuse (see also Huang & Gunn, 2000; Short et al., 2000). African American victims who seek help may not look for this particular type of support. On the other hand, the personal needs of Black domestic violence victims may also be underestimated. Gondolf (1998) asserted that because Black women must survive in an environment of multiple oppressions, they may appear to be more assertive, more confident, more positive about themselves, and more resilient than they actually are. African American victims may present themselves in an overly self-sufficient manner that can sometimes be misleading for professionals. Clinicians or service providers may misinterpret these actions as the women not needing the same amount of personal/emotional support as clients of other races (see also Weisz, 2002). If the Black victim did not explicitly state or show her need for personal support, the service provider could have easily missed it. It is also possible that African American victims did not believe that the programs would help them, and therefore, they did not ask for such assistance. Several authors, as noted, discuss discrimination faced by African American women in the service system (see Donnelly, Cook, & Wilson, 1999; Short et al., 2000; Sullivan & Rumptz, 1994). Perhaps such experiences make African American women less likely to ask for certain kinds of help.

It is also not clear why smaller proportions of African American victims were seen as needing legal assistance—especially because the decision to file criminal charges in Illinois is left up to the State's Attorney (J. A. Ferguson, personal communication, July 15, 2002). It is therefore unlikely that this difference can be explained by variation in the willingness of African American victims to file charges compared to other racial and ethnic groups, as some authors suggest (Donnelly et al., 1999; Sorenson, 1996). It is more likely that the difference relates to marital status. Victims in all the other racial and ethnic groups were more likely to be married. Therefore, they may have needed legal assistance to help in matters such as the dissolution of their marriage and custody issues.

American Indian clients had the greatest number of service needs, on average, at intake (2.7%; see Table 5), and for many of the service categories examined here, they had the highest percentage of clients in need compared to the other groups. American Indian clients also had the greatest percentage of clients with special needs or disabilities, although the percentage of clients in this group, 5.3%, was relatively low. Particularly striking is the need for housing assistance and shelter. As noted, if the percentages of American Indian clients in these two categories are combined, more than half of all American Indian clients had a housing-related need. Again, it is possible that much of the need of this group was related to the greater likelihood of poverty among American Indians in general, although Hispanic Americans have a comparable rate of poverty and did not have the same level of housing needs (see Bureau of the Census, 2003), indicating that other mechanisms may also be at work.[3] The findings suggest, however, that service providers pay careful attention to the need for housing when working with American Indian clients.

Hispanic American clients had the lowest number of needs on average (2.0). Only a very small percentage (1.2%) had special service needs or disabilities. However, they had a large need for assistance related to language proficiency. This suggests the need for bilingual personnel in areas that are heavily populated by Hispanic American persons. Indeed, it is possible that language barriers may have led to an underestimation of service needs for this group. Of note is that despite their low rate of referral to services from legal service providers, Hispanic American clients had a fairly substantial need for legal assistance. Certainly, some of the issues related to their possible immigrant status suggest a need for legal expertise. Similarly, the fact that a large proportion of Hispanic American clients was married implies that they might need legal help to end that relationship.

In addition to a fairly high need for housing, Asian American clients also stand out to the extent that they had higher percentages of clients compared to several other ethnic and racial groups in need of services that would help them be financially independent, such as education or training, employment, transportation, and financial assistance. They were also among those more likely to need legal assistance. Again, this may be because of the greater proportion of currently married clients in this group.

Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study suggest that although factors such as the relationship between victims and abusers or the type of abuse experienced do not vary greatly by race and ethnicity, the path into services and the service needs of groups tend to differ somewhat depending on such demographic characteristics. We suspect that economic status also plays a role, although not exclusively. Thus, as noted, American Indians had the greatest number of service needs, but Hispanic Americans, who have comparable rates of poverty, had the lowest number. The reasons for this discrepancy are unclear

and indicate a need for further research to determine the relevant systemic factors. For example, American Indians often have to rely on services established within their community, which can create additional conflict in small communities (Sen, 1999). The use of domestic violence services outside the American Indian community should be evaluated to determine not only whether they are currently responsive to the specific needs of the American Indian who is battered, but also whether service providers can be responsive in the ways that this community requests, considering financial limitations and philosophical differences.

Asian American service users also had a large need for shelter and emergency assistance and housing. The literature makes it quite clear that Asian Americans who report that they are battered and who seek shelter have, by their actions, cut off access to support within their own communities. Lee (2002) has suggested that they are therefore extremely likely to be in need of many services, including financial support, residential shelter, tutoring for children, support groups, and legal services. Furthermore, Lee (2002) has argued that the services that are provided need to be present- and future-oriented as well as goal-driven. The data presented here largely reflect this trend and indicate that service providers need to pay more attention to securing financial assistance as well as helping with employment for Asian clients.

The data also suggest that special attention be paid to the needs of African American victims who seek out services to ensure that their need for emotional support and legal assistance do not go underserved. Previous analysis of White and African American victims in urban and rural settings suggests that this is particularly critical for African American victims who are in urban environments (see Grossman et al., 2005).

Although we have tried to distinguish each of these groups to express appreciation and relevance for the heritage of each, we also agree with Falicov (1998, p. 7), who has described "cultural borderlines," or zones of overlap, among groups. It is clear that all victims of domestic violence report a strong need for personal and emotional support as well as legal assistance. However, the way in which that support is manifested may determine whether each woman seeks the help that she needs and whether she chooses to stay in a shelter. For example, 32% of Hispanic American clients and 17% of Asian American clients had difficulties with language proficiency. We do not know the subgroups that this comprised (e.g., Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Chinese, Japanese, or Asian Indian). This distinction could be helpful in knowing subtleties of language problems, but perhaps more directly it would help to distinguish subtleties in cultural differences, interpersonal expectations, personal space, food preferences, and other traditional issues. As noted in the literature, these subtleties are crucial to providing an inviting, meaningful, and relevant shelter experience for different women (Huisman, 1996).

Although there are certainly similarities across groups in terms of their needs as battered women, women of color are a diverse group. There are distinctions that are only beginning to be acknowledged within the interpersonal violence literature. At

minimum, there is a need to be aware of differences in larger epidemiological stud-ies to avoid the trap of combining diverse and distinct racial and ethnic groups. Identifying subgroups within racial and ethnic groups would be even more useful, although the manner in which racial and ethnic information is usually collected makes this task challenging. Furthermore, empirical research using samples other than White individuals would be a large step forward in increasing our awareness of the experiences of victims of color and their unique needs. As the research becomes more precise, it feels hopeful to consider the similarities of experience for all bat-tered women to establish a bond of collaboration and support among them, though at the same time it is incumbent on researchers and clinicians alike to distinguish and to honor their individual differences and concomitant needs. This is a critical area of research that is at once exciting and daunting in its complexity.

Notes

1. Ironically, studies that analyze difference in calls to police by race and ethnicity, using samples of nonimmigrant female victims of domestic violence, have found that both African American and Hispanic American women are more likely than White, non-Hispanic women to report violence to the police (Rennison & Welchans, 2000; see also Pearlman et al., 2003; Weisz, 2005, related to conflicting data regarding African American women and calls to police). Distinguishing between immigrant and nonim-migrant women of color and their responses to domestic violence is another important factor that can either be minimized or overlooked.

2. See Grossman and Lundy (2000) regarding a detailed discussion of issues related to the data col-lection forms and ways in which missing data were handled. We note that variables for which large amounts of data were missing were not included in the present analysis.

3. Jacqueline Ferguson, Associate Director for Operations, Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence, notes that American Indians in Chicago, which is where the majority of American Indian persons in Illinois reside, are not those who historically lived in this region. Rather, they are from the Iroquois Confederacy of the Northeastern United States, various Siouan tribes, and Southwestern groups. These populations are very fluid because of the pull of their tribal lands, people, and religions. Furthermore, their traditional family relations would probably be elsewhere, so that there are not familial resources or support available to them for housing (J. A. Ferguson, personal communication, August 30, 2003).

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